

(Isaiah) Judgment of the Nations

by David Guzik

God's judgment on the nations, specifically Egypt, is a demonstration of His power and control over the world, and ultimately leads to their salvation and knowledge of Him.

Duration: 47:55

Scripture: Isaiah 19:1-21, Isaiah 20, Ephesians 1:18, Revelation 18:2

Topics: "Gods Judgment", "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the fall of Babylon as described in the book of Isaiah. He emphasizes the vividness and power of God's word, which conveys the panic and terror of the impending judgment on Babylon. The preacher highlights how this judgment is a call for repentance for both believers and the entire nation. He also mentions how God's judgment can manifest through the leadership of a nation, as seen in the case of Egypt. The sermon concludes by mentioning the fulfillment of the fall of Babylon by the Medo-Persian Empire and suggests a prophetic application of this event.

Transcript

Tonight we're in Isaiah chapters 19, 20, and 21. We're going to be taking a look at these chapters tonight. They all deal along with the same theme that we've been covering in the recent chapters in the book of Isaiah, and that's God's burdens against the nations.

These aren't messages primarily directed towards Israel. These are messages primarily directed towards the surrounding nations, and it's fair for us to take a look at this and ask, well, wait a minute, you know, Lord, why are you speaking to an Israeli prophet, a Jewish prophet, about what you're going to do to Egypt, or Babylon, or the Edomites, or the Arabians? That's who we're going to take a look at tonight. Why? Why don't you just talk to them directly? Well, there are many different reasons, and we have reason to believe that God would have spoken to them directly in some way or another, through conscience, through whatever way that the Lord could communicate to them.

But God wants Israel to know a few things. He wants Israel to know that He's not only the Lord over Israel, He's Lord over all the nations. You understand that, don't you? That God is God.

Lord God, Jesus Christ, He isn't just God of the Christians. He's God. That's what's on His business card.

God over everything. Not just over the Christians. And the Lord wanted Israel to know this.

The other aspect of this was, as we've seen in preceding chapters of the book of Isaiah, the Lord has been doing some heavy judgment upon the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, hasn't He? Heavy judgment has been coming upon the people of God. Well, it's a fair thing for the people of God to say in a time of heavy judgment, Hey, Lord, what about the heathen? What about the wicked? Aren't you going to take care of them? The Lord says, I'll take care of them, and let me show you how. So that's why we're in these chapters here.

Isaiah chapter 19, beginning of verse 1, the burden against Egypt. Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud and will come into Egypt. The idols of Egypt will totter at His presence.

And the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst. I will set Egyptians against Egyptians. Everyone will fight against his brother and everyone against his neighbor.

City against city, kingdom against kingdom. The spirit of Egypt will fail in its midst. I will destroy their counsel, and they will consult the idols and the charmers, the mediums and the sorcerers and the Egyptians.

I will give into the hand of a cruel master. And a fierce king will rule over them, says the Lord, the Lord of hosts. Now, Egypt was one of the great powers of the ancient world.

And being situated immediately to the south of Israel, it was an empire that Israel constantly had to reckon with. Many times Egypt had been an enemy of Israel. In certain times, Egypt had been a refuge for Israel.

And sometimes Egypt was neither an enemy nor a friend, but they would offer a tempting but ungodly alliance to Israel. In this chapter, you're going to see how the Lord provides a prophecy both against Egypt, and it's also a prophecy for Egypt. Obviously, in the first four verses, it's the against part, isn't it? Isaiah pictures up in his mind the glory of the Lord coming in a cloud and an army kicking up dust and coming and pursuing the Egyptians and God's pouring out judgment upon them.

And as the Lord comes into Egypt with his judgment and says, the idols of Egypt will totter at his presence. Egypt was known in the ancient world for its worship of many, many different gods. And God, through his hand of judgment, will knock over many of these foreign and idolatrous gods.

You know, you may be aware of this from your own studies in the Bible during the time of the Exodus. You're aware that the plagues that God chose against Egypt weren't just kind of randomly chosen. You know, it wasn't just, you know, pick an angel up in heaven and a different angel each day could pick the next plague.

Frogs, lice, this or that. No, the plagues of Egypt were directed against specific gods of Egypt. In other words, when he knocked over the god Klum, the guardian of the Nile, the god Hapi, the spirit of the Nile, the god Osiris, who had the Nile as his bloodstreams when the waters of the Nile were turned to blood.

With the plague of the frogs, he knocked over the goddess Hecht, the frog goddess of fertility of Egypt. He knocked over the goddess Hathor, the cow-like mother goddess with the plague on livestock. He knocked over the god Imhotep, the god of medicine with the plague of boils.

He knocked over the god Nut, the sky goddess with the plague of hail. He knocked over the whole system of Egyptian worship of their gods with the lobes and lice and swarms of insects. He knocked over the god

Seth, thought to be the protector of crops with the plague of locusts.

He knocked over the god Ra, thought to be the sun god with the plague of darkness. He knocked over the god Osiris, the Egyptian god thought to be the giver of life. And he knocked over Pharaoh himself, who was deified in Egypt with the plague on the firstborn.

At the Exodus, God made all the idols of Egypt to totter at his presence. Before, in the time of the Exodus, God says he's going to do it again after the days of Isaiah, part of his judgment. Now, before we move on, let's just take a suggestive application of that for your life.

If you set up an idol in your life, get ready for God to knock it over. And he doesn't do it because he hates you. He does it because he loves you.

He doesn't want you to trust in an idol. He wants you to trust in him. So that's what God says.

I'm going to totter, knock over the idols of the Egyptians. But that's not all he says. Look at verse two.

He says, I will set Egyptians against Egyptians. Isaiah prophesied the coming civil war in Egypt, which was indirectly the hand of God's judgment against them. And we know from secular history, not long after the time of Isaiah, there was a great civil war in the days or in the region of Egypt.

He also goes on to say here, if you notice in verses three and four, he says, I will destroy their council and they will consult the idols and the charmers. Now, oftentimes, when a nation is under the judgment of God, he often seems to remove, so to speak, sound counsel and wisdom from their leaders. They turn to vain, pagan things for wisdom instead of the living God.

I tell you, when you take a look at a nation and it just seems like they just can't do anything straight. The leadership looks incompetent. They make this decision.

And on the outside, you know, they can explain it or it sounds like a noble goal. But as you look at it, it's just it's silly. It's stupid.

It's foolish. Ill-advised decision there. Ill-advised decision there.

Counsel here and counsel that. And then sell it at a press conference or whatever. It just doesn't work.

You have to stand back and say, Lord, are you judging that nation? Are you doing exactly what you did to the Egyptians? I will destroy their council. You take a look around in the nation. You go, look, you've got a lot of people in this country.

Aren't there any wise people who can lead this nation? Friends, it's not a mistake. It's the hand of God's judgment. It's a call for believers and the whole nation to repent before God.

To say, man, let's get right with God. That's what we need to do. Then he says also, verse four, the Egyptians, I will give into the hand of a cruel master.

God could judge a nation through their leadership in two ways. First of all, he could remove competent leadership. But then also he may send cruel and oppressive leaders.

This is a curse and a judgment to any people. Now, God isn't done judging Egypt, though. Look at verses five through ten.

He says, the waters will fail from the sea and the river will be wasted and dried up. The rivers will turn foul and the brooks of defense will be emptied and dried up. The reeds and the rushes will wither.

The papyrus seeds reeds by the river, by the mouth of the river. Everything sown by the river will wither, be driven away and be no more. The fishermen also will mourn.

Those who will lament will cast hooks into the river and they will languish who spread nets on the waters. Moreover, those who work in fine flax and those who weave fine fabric will be ashamed and its foundations will be broken. All who make wages will be troubled of soul.

Now, you know, the Nile River was the key to Egypt's economy. Every year it would flood. And then when it receded, it left in its flood plain beautiful silt that was just perfect for planting.

And the rich agriculture of Egypt was dependent upon the Nile River when the Nile River didn't reach its proper flood stage even one year in a time of drought or lowering of the river. It was a disaster for the Egyptian economy. God says, hold on.

Here it comes. Here it comes. That's the judgment I'm going to bring upon Egypt.

And so the workers cry out. The fishermen mourn. They languish who spread nets on the waters.

Those who weave fine fabric, they're ashamed. Everything in the Egyptian economy was interconnected with the Nile River. God strikes that.

Everything else is this. And now again, let me bring a little reminder to our own lives here. How vulnerable the Egyptian economy was, right? Right.

You take away the Nile, boom, they're gone. That's it. Everything topples from that.

When you think about how we're dependent upon every breath that we draw from God. You know, sometimes we think, oh, we're so mighty. We're so strong.

You know, yes, everything's great. You know, I'm on my course. Look at the life's going great.

This or that. Wake up. We realize how fragile we are.

Man's but a vapor. His life is just a breath. All right.

You realize that you say, thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord, for another day. Thank you, Lord, for preserving me from keeping me from the many perils.

The Lord who found it easy to strike Egypt, he'd find it easy to strike us if he so please. Thank the Lord for his love. Verse 11.

Surely the princes of Zohan are foolish. Pharaoh's wise counselors give foolish counsel. How do you say to Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of the ancient kings.

where are they? Where are your wise men? Let them tell you now and let them know what the Lord of Hosts has purposed against Egypt. The princes of Zohan have become fools. The princes of Naph are deceived.

They have also deluded Egypt, those who are the mainstay of its tribes. The Lord has mingled a perverse spirit in her midst, and they have caused Egypt to err in all her work as the drunken man staggers in his vomit. Neither will there be any work for Egypt which the head or the tail, palm branch, or bulrush may do.

Wow. You know, the Lord's following in on this theme. He's going to judge Egypt by sending them foolish counsel.

The princes of Zohan are fools. Pharaoh's wise counselors give foolish counsel. You look at leaders on a governmental level, and they just say, fools.

What are they thinking? What are they doing? It's a sign of the judgment of God. He gives them cruel rulers, but he also gives them foolish counsel. I really love what he says there in verse twelve, where he says, Where are they? Where are your wise men? Let them tell you now and let them know what the Lord of Hosts has purposed against Egypt.

Here, the Lord is reminding us what true wisdom is. Hey, Egypt, you got some wise men, big hotshot consultants, advisors, assistants. Yeah, there they are, the big guys, the national leaders.

By the way, you should know the Egyptians were people that really prided themselves on their knowledge and their wisdom. They really had a high view of themselves in that. God says, Oh, you want to know wisdom? You want to know how great things are? You want to know true wisdom? Then know what the Lord of Hosts has purposed.

That's real wisdom. You could have a fellow over here. He can know how to split the atom.

Boy, he's smart. Wow. Look at all that.

You got a sweet little gal over there and she knows what the Lord has purpose. Which one has more real wisdom? The one who knows what the Lord has purpose. True wisdom isn't knowing all kinds of facts and plans and strategies.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. That's Proverbs 9.10. This is the call. Hey, you wise men among the Egyptians, where's your wisdom? Let it know what the Lord has purposed.

Verse 16. In that day, Egypt will be like women and will be afraid and fear because of the waving of the hand of the Lord of Hosts which he waves over it. The land of Judah will be a terror to Egypt, and everyone who makes mention of it will be afraid in himself because of the counsel of the Lord of Hosts which he has determined against it.

All the Lord needs to do is wave his hand and everybody in Egypt is going to panic. They're going to be set aside in terror and in fear. And then it says very significantly, verse 17, the land of Judah will be a terror to Egypt.

That's fascinating. That's like saying, you know, oh, gosh, what's the analogy you could make? You know, the Dominican Republic will be a terror to the United States of America. What are you talking about? You know, don't they know who we are? How can the Lord say that? That's quite a switch God's describing.

You see, for thousands of years, the land of Judah lay submissively in the shadow of the great Egyptian empires. Lord prophesied the day when Judy, Judah, Judy, Judah, where it is. That's funny, isn't it? Lord

prophesied the day when the nation of Judah is going to be more mighty than Egypt and the land of Judah will be a terror to the Egyptians.

Now, of course, you could say this is fulfilled today, couldn't you? You had a war right now between the Egyptians and Israel. Put your money on Israel. I'm telling you that right now.

That was proven in the last military conflict the two nations had between each other. That's a military conflict. Israelis captured huge parcels of Egyptian land, the whole Sinai Peninsula.

The Egyptians basically had to beg for years to get and give it back. Well, it was the mightier nation now. But I think that this will particularly be fulfilled during the millennium.

Let's take a look here. Verse 18. Here's when God saves Egypt.

The first part of the chapter, God was striking Egypt. Now he's going to save Egypt. Look at verse 18.

In that day, five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear by the Lord of hosts. One will be called the city of destruction. In that day, there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt and a pillar to the Lord at its border.

And it will be for a sign and a witness to the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt, for they will cry to the Lord because of the oppressors and he will send them a savior and a mighty one and he will deliver them. Then the Lord will be known to Egypt and the Egyptians will make known the Lord will know the Lord in that day and will make sacrifice and offering. Yes, they will make a vow to the Lord and perform it.

And the Lord will strike Egypt. He will strike and heal it. They will return to the Lord and he will be entreated by them and heal them.

Isn't that interesting? God's describing revival in the land of Egypt. Five cities are going to be identified with the Lord of hosts. They're going to speak the language of Canaan there.

Egypt will worship the Lord with an altar to the Lord and will memorialize great God's great works with a pillar to the Lord. When Egypt brought under this oppression, they will cry to the Lord because of their oppressors and he'll send them a savior and a mighty one and deliver them. There's a few interesting ways that this could be fulfilled.

In all likelihood, this prophecy is yet to be fulfilled and will be fulfilled in the millennium. After the great tribulation that God sends upon the earth and Jesus Christ comes to rule and reign and majesty over the earth, the Bible says that Jesus will rule the earth for a thousand years. During this time, the nations will turn to him and the superpower of the world will be little old Israel.

Now, during that period of time, Egypt will turn to the Lord and worship the Lord. And I believe the ultimate fulfillment of these things is for the millennium. However, there are some interesting either partial fulfillments or some people regard them as complete fulfillments.

In the time of the Maccabees, that's in between the Old and the New Testaments, a Jewish high priest named Onias IV was forced to flee Egypt, excuse me, forced to flee Israel. And he went to Egypt and there in Egypt he built a temple that was similar to the one in Jerusalem. So some commentators think that this is the fulfillment of this prophecy where it talks about the altar and the pillar.

I suppose that's a possibility, though I would look to an ultimate fulfillment in the millennium. You know what I love about this passage? Look at it here in verse 20. It says, And he will send them a savior and a mighty one, and he will deliver them.

You know, the text here says that the savior will be a mighty one. I don't know about you, but that's the kind of savior I need. I need a mighty savior.

A little savior wouldn't have met my need because my great sin needed a mighty atonement and my heart, a heart needed a mighty grace to soften it. I think we're mighty sinners, friends. We need a mighty savior and that's the one that the Lord has supplied for us.

But praise the Lord in this prophecy. It says, if you look here in verse 21 and 22, it says, And the Lord will be known to Egypt and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day. Now, you should know that there did come to be a widespread knowledge of the Lord in Egypt.

In the days of Jesus, more than a million Jews lived in Egypt. And then later on in the days of the early church, there was a strong, vital church in Egypt for more than 600 years. Christianity was one of the strongest religions in Egypt for the 600 years after the time of Christ until the great invasions of Islam.

The great theologian Athanasius, who lived in the fourth century, this is about 400 A.D., he lived in Egypt, in Alexandria, and this is what he said. I'm quoting him. He says, speaking of this exact passage, he says, This thing is happening before our very eyes here in Egypt and thereby another prophecy is fulfilled.

For at no other time have the Egyptians ceased from their false worship, save when the Lord of all writing is on a cloud, came down here in body and brought the error of idols to nothing and won over everybody to himself and threw himself to the father. So we don't think of Egypt today as a nation with a mighty Christian presence. By the way, did you know that in Egypt today, Christians are horribly persecuted? Christian brothers and sisters are dying for their faith at the hands of Muslim murderers in Egypt.

It's a terrible thing. Sometimes people would say that Christians shouldn't speak so boldly about that and call those who would kill Christians, you know, head on with that kind of language. Friends, I think that if a Christian were to kill any other person, whether it be a Buddhist or a Muslim or, you know, any person from any other faith, I'd call them a murderer too.

Jesus Christ never wanted his gospel to be advanced by the sword. Never. It's been an abominable thing in Christianity when people somehow got the message in the Middle Ages that God wanted the gospel to be spread by the sword.

What a terrible delusion. What a satanic delusion upon the church. Friends, it's a terrible thing that today Christians are dying for the fact that they serve and honor Jesus Christ and want to live for him.

Well, I believe that this passage will be fulfilled mightily during the millennium. If you notice here, it says in verse 22 in this precious, the Lord will strike Egypt. He will strike and heal it.

They will return to the Lord and he will be entreated by them and healed them. You know, it's just about worth the striking of the Lord to be healed by him, isn't it? The beautiful restoration and glory that God brings in our lives. It's a beautiful thing.

And I think that the Egyptians and the fulfillment of this would say, thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord, for striking us and healing us. Now, there's even a more amazing fulfillment in verses 23, 24 and 25, where we read in that day, there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians.

And that day, Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land. From the Lord of hosts shall bless saying, Blessed is Egypt, my people and Assyria, the work of my hands and Israel, my inheritance. Well, do you notice God says in that day, that's why I think this is going to have to be the millennium, my friends.

In that day, they're going to be the three amigos, Egypt, Israel and Assyria. Good heavens. This is a remarkable prophecy.

God blessing all three nations. Then blessed is Egypt, my people, and Assyria, the work of my God, blessing Egypt, God blessing Assyria, God blessing Israel. What an amazing work of redemption.

This shows that God's salvation will extend to the nations. Now, he'll call forth his own, even from Egypt and from Assyria, not only from Israel. Friends, don't we rejoice in this? Don't we rejoice in the fact that Christianity is not an American faith? God forbid.

Christianity is the first great world religion that said, you know, it doesn't matter what country you're from, doesn't matter what your ethnic background is. We are all one in Jesus Christ. I tell you, one of the most remarkable things I've ever experienced in my Christian life is traveling over to other parts of the world where I don't know these people and they don't know me.

And we don't speak the same language. We don't eat the same food. We don't live in the same kind of houses.

We don't go to the same kind of places. I meet with these people and I have a beautiful, instant bond of fellowship because we have the same Lord Jesus Christ. And that common ground is greater than any of the other things that we have different about us.

God says, I'm going to bring in Egypt. I'm going to bring in Assyria. Now, it was powerful to see this of Egypt.

I mean, Egypt and Israel, there's some history there, right? But it's almost unbelievable to say it about Assyria. Friends, the nation or the empire of Assyria was the one power feared by every little nation in the fertile crescent of that day. The Assyrians had a calculated and a planned brutality.

Everybody hated the Assyrians because they were. Well, let me put it this way. Other nations, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Persians, they were all capable of inhuman acts.

But the Assyrian record for callous cruelty is difficult to match anywhere, anywhere in the world. These were people that when they took other people into captivity, by the way, that was a technique that they engineered. You conquer a nation, you deport all their people to dispirit them.

And when they would take them in captivity, you know what they do? First thing they do is they strip them naked or just bare with just the smallest of clothes. Then literally, literally they would take a fish hook and string it through their lip and tie the hooks together and lead the people by that train on a procession.

That's how you would walk thousands of miles to be relocated by the Assyrians.

Their cruelty was renowned. What does God say? I'll bring in the Assyrian, too. Do you know that there's no sinner beyond the pale of God's grace and redemption? Nobody, nobody.

Doesn't matter how bad. Doesn't matter if you're an Egyptian, so to speak. I'm speaking spiritually, of course.

Doesn't matter if you're an Assyrian, so to speak spiritually. God can bring you in. God can redeem you.

Who would have ever thought that Egypt could be addressed this way? Who would have ever thought that Assyria could be addressed as if these are the trophies of God's grace? Notice it here. Don't you love this? Look at verse 25. From the Lord of hosts shall blessing.

Blessed is Egypt, my people. Right. Oh, yeah.

Great for Egypt. They're blessed. What does God say about Egypt? My people.

Man, that's great. That's music to their ears. Look at verse 25.

And Assyria, the work of my hands. Well, that's beautiful, too. Yes.

Yes. But the best is for the last. You see at the end there in verse 25.

And Israel, my inheritance. I don't know if you've ever dreamed. You think, you know, wouldn't that be read about people? Wow.

You know, they die and some real rich guy left a big inheritance, jillions of dollars. Wow. You go, wow, that's that's their inheritance.

You know, wow, that's a good inheritance. That's their inheritance. What did you know? God has an inheritance.

You don't think about that, do you think? What does God need money for? Let's go. What's rich to God? What's valuable to him? What does God say that I can't wait till I get my inheritance? You know, God sits in heaven and thinks that way because I want my inheritance. I can't wait till I get my inheritance.

Oh, I can't wait for it. You know what his inheritance is. You.

You are his inheritance. That is how precious you are to God. Let me read it to you from Ephesians 118.

Paul prayed that you may know what is the hope of his calling. What are the riches of his glory, riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints? Now, we connect very easily with the idea that God is our inheritance, right? That you're his inheritance. That's why it's a special thing that the Lord says it is.

Oh, people, if you only knew how rich you were in the sight of God, how God treasures you and values you and honors you, how that would lift us up, how that would just lift us up to a higher love, answer so many hurting needs in our heart. Well, coming on here now, chapter 20. This is one of the more unusual chapters in the Bible.

Let's see what I mean. In that year, Tartan came to Ashdod when Sargon, the king of Assyria, sent him and he fought against Ashdod and took it. Okay, well, this describes the time when the army of Assyria came against city of Ashdod.

Ashdod, Egyptian city? No. Edomite city? No. Moabite city? No.

Israelite city? No. Ashdod is a Philistine city. Again, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

If you were to take Jerusalem and just head straight to the Mediterranean, you would go over the land of the Philistines and in that general region was the city of Ashdod. By the way, this invasion that Isaiah mentions here has a specific marking point in secular history. We know this happened in 711 BC, 711 years before Christ.

And so the Philistines here, they're both neighbors and thorns to Israel. And when the Philistines are being invaded and Ashdod is being taken over, what are you going to think if you're in Israel? What's the logical thing to think? We're next, right? The Assyrians, they just took over Ashdod. They're coming after us next.

It'd be like if an army just conquered a thousand oaks. You're thinking, Sema Valley's next. They're on the way.

They're making their sweep through. Here it comes. Verse 2. At the same time, the Lord spoke by Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saying, Go and remove the sackcloth from your body and take your sandals off your feet.

And he did so walking naked and barefoot. Now, before this, Isaiah wore an outer garment of sackcloth, which was the garments of mourning. Sackcloth, think of it like a burlap bag.

And you'd wear that. Why would you wear that? Because it's a way of saying, I'm in mourning. I don't want any comfort.

I don't want any pleasure. I am so upset. I'm so grieved over somebody dying or some tragedy happening.

I don't want anything to come to me. What I wear isn't important to me. My grief is what's important.

Now, God tells him, take off your outer garment of sackcloth and take your sandals off. You know, sometimes God did that with the prophets. Sometimes God had them act out signs, not just preach with their words, but preach with their actions.

And so he did. See it in verse 2. And he did so walking naked and barefoot. Now, when it says naked there, you shouldn't regard it that Isaiah was nude, completely without clothing for three years.

He didn't go live in some nudist camp for three years. That's not the picture at all, my friends. Instead, the Bible, using that term, it's completely within the bounds of it saying that he only wore the inner garment customary in his day.

Now, it would be like somebody in our day just wearing a night shirt. That would be the appearance of it. He'd just walk around in like a torn night shirt.

Culturally, it would be like somebody walking around their underwear. Not obscene, but not decent either. You know, I mean, it would be disturbing to you know something was wrong when you saw somebody walking around.

You'd say, get your outer garment on. But the message wasn't the message of nudity. The message was and listen of complete poverty and humiliation.

Isaiah was to dress as the poorest and the most destitute would dress. Now, I don't think either that it's necessary to think that Isaiah lived like this every day for three years, though that's an outside possibility. I think that what Isaiah did was there was probably a set period of time every day where he would go out dressed like this.

You know, maybe he'd take his midday walk around Jerusalem for three years straight dressed like this as a visible sign to people. And every day people would look at Isaiah to go, man, why didn't that guy dress himself properly? What's wrong with him? What's wrong with this guy? This guy looks like a prisoner of war. This guy looks like a destitute beggar.

There's something wrong with this man. What's going on? Well, that's exactly the sign that God wanted to show, because look at verse three. Then the Lord said, just as my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and a wonder against Egypt and Ethiopia.

So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as prisoners and the Ethiopians as captives, young and old, naked and barefoot with their buttocks covered to the shame of Egypt. You get the picture here. Now, why is Isaiah advertising what's going to happen to Egypt? Isn't that interesting? The Lord isn't saying this is what's going to happen to you.

You're saying this is what's going to happen to Egypt. Why is Isaiah prophesying that? So that the Israelites would not trust in Egypt. That was the temptation.

Here's the great Assyrian empire threatening them. Israel, what are you going to do? Judah, what are you going to do? You got to find refuge. You got to find protection from somebody.

I know we'll go to Egypt. And the Lord's message through this powerful sign is don't trust in Egypt. Look what's going to happen to them.

If this was going to happen to them, what do you think is going to happen to you? That's the message of God from this. This would all be to the shame of Egypt. The Syrians, as they took the Egyptians captive, would humiliate them by stripping them and leading them away as prisoners.

And this would be to the shame of Egypt. Can I draw a little spiritual analogy right now? You know, when the devil wants to take away one of his wretched captives, he humiliates him at the same time, doesn't he? Satan knows how to catch people with the bait that's out there, right? But underneath the bait is what? And that fish thought it was getting something good with the bait. And the hook goes in and draws him in.

My friends, Satan doesn't want anything good for you. Have you ever heard of four spiritual laws? First of the four, it's TULIP evangelism. One of the first four spiritual laws is God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.

I think there should be a corollary to the four spiritual laws. And the second one is Satan hates you and has a terrible plan for your life. He wants to bring you into shame and degradation.

Now, here's the message of the sign to Judah. Look at verse five. Then they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia, their expectation in Egypt, their glory and the inhabitant of this territory will say in that day,

surely such is our expectation wherever we flee to help to be delivered from the king of Assyria.

And how should we escape? What are we going to do? We were counting on Egypt to help us out. Look what's going to happen to Egypt. When God judges Ethiopia and Egypt, it's going to be evident how foolish it was for Judah to look to them for protection against Assyria.

I think there's a powerful, powerful phrase there in verse five, then they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia, their expectation in Egypt, their glory. My friends, tonight, right now on this Wednesday night, what is your expectation and what is your glory? Whenever our expectation is in something wrong or our glory is in something wrong, the Lord will find a way to make those things disappoint you. He will.

Judah set their expectation on Ethiopia. They're going to deliver me. God says, no, look what I'm going to do to Ethiopia.

Judah set their expectation, their glory upon Egypt. But now they're left afraid and ashamed. You, Camel Morgan, said there is no place of security for the people of God other than that to be found in the rule of God.

All expectation not centered in God is doomed to disappointment and discomfiture. Oh, my friends, let God search your heart about your expectation and your glory. So many of us go through life crippled by our expectations.

God says, put your expectation on me. Put your glory on me. Lord, allow Judah to be backed into a corner cap between these two empires, between Egypt and Assyria, so that they can only trust in the Lord and find their expectation only in him.

Coming now to chapter 21, verse one. The burden against the wilderness of the sea. Now, this is interesting, isn't it? You know, we use the burden against Ethiopia, the burden against Egypt, the burden against Moab, the burden against this, the burden against that.

What's the wilderness by the sea or the wilderness of the sea? Well, Babylon was called the wilderness of the sea in the ancient world because the great plain of Babylon was divided with so many lakes and marshes that it was referred to as a sea. So, this is a judgment or an oracle against Babylon. Again, verse one.

The burden against the wilderness of the sea. As whirlwinds in the south pass through, so it comes from the desert, from a terrible land. A distressing vision is declared to me.

The treacherous dealer deals treacherously and the plunderer plunders. Go up, O Elam, but cease, O Medea. All the citing I have made to cease.

Now, Elam and Medea are the ancient names for the people of Persia, modern day Iran. The Persian Empire conquered the Babylonian Empire, and Isaiah prophetically sees their armies marching upon Babylon. This is what Isaiah is seeing.

He's seeing the armies of the Elamites and the Medeans coming upon Babylon. And now it's going to fall here. If you look at verse three.

Therefore, my loins are filled with pain. Pangs have taken hold of me like the pangs of a woman in labor. I was distressed when I heard it.

I was dismayed when I saw it. My heart wavered. Fearfulness frightened me the night for which I longed.

He turned into fear for me. Prepare the table. Set a watchman in the tower.

Eat and drink. Arise, you princess. Anoint the shield.

For thus the Lord has said to me, Go, set a watchman. Let him declare what he sees. And he saw a chariot with a pair of horsemen, a chariot of donkeys, and a chariot of camels.

And he listened diligently with a great care. Then he cried, A lion, my lord. I stand continually on the watchtower in the daytime.

I have set my post every night. And look, here comes a chariot of men with a pair of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen.

And all the carved images of her gods, he has broken to the ground. Isn't that amazing how vivid God's word is? I mean, without even words, you just get the feel of it, the panic, the terror. Here it is, armies sweeping down upon Babylon and they're going to crush it.

And in one night, Babylon will fall. They'll say, Babylon is fallen, fallen. Isaiah thinks about it.

He thinks about the terror coming upon the people. And he says there in the early verses there, verses three and four, how they're filled with pain. Pangs have taken over like the pangs of a woman in labor.

I was distressed when I heard it. Do you know that there's nothing more hopeless, more crestfallen than a wicked man in distress? You know why? Because when his life ends, his hope ends also. His life and his hope is about to end together.

And here's Isaiah mourning over all this. And the report comes to the watchman there in verse nine. Babylon is fallen, is fallen.

And this dramatic scene was fulfilled when the Medo-Persian empire conquered Babylon. Do you know it also has a prophetic application? Stick with me on this. Turn in your Bible.

Keep your finger here at Isaiah 21. We'll come back to it. Go to Revelation chapter 18, verse 2. There is no book in the entire New Testament that is more keyed into the Old Testament than the book of Revelation.

If you want to understand the book of Revelation, read your newspaper, read your Time magazine, but first and foremost, know your Old Testament. Revelation chapter 18, verse 2. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen. And it has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird.

Do you see the connection between the passages? John is quoting Isaiah. Now, Isaiah was speaking about literal Babylon, the literal city. John is speaking about spiritual Babylon, and commercial Babylon, the world system.

And just as certainly as the old empire Babylon fell and was destroyed by an army sweeping upon it, so God is going to deal with the world system too. There is going to come a day when you take a look at the Babylon of this world system, and everybody is going to be able to say, Babylon has fallen, has fallen, and

it can't come soon enough for me. For the passing of this world order, and God to make something new, something beautiful, for Jesus Christ to rule and reign.

The same panic and terror that the people of Babylon felt when the great city was conquered by the Medes and the Persians is going to be seen again when the Lord strikes the world system, when He strikes both spiritual Babylon and commercial Babylon, the world will be terrified in more than the same way. God's people will rejoice over the fall of Babylon. Look at Revelation chapter 18, verse 20.

This is the reaction of God's people over the fall of Babylon. Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her. I can't wait until God avenges all the injustice that this world system has done to believers, done to everybody.

God's going to avenge it someday. Back to Isaiah, verse 10, O my threshing and the grain of my floor, that which I have heard from the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, I have declared to you. That seems to be a parenthetical statement by Isaiah, maybe a pause in the midst of his prophecy.

Now, in verse 11, he picks it up again and now he's going to say, verse 11, the burden against Duma. Well, what's Duma? Duma was another ancient name for the kingdom of Edom in the mountainous region of Seir. The Edomites descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob, that is Israel.

They settled in the land to the southeast of Israel and they were the sometimes enemies of Israel. Let's take a look at this here, the burden, verse 11, the burden against Duma. He calls me out of Seir.

Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, the morning comes and also the night. If you will inquire, inquire, return, come back. Just feel like I read a little thing of beatnik poetry there.

It's going to be snapping, you know. Cool, daddy-o. This is a vague, mysterious burden against Duma.

It probably speaks to the confusion and darkness striking Edom at the time of the judgment. There's confusion. What of the night? Is the night done? Is the night done? And finally, the watchman answers back, yeah, morning's coming, but then another night.

May refer to the fact that Edom was in a time of judgment and then they saw a glimmer of hope on the horizon. But that glimmer of hope would be quickly surrounded again by night. It's a picture of gloom and doom to the world.

It's a picture of gloom and doom to the world. And then there's a glimmer of hope to come upon Edom. Now, we wrap up our section tonight with verses 13 through 17 the burden against Arabia.

The burden against Arabia. In the forest in Arabia, you will lodge, O you traveling companies of Danites. O inhabitants of the land of Tima, bring water to him who is thirsty.

With their bread they meet him who fled. For they fled from the sword, from the drawn sword, from the bent bow, from the distress of war. For thus the Lord has said to me, within a year, according to the year of a hired man, all the glory of Kedar will fall, and the remainder of the number of the archers, the mighty men of the people of Kedar, will be diminished, for the Lord God of Israel has spoken it." Isaiah pictures the refugees flowing from an attack on Arabia.

They're the traveling companies of Danites. They're thirsty. They need bread because they fled from the swords and from the bent bone, from the distress of war.

And that attack is going to come soon. The Lord says it will come within a year. Within a year, the glory of Kedar will fail.

It says, according to the year of a hired man. You know what that means? That means an exact year. I mean, if you're working for a year and then you get paid, let's say you're under contract for a guy for a year, and after that you get a big bonus, you get a big paycheck.

That year is going to be exact, right? You're not going to work for a year and a couple weeks. It's going to be exact. That's the year of a hired man, exactly, counting the days.

God promises that it'll come to pass. Well, we have to break it off there. I think we can see.

If there's any one thing I'd leave you with tonight, go back to that thought in chapter 20. Where's your expectation? Where's your glory? Is your expectation in the Lord? Is it really settled in the Lord? Is your glory in the Lord? What gets you excited? What gives you a sense of peace and satisfaction and glory? Let your expectation, let your glory be in the Lord. Because if you set it in anything else, it can be idolatry.

The Lord loves to topple those idols. He loves to do it not because he's cruel, but because he loves you. You're his inheritance.

He doesn't want anything to get in the way. For God's goodness is shown to us in so many ways through these things. Through his dealings with us, both in his kindness and in his judgments, the goodness of God is still there.

Maybe you're saying, you know, David, if God's goodness is shown in his judgments too, and the Lord's been pretty good to me lately. Well, the Lord has been good. You need to just ask God tonight, what do you want me to do? How do you want me to pray? How do you want me to walk right with you? And he'll show you.

He loves to show the seeking heart what to do. Let's pray. Father, that's what we want to be before you tonight.

Just a whole room full of seeking hearts here together. Loving you, praising you. And Father, we pray that you'd mold our expectation and our glory so that it would be set firmly on you.

We love you, Lord. Even the things that you've promised us, Lord, we don't want to desire the promise more than we desire you. You are our life.

You are our glory. Shine it forth in our lives, Lord God. We pray in Jesus' precious name.

Amen.

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