

(Isaiah) the Pain of the Prophet

by David Guzik

God is judging Moab for their pride and sin, but He is also refining them through a purifying process, and in the end times, Moab will be a place of refuge for the Jewish people.

Duration: 58:30

Scripture: Isaiah 13:1, Isaiah 16:1-3, Isaiah 18:1-5

Topics: "Social Justice", "Spiritual Refuge"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the book of Isaiah and its message of judgment and refuge. He describes how Isaiah shifts his gaze between the refugees fleeing from Moab and the rulers of Judah, urging them to take in the refugees. Isaiah also prophesies that Moab itself will one day receive refugees from Judah. The preacher emphasizes the importance of providing protection and refuge for those in need, and highlights the need for individuals to remember and acknowledge God in their lives to avoid spiritual forgetfulness.

Transcript

We're in the midst of the section of the book of Isaiah where Isaiah is speaking against the nations and tonight we're going to see Isaiah listen to Isaiah hear him speak to three different nations surrounding Israel first he's going to speak to the Moabites then he's going to speak to Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel and then finally he's going to speak to the Ethiopians let's jump right into it Isaiah chapter 15 beginning at verse 1 the burden against Moab Now maybe we should just stop right there and think about Moab The founder of the people of Moab was the son born of the incestuous relationship between Lot and one of his daughters After Sodom and Gomorrah had been destroyed and Lot and his wife and two of their daughters escaped the city You remember what happened to Lot's wife?

She turned around and became a pillar of salt So Lot and his two daughters escaped the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah First they hid out in a little town named Zoar but then after that they fled up into the hills perhaps feeling that that city would be destroyed as well and Lot's two daughters got him drunk and had incestuous relations with him and the children born of that union Was the founder of the nation of the Amorites and the founder of the nation of the Moabites Well, this is where the Moabites came from they settled in the plains to the southeast of Israel In what is today modern-day Jordan now at certain times in the history of Israel the Moabites were great enemies of Israel After all it was Balak the king of Moab who hired Balaam the prophet Hoping that Balaam could destroy

Israel by cursing them later on it was in the days of the judges that Eglon king of the Moabites Oppressed Israel in the days of the judges and God had to send a deliverer named Ehud to go and deliver Israel from the control of the Moabites now during the days of Saul and David Israel established a firm control over Moab But later kings of Israel were not always able to keep them under Israeli dominance now What's interesting about this you have this element of competing with the nation of Moab, but there's a very interesting other connection You need to understand here There was a Moabite connection with Israel first of all because they were related by bloodline The Moabites came from Lot who was Abraham's nephew So the founder of the people of Israel Abraham and the founder of the

people lot or the descendant of them lots They were they were of the same lineage, so there was a connection there Now it was because of that that God told Israel in Deuteronomy chapter 2 verse 9 When they were coming into the promised land God told Israel don't take the land of the Moabites it belongs to them let them have it as well David Israel's greatest king was one-quarter Moabite his grandmother on his father's side her name was Ruth and Ruth was a Moabites Now matter of fact when David was on the run from King Saul and we've been seeing this we're coming into this section now on Sunday mornings when David is on the run from King Saul a fugitive David Takes his mother and father and entrust them into the care of the king of Moab so that he can look over them so there's this Moabite

connection between David and the house of David and the the kingdom of Moab now for this reason there's a great deal of sadness and Empathy on Isaiah's part as he describes the coming judgment upon Moab so check it out here verse 1 the burden against Moab because in the night are of Moab is laid waste and Destroyed because in the night here of Moab is laid waste and destroyed He has gone up to the temple and did bond to the high places to weep Moab will wail over Nebo and over Medina over all their heads will be baldness and every beard cut off in their streets They will clothe themselves with sackcloth on the tops of their houses and in the streets.

Everyone will wail weeping bitterly Heshbon and Elia will cry out their voices shall be heard as far as Jahaz Therefore the armed soldiers of Moab will cry out his life will be burdensome to him You get the feeling of this Here is the coming judgment upon Moab upon the cities and he lists the cities city after city These belong to the people Moab But the warning sign has gone on since the air raid sirens gone off in each one of these cities The attack is coming judgment is coming and everybody's fleeing some of them go to their temple Did you notice this look at verse 2 he's gone up That's a temple and to the bond of the high places to weep They seek their pagan gods as the judgment from other nations comes upon them.

What are they going to do? Who are they going to turn to? They turn to whatever they can They should turn to the Lord, but they don't They clothed themselves a sackcloth and everybody will wail weeping bitterly at this invasion and as a result of it, there's great distress Excuse me.

There's great mourning in Moab now. I want you to keep your finger here in Isaiah chapter 15. I Want you to turn to Jeremiah chapter 48? because Jeremiah Describes the same Incident of judgment upon the Moabites Jeremiah chapter 1 we're going to begin here at verse 11 Jeremiah chapter 48 verse 11 What did I say? 41 whatever 48 41 hut-hut-hike Jeremiah chapter 48 verse 11 Listen to the Lord's judgment against Moab Moab has been at ease from his youth He has settled on his dregs and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel Nor has he gone into captivity.

Therefore his taste has remained in him and his scent has not changed Did you understand the image that God's drawing from here? You may not Because he's drawing on an image from the ancient practice of

purifying and refining wine how they would refine wine in the ancient world is they would put wine in a vessel and The dregs the impurity in the wine would sink down to the bottom because of gravity Impurities the dregs would be heavier And so if you would just set the wine in the vessel over time it would settle down there And then what you would do is once the dregs settled you Carefully poured off the wine to leave The dregs down at the bottom and you just poured off the good part and if you poured it from vessel to vessel Each time along the way allowing the dregs to settle that is how you got yourself a good pure product of wine in the end Now here's the tricky part If you left it too long With the dregs at the bottom then the whole Flavor of the wine in the vessel would take on the flavor of the dregs So the trick was letting the dregs settle the bottom But then pouring it off without letting the dregs sit in there too long Do you hear what God is saying to Moab look at it again verse 11? Moab has been at ease from his youth He has settled on his dregs and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel Nor has he gone into captivity therefore his taste remained in him and his scent is not changed you see what God's saying He's saying well Moab you're just sitting there You're sitting on the dregs the dregs are starting to flavor the wine The purifying process isn't working. So you know what the Lord says? Here's God's solution. Check it out verse 12 therefore behold the days are coming says the Lord when I shall send him wine workers who will tip him over and Empty his vessels and break the bottles Moab shall be ashamed of Chumash.

That was the Moabite God as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel their confidence You understand what's going on? You know what God says? He says Moab you've settled down too long. I'm gonna pour you You didn't want to move on You didn't want to seek this change You didn't want to seek me for how you could change for how you could grow So what I'm gonna do is I'm gonna take it out of your hands. I'm gonna pour you I'm gonna mix things up in your life.

You ever feel like God is pouring you from vessel to vessel like your whole life is getting upset and being poured out and Regather, you know what's going on? There could be a lot of things going on a lot of different levels, but part of it is God's purifying process You liked it before when everything was comfortable Right, you know what comfortable can mean you've settled on your dregs God won't allow it. He loves you. So he says, okay, I'm gonna tip you over He said oh lord.

No, everything will spill Everything go everywhere. No, the Lord says I'm gonna pour you from vessel to vessel Vessel you see when we're at ease and when we're never poured from vessel to vessel we'd settle on the dregs and we're never refined God uses the pouring process to refine us. I Don't think it's fun But it is necessary So that's what God was doing to Moab in in Isaiah chapter 15 You get such a vivid sense of the pain of the bewailing of the of the the agony that they're going through Look at it here in verse 5 It says my heart will cry out for Moab His fugitives shall flee to Zoar like a three-year-old heifer for by the ascent of Lewetheth They will go up with weeping for the way of Haranam They will raise up a cry of destruction for the waters of Nimrim will be desolate But the green grass is withered away the grass fails.

There's nothing green Therefore the abundance they've gained and what they've laid up. They will carry away to the brooks of the willows The idea is refugees are fleeing You see it on the television news, don't you? Flight of refugees in the world right now and you're looking at your heart breaks. Oh, it's very sad Look at those poor people.

They're displaced and you look at it. That's what Isaiah sees in this prophecy He sees the Moabite people they've been devastated by attack by judgment that's come upon them and they're fleeing their refugees and The grass is withered away the beautiful plains of Moab were once wonderful grazing land But now under the hand of God's judgment, the green grass is withered away And they take everything they have

They carry it with them. You see these poor refugees carrying with them everything that they can possibly carry That's the picture here in the book of Isaiah as they're fleeing and listen to the cry of the refugees in verse 8 But the cry has gone all around the borders of Moab It's wailing to a glam and it's wailing to bear a limb for the waters of the demand will be full of blood Because I will bring more upon demand lions upon him who escapes from Moab and on the remnant of the land If the judgment of the night attack did not complete the work of judgment God would send lions upon him who escapes God was going to finish his work of judgment against Moab chapter 16 continues on the thought verse 1 Send the lambs of the ruler of the land From Selah to the wilderness to the mount of the daughter of Zion for it shall be as a wandering bird thrown out of the nest So shall be the daughters of Moab at the fords above the Arnon Now it's a very interesting you read that you scratch your head.

Don't you send the lambs of the ruler of the land? What's that? Now, I know it's tempting to look for a messianic connection there, right? Ah the Lamb of God. Yes Well, not exactly This is a reference To the way that the Moabite Kings at one time used to bring Tribute to the kings of Judah and what they would bring when they would pay tribute, which was really a sense of taxes or extortion See basically what the Israelites would do is they would come to the king of Moab and they would say, okay Look, we're bigger than you. We're stronger than you.

You're under our governance. You're under our dominance Therefore you have to give us ten thousand lambs every year And the king would say what? They'd say yeah, or we'll attack you. It's up to you ten thousand lambs every year or we'll attack you.

Okay fine So they would pay the tribute of ten thousand lambs or whatever The amount was ten thousand probably too high of a figure keep your finger there in Isaiah chapter 16 Turn back to 2nd Kings chapter 3 and you'll get an idea of exactly what I'm talking about 2nd Kings chapter 3 2nd Kings chapter 3 verse 4. Oh 10,000 I was off look at verse 4 2nd Kings 3 4 now Misha king of Moab was a sheep breeder and he regularly paid the king of Israel 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams But it happened when Ahab died that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel You see see during the days of King Ahab. It was understood Okay, every year or so the king of Moab brings these hundred thousand lambs and the wool from it But when King Ahab died the king of Moab said well forget it. I'm not doing anymore a weaker King has come I don't have to give in to his demands now go back to Isaiah chapter 16 and see it in that light what the Prophet is telling the king of Moab is send the lamb to the ruler of the land Submit yourself to Mount Zion again submit yourself to the people of God Listen king of the Moabites.

Your answer is not in your pagan God. Your answer is in the Lord God of Israel So submit yourself to the ruler of Israel And then Isaiah paints a very powerful picture of the helpless Confused state of Moab under the hands of God's judgment look at verse 2 He says it shall be as a wandering bird thrown out of its nest So shall the daughters of Moab at the fords of be at our non And that's the whole idea of how desperate how confused how disoriented they are. They're helpless.

They're they're confused So that's the the council the Moab listen submit to the ruler of Israel, but now in verse 3 Isaiah is going to plead with the people of Judah with the rulers of Judah Listen to what he says to them take counsel execute judgment Make your shadow like the night in the middle of the day hide the outcasts do not betray him who escapes You see that's the council Listen, you got this flood of refugees coming from Moab and what does Isaiah say to the rulers of Judah take them in? protect them Make your shadow like the night in the middle of the day in other words cast your cooling shadow upon them So in the middle of the day, you're giving them shelter and protection from the hot Sun Hide the outcasts do not

betray him who escapes You see this is a marvelous marvelous plea for mercy on behalf of the people of Judah They see these refugees flooding from Moab. Won't you help them? Won't you care for them? I? Think it's marvelous that Isaiah Wanted Judah to be a place of refuge and protection for Moab when Moab was under judgment now Doesn't it strike you that that's exactly what the church should be? That the church should be a place of refuge and protection For those who feel like they're under the hand of God's judgment You feel somebody who feels like the Lord's just got his whooping stick on him Maybe they don't know the Lord yet Maybe they do know the Lord, but they just feel that the heavy hand of God is upon them Shouldn't they be able to come to the church and we put a cooling shadow over them We give them a place of protection if they feel like they're an outcast we don't betray them No, we give them a place of protection and refuge That's what Isaiah wanted Judah to be Now take a look here It's a little bit confusing because in verse 4 he shifts gears real suddenly again look at it again verses 4 and 5 He says let my outcasts dwell with you Oh Moab Be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler for the extortioner is at an end Devastation ceases the oppressors are consumed out of the land and mercy the throne will be established and one will sit on it in truth in the tabernacle of David Judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness Now again, this is a sudden and a curious change of focus I Think sometimes the best way to think of the prophets is in a very cinematic way It's like a Bergman movie Sudden shifts of scene where at the one hand he's looking at the refugees Flooding forth from Moab and then his gaze turns very quickly and now he's looking at the rulers of Judah and he pleads with them To take in the refugees now what Isaiah does is it seems that he lifts his gaze very high and he looks off into The distance at a time when Moab itself will receive refugees from Judah Say what? Well, that's what he's saying here. Look at verse 4 Let my outcasts write the Lord saying let my outcasts dwell with you Oh Moab God is asking the Moabites to receive his people.

Well, when will that happen some commentators? I would agree with them Think that this is a end times prophecy of how Moab will be a place of refuge for the Jewish people Escaping the fury of the Antichrist in the Great Tribulation after the abomination of desolation the Bible says that is going to come upon the world a charismatic political economic Social Superman known as the Antichrist and he's going to rule the world Willingly the world will follow him because he'll seem to have all the answers and in particular the Jewish people Either in a formal religious way or maybe just in a political and economic way They're going to embrace this man as their Messiah and he'll do a lot of good for them but then in the midst of the last seven year period that God has appointed for business as usual on this planet earth in the midst of it that Political leader which is known in the Bible as the Antichrist. Believe me. That's not going to be on his business card If you know what I mean But he's known in the Bible as the Antichrist as most many other titles that political and and social and an economic Superman he will turn on the Jewish people with a fury and the Bible says that the Jewish people will have to scatter and flee from Israel and Where will they head out? Well, one of the places where they will flee to will be Moab Israel fleeing from the fury of the Antichrist will find refuge in places like Moab and they will be look at it here in verse 5 Excuse me verse 4 they will be protected from the face of the spoiler until devastation ceases and the oppressors are consumed out of the land and in those end times Verse 5 would be fulfilled the throne of the Messiah will be established and the Messiah himself will sit on the throne One will sit on it in truth in the tabernacle of David.

His reign is going to be wonderful He'll be judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness Isn't it remarkable the many Variated visions of Isaiah here. He sees the refugees He sees the rulers of Judah and then he looks distant to the end times and then now He looks back at the refugees in verse 6 we have heard the pride of Moab He is very proud His haughtiness and his pride in his wrath, but his lies shall not

be so therefore Moab shall wail for Moab Everyone shall wail for the foundations of Kier Heresheth. You shall mourn Surely they are stricken for the fields of Heshbon language and the vine of Sidma The Lords of the nations have broken down its choice plants Which have reached a jazz ear and have wandered through the wilderness her branches are stretched out They are gone over the sea now interestingly in This whole prophecy of Isaiah against Moab This is the only place where her sin is described and it's significant that the sin of Moab was pride You know why it's significant that it was Because as far as the nation's go Moab was Bath water Hick town Right friends.

They weren't even as a mighty nation as Israel was This is like, you know Luxembourg, you know flexing its muscle or some smaller, you know less politically important Central American nation God comes to them and says I'm rebuking you because of your pride now when God comes to the Babylonians Empire we say aha. Yes rebuke them for their pride Lord. God comes to the Assyrian Empire Yes, Lord rebuke them for their pride.

But do you realize that pride can exist in pretty small packages? You don't have to be exalted to a high place to have pride in your life No, my friends Pride can be just as consuming with the small as it can be with the great Moab's relative insignificance did not make them immune to pride That was their sin So the pride is also referred to in the prophecy of judgment that we saw in Jeremiah chapter 48 God would judge the proud nation so that Moab shall wail for Moab the Moabites took great pride in their vineyards but if you notice It says here in verse 8 that God's going to take those beautiful vineyards of Moab and trample them down He's going to use the Lords of the nations To break them down and to destroy everything that Moab took pride in So verse 9 you see the sorrow of the prophets heart Therefore I will bewail the vine of Sidma with the weeping of Jazeera. I will drench you with my tears Oh Heshbon and Elia for battle cries have fallen over your summer fruits and your harvest gladness is taken away and shouting Excuse me and joy from the plentiful field in the vineyards. There will be no stinging nor will they be shouting No treaders will tread out the wine in their presses.

I've made their shouting cease Therefore my heart shall resound like a harp for Moab and my inner being for Keir HaRez It shall be or it shall come to pass When it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place that he will come to a sanctuary to pray But he will not prevail You see the broken heart of Isaiah in the midst of this call to judgment Upon Moab as he prophesies of this coming judgment. He's not happy He's not pleased that judgments coming upon a rival nation as far as he's concerned Gladness is taken away. It's like he sees those people trampling out the grapes in the vineyards a beautiful time Everybody's rejoicing at the time of the harvest Isaiah looks don't be happy Moab's being judged There's another group of their gladness.

It's a joyful day. I say let's don't be happy Moab is being judged Same time Isaiah knows that Moab is looking in the wrong places for answers at the end of verse 12 It says that they're looking for in the high places. They're looking for it in the sanctuaries of their gods But they will not prevail Isaiah knew the pain of seeing calamity come and watching people turn to the wrong Places in the midst of their destructions, you know that pain in your life.

I Mean you see somebody else going through a bad time and They're looking to the wrong place They're going up to a high place They're going up to the sanctuary of their God Maybe it's a bar. Maybe it's a Group of friends that are giving them ungodly counsel. Maybe it's just the the inner recesses of their own heart And they're not seeking the Lord Painful isn't that's the pain Isaiah Means you understand the the heart that Isaiah has here Moab was a rival nation a pagan nation yet.

He did not rejoice In their judgment, you don't get that feeling with everybody when Isaiah is talking about the judgment of God upon the Babylonians It's almost like you get the feeling. Yeah, come on Lord bring it to him Not the Moabites No, this was the same attitude Jesus had when he wept for Jerusalem. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 23 Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem The one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her how often I wanted to gather your children together as a hen Gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing See your house has left you desolate for I say to you shall see me no more till you say Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord when Jesus saw the desolation that was to come upon the city that Rejected him.

He didn't rejoice Here's my question for you glow And the judgment that comes upon other people sometimes it's easy to do. You know you Something he says good They deserve it good for them. Yeah You like putting another notch in your Bible or something Don't You know, just let the Lord take care of all that stuff and Even when you do let the Lord take care of it Don't rejoice in it.

Is there a single person in this room? Who wants to be judged by the Lord as they deserve for their sin not me, I Don't know anybody in this room does that I I want you to come on up front after service I want you to pray for me If there's a single person in here who wants to be judged as they deserve for their sin No friends No, God has been merciful for us And we need to ask him to be merciful Well verse 13 and 14. This is the word which the Lord has spoken concerning Moab since that time But now the Lord has spoken saying within three years as the years are hired man The glory of Moab will be despised with all that great multitude and the remnant will be very small and feeble Now Isaiah speaking for the Lord announces that judgments going to come upon Moab in this time period The judgments going to humble Moab Their glory will be despised and we don't know the exact date of Isaiah's prophecies We can't know for sure when and how exactly it was fulfilled but God was giving this three-year period of time undoubtedly to give the Moabites a chance to repent and To give the nation of Israel the opportunity to have their hearts softened towards the Moabites That finishes Isaiah chapters 15 and 16 which dealt with the burden against the Moabites But now in chapter 17, we have the burden against Damascus Now if you notice it, it says that right there Isaiah 17 1 the burden against Damascus now Damascus is one of the great cities of the ancient world it was the capital of the ancient nation and by my by the way, the modern nation as well of Syria and Syria is positioned to the immediate Northeast of Israel and the northern tribes around the Sea of Galilee had constant contact and interaction with Syria and so when he says The burden against Damascus. It's almost like if God were to say the burden against, Washington DC, you'd know that he's speaking of America because Washington DC is our capital Well, it's the same thing Damascus is the capital of Syria now as we go on you're going to see an interesting twist on this But let's take a look as we make it through here verse 1 the burden against Damascus Behold Damascus will cease from being a city and it will be a ruinous heap The cities of Aurora forsaken it will be for flocks which lie down and no one will make them afraid The fortress also will cease from Ephraim the kingdom from Damascus and the remnant of Syria They will be as the glory of the children of Israel says the Lord of hosts So you read that you go? Wow, that's pretty radical Damascus is going to cease from being a city and Damascus was one of the most beautiful cities in the ancient world But the coming judgment of the Assyrians would reduce it to a heap of ruins and it would be rebuilt It would be inhabited again The great destruction great desolation was going to come upon the Syrian capital of Damascus now.

I Don't know if you remember this from previous chapters in the book of Isaiah But current in the day of Isaiah There was a confederation Between Isaiah between Isaiah boy. I'm about to get really mixed up in the terms of my head. Let me be careful here between Syria and Israel Now let me go back and review

this Both for the sake of repetition and for the sake when some of you this might be new information When Israel came when the people of Israel the Jewish people came from Egypt into the Promised Land They were one United Nations and for 400 years.

They lived together without any King It was the time of the judges and God would just raise up different leaders from time to time then Through a lot of different circumstances some of them godly some of them not so godly They established Kings the first king of Israel was Saul the second king of Israel was David The third king of Israel was Solomon between Saul David and Solomon that was a reign of Israel for more than a hundred years But after the reign of Solomon there was a civil war and the Jewish people divided into two nations the Northern nation of Israel and the southern kingdom I should say of Judah and so he had Judah to the south Israel to the north the ten northern tribes Confederated together and were the northern kingdom of Israel the two southern tribes Confederated together and were the southern kingdom of Judah simple enough. Oh here's the point of it the northern kingdom of Israel and Syria Joined together in alliance against the southern kingdom of Judah now, that's not right. That's not good So what's interesting in this is as God gives this prophecy against Syria? He lumps in the northern kingdom of Israel with them.

You want me to show it to you? Sure look at verse 4 and it shall come to pass that the glory of Jacob will wane Jacob that's Israel, right and The fatness of his flesh will grow lean it shall be when the harvester gathers the grain and reaps the head with his arms And it shall be as he who gathers heads of grain in the valley of Rephaim Yet the gleanings of grapes Will be left in it like the shaking of an olive tree two or three olives at the top of the uppermost bow Four or five and its most fruitful branches says the Lord God of Israel Now what he's doing in verses 4 5 & 6 is explaining something that he mentioned back there in verse 3 Did you notice it in verse 3?

He says the fortress also will cease from Ephraim all right. Here's another thing to educate you to help you understand the prophet a little bit better Ephraim is another name for the northern kingdom of Israel the tribe of Ephraim was one of the twelve tribes of Israel and Ephraim was the dominant tribe in the northern kingdom of Israel So sometimes God would refer to the northern kingdom as Ephraim So when you read Ephraim in the prophet Isaiah say to yourself northern kingdom of Israel So the judgment is coming upon Syria and the northern king of Israel look at it verse 3 the fortresses of The fortresses will also cease from Ephraim the kingdom from Damascus and the remnant of Syria There will be as the glory of the children of Israel says the Lord of hosts and in that day It was a kind of pass at the glory of Jacob away God's judgment is coming upon both Syria and Israel Now before I get on to verse 7 I think it's Interesting to to speak about something and that's the the political situation today with Israel and Syria You know, there's a nation of Israel today and there's a nation of Syria today And the nation of Syria is headed up by one of the true Psychopaths on the world scene today a guy named Hassan and wow, this guy is a is a brutal terrorist guy and He is at war with Israel constantly.

His nation is in a lot of trouble Economically politically, but he clings to power Now what's interesting is that the interaction between Syria and Israel is a potential hotspot for future conflict you see at one time Syria occupied an area known as the Golan Heights if You think on your Bible map and maybe you have a Bible map in your Bible somewhere If you want to turn to it, you could see where the Sea of Galilee is north of the Sea of Galilee is a long broad plateau and that's the Golan Heights Now if you know anything about military strategy high ground is strategic ground If you hold the high ground militarily, you're always in a superior position Because you can attack and defend high ground much easier than low ground If you're on high ground, you can send mortars and artillery fire down into low ground very very easily Well, that's

exactly what the Syrians did they held this area known as the Golan Heights and they would send down mortar fire and rocket fire and artillery shells into the Israeli villages and cities all around the Sea of Galilee constantly this really got tired of it then one day it's 1960s 1970s.

There was a great war between Israel and Syria and when the Syrians attacked the Israelis just plowed back and pushed the Syrians off the Golan Heights Now if you go on a tour of Israel You got to go on the bus ride through the Golan Heights Now what you see is this amazing? Sloping plateau and when you're up on it and when we're not talking about a small patch of land We're talking about a very substantial, you know region here You see what an absolutely strategic piece of ground This is militarily and you know what the Syrians say the Syrians say hey, that's our land. Give it back Israelis say not on your life If we give this back to you, you're just gonna show us again. You might say well What are the Israelis doing with that land? Nothing.

You want to know why because there's landmines all over it You can't go hardly anywhere on the Golan Heights Everything's very closely restricted and is that you get off the road you start wandering that you'll get blown up by a landmine because the Syrians buried tons of landmines Now when the Israelis conquered the Golan Heights, there's all these fascinating fascinating stories of intelligence work and stuff behind the scenes the Israelis had some incredible moles planted in the Syrian intelligence community and in the military community and they told them to do things like okay put this put your artillery placements behind the eucalyptus trees because that'll protect them So when the Israelis started attacking on that they just shot for all the eucalyptus trees and they knew where all the artillery placements were and all this kind of brilliant intrigue and as a remarkable victory the hand of the Lord was obviously upon the the Israelis But it was also an incredible victory just from a military intelligence standpoint Now the Israelis are adamant that they'll never get back that Golan Heights Because it's necessary for their security in the meantime Syria is fighting Israel through terrorism and through their support of militia groups in Lebanon Syria dreams of the division of a greater Syria which encompasses Lebanon and most of northern Israel powerful vision friends keep your eye on that part of the world because this interaction between Syria and Israel it's a very very important dynamic to the present day.

Well This judgment was coming upon the northern kingdom of Israel and upon Syria that had aligned themselves together against Judah Look at verse 7 now of Isaiah 17 It says in that day a man will look to his maker and his eye will have respect for the Holy One of Israel He will not look to the altars the works of his hands He will not respect what his fingers have made nor the wooden images nor the incense altars and that day his strong cities will be As a forsaken bow and an uppermost branch Which they left because of the children of Israel and there will be desolation in the midst of such severe judgment Some will respond as they should with humble respect to God They'll turn their eyes away from the altars of vanity from the works of their hands God does that in time of judgment upon us, doesn't he?

He gets our attention away from the things that we turn our focus on wrongly and he says no I want you to look to me instead and even the strong cities that they had built those will be forsaken as well As a matter of fact, look at verse 10. This is very powerful stuff here He says because you've forgotten the God of your salvation and have not been mindful of the rock of your stronghold Therefore you will plant pleasant plants and set out foreign seedlings and the day you will make your plant to grow and in the morning You will make your seed to flourish but the harvest will be a heap of ruins in the day of grief and desperate sorrow Friends do you understand that one aspect of the Lord's judgment against Israel would be to bring their hard work to nothing They would work hard to plant and to grow crops both literally and figuratively, but the harvest would be a heap of ruins I'm saying that's a severe judgment of the Lord, isn't it?

When your hard work is fruitless This can be one of the most devastating aspects of the Lord's judgment Haggai chapter 1 verse 6 speaks of this work of the Lord He says you've sown much and bring in little you eat, but you do not have enough you drink But you're not filled with drink you clothe yourselves But no one is warm and he who earns wages earns wages to be put in a bag with holes You ever feel like that? Friends turn to the Lord Turn to the Lord seek him ask God Lord.

What do you want me to do? Am I on the wrong track? Is there something you want to humble me and is there some reward for repentance you want to deepen in my life Lord, what is it? How much better it is to be listening to Jesus and have our service directed and blessed by him Remember the Apostles the disciples there they were fishing all night Didn't catch anything Man, that's a drag It's a drag when you're fishing all night, and that's how you make your living. This wasn't just pleasure fishing This wasn't coming in on the charter boat with an empty, you know bag This was this is my bread and butter and I worked all night, and I didn't make anything They come in and they're tired and they're exhausted Then Jesus comes and says hey Peter Throw your net over there Don't you just love that from the Lord? It's like that's the last thing some fisherman wants to hear since some carpenters standing on the shore You know living a man you never fished a day in your life I've been fishing all night. You can't fish in the morning.

The sun's on the lake the fish go to deeper deeper water No, you fish at night. Don't you get it Jesus? You know Peter didn't do that. Okay, Lord I'll do what you say and he let the Lord direct his service and he had worked hard all night And it was good work, and it was hard work But it didn't amount to anything but when the Lord directed his service what he brought in such a catch They couldn't even contain it in the boats That's how much better it is to have the Lord direct her service And why did the Lord bring this judgment on Israel check it out here look at this And this is where you need to check your heart if you feel that you're in this place verse 10 Because you've forgotten the God of your salvation Now in one way this doesn't seem like a great sin at all does it? I mean after all why does God need us to remember him? You ever have somebody like a total stranger come up to you and say remember me It's like why should I remember you you know I mean, maybe it's just met him once a passing thing.

Well. I don't know why I remember you Maybe some people feel like that towards the Lord Some people's attitude towards the Lord is look I'll leave you alone. You leave me alone, right? Just whatever God I won't bug you you don't bug me Friends it's a sin to forget the God of your salvation.

You know why first of all it's a sin Because he made you He made you You didn't happen by chance you didn't come up from some monkey or some amoeba He made you you owe him He created you That's all there is to that's reason enough God has rights over us because he created us That's not all Friends it's not only that he's the God of your salvation If God has a claim to every human being who walks this earth because he created them How much more does God have a claim over his people whom he's redeemed and saved? Let me add to put it to you this way if you forget him you can forget about your salvation Don't forget the Lord. Don't put him on the back burner. Don't shuffle him off into some corner of your life Do you realize that Satan doesn't need to make us bank robbers or murderers to destroy us? It's quite enough Simply to make us forget You can forget because you're falling asleep spiritually you can forget because you don't have a your attention focus the right place You can forget because you're distracted.

Those are all reasons why you forget things in everyday life, right? You forget that while I was nodding off when they said that to me. That's why I forgot Or I wasn't paying attention. That's why I forgot or or I was distracted.

That's why I forgot Friends Satan doesn't care how he does it, but he wants you to forget the God of your salvation Want you to push him off into a corner? And don't do it You feel like you're in that place that the chastising hand of God is upon you you feel him spanking you so to speak Take that inventory of your heart and say am I forgetting the Lord my God remember what it says in the book of Proverbs That if you acknowledge him in all your ways He'll direct your path isn't that glorious promise. That's the opposite to forgetting him. You know look at verse 12 Here we shift gears again Woe to the multitude of many people who make a noise like the roar of the seas and to the rushing of the nations That make a rushing like a rushing of mighty waters the nations will rush like the Russians of many waters But God will rebuke them and they will flee far away and be chased like the chaff of the mountains before the wind like the Rolling thing before the whirlwind then behold it even tied trouble and before the morning.

He is no more This is the portion of those who plunder us and the lot of those who rob us Now in verses 12 13 and 14 again First in the beginning of chapter 17 the prophet puts his eyes on Syria Then he puts his eyes on Israel now he puts his eyes on the Assyrians who are going to bring the judgment against Syria in Israel and if I hope I haven't confused you so far Let's remember here. We're talking about three different nations the northern kingdom Israel, right? the nation to the northeast of them Syria, right and then the big Empire further to the east of Assyria That's a s s y r i a The us Syrians were the mighty Empire that we're going to come and judge them And you know what God says God says I'm going to take care of them, too. I'm going to judge them friends This is a comforting principle that even in the midst of judgment God shows mercy as bad as it was going to be for Israel It could have been worse and said God's going to allow it for a time Then he's going to rebuke the ones who are attacking Israel Israel was not going to be at the mercy of circumstances.

They were not going to be the mercy of their enemies They were going to be at the mercy of God And that's a comforting place to be Now finish up tonight with chapter 18 chapter 18 is short. You take a little look at it seven verses. I Think you should kind of gulp hard before we take a look here Let me read you what some of the commentators have said about Isaiah chapter 18 when I pause The Dutch commentator Bultma says to us this brief chapter is the most difficult one of all the 66 chapters of Isaiah Wolf says although the prophecy is a short one It probably ranks is the most obscure chapter in the entire section and Adam Clark says this is one of the most obscure prophecies in the whole book of Isaiah Let's get it on.

What's this talking about here Isaiah chapter 18? Woe to the land shadowed with buzzing wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia Which sends ambassadors by the sea each in vessels of reed on the waters? saying Let's just stop right there now This is a prophecy directed to Ethiopia, but I want you to notice something Look at Isaiah chapter Oh 13 verse 1 The burden against Babylon you see it Isaiah chapter 15 verse 1 the burden against Moab Isaiah chapter 17 verse 1 the burden against Damascus Do you notice how I say 18 one does not begin the burden against Ethiopia? That's because this is not a heavy pronouncement of judgment, but this is a word of God to the Ethiopian Now in the days of Isaiah Ethiopia was a major world power Not only because they covered a much more extensive ground than we see today Today that the ancient kingdom of Ethiopia or Cush as it's sometimes known in the Old Testament It encompasses what's modern-day Ethiopia and Somalia and the Sudan but not only that The Ethiopians at the time of Isaiah also ruled over the mighty kingdom of Egypt at that time the rulers of Egypt were an Ethiopian dynasty So when he talks about Ethiopia, he's including it and Egypt as a matter of fact though. We're not going to get to it tonight Isaiah chapter 19 look at it verse 1 the burden against Egypt that focuses more on Egypt But here it's almost as if in chapter 18. He has Ethiopian their whole picture in mind So he refers to this He says shadowed with buzzing wings in verse 1 there the Nile Valley is famous

for its many whirring insects And then says which sends ambassadors by the sea you see the scene pictures Ethiopian ambassadors who come to make an alliance with Judah and other nations why okay now get the picture here You got the mighty Empire of Assyria, right? And then you have the other world player at the time was Ethiopia slash Egypt the two of them together So, you know what's happening here at this time the Assyrians have power Over Judah and Israel and all the nations in that area Do you know what the ambassadors from Ethiopia are trying to convince them to do? Hey, why don't you rebel against the Assyrians and come on over to our side? Join us You know how it was during the Cold War when you had the United States and the Soviet Union and then all these other little countries caught in the middle Aligning on either side of the that's what's going on here.

The two superpowers are Ethiopia slash Egypt and the Assyrians and the people of God are caught in the middle right between the two So what does it say here verse 2? Which sends ambassadors by the sea even in vessels of reed on the water saying go swift Messengers to a nation tall and smooth and skin to the people terrible from the beginning onward a nation Powerful and treading down whose lands rivers divide now it seems that as the Ethiopian ambassadors invite Judah to rebel against the Assyrians. They're asking Judah to send messengers back to Ethiopia The Ethiopian ambassadors come to Judah they say send messengers back to our land The land as it says a nation tall and smooth of skin a nation powerful Send them back with news that you want to align yourselves with us Not with the Assyrians So what does the Lord say to this? This is an offer of protection. This is an offer of Alliance.

Come we will help you Come we'll join you join with us against the Assyrians. That's what the Ethiopian ambassadors say And what does the Lord say look at verse 3 the Lord says? No, thank you all the inhabitants of the world and the dwellers on the earth When he lifts up a banner on the mountains you see it and when he blows a trumpet you hear it For so the Lord said to me I will take my rest and I will look for my dwelling place like clear heat and sunshine like a cloud of dew in the Harvest for before the harvest when the bud is perfect and the sour grape is ripening in the flower He will both cut off the sprigs with the pruning hooks and take away and cut down the branches They will left to be together for the mountain birds of prey and for the beasts of the earth The birds of prey will summer on them and the beasts of the earth will winter on them. I Know that's a little obscure But let me just kind of give you the sense of it what the Lord's telling the Ethiopian ambassadors, basically No, thank you When I want an army to protect my people I can call it myself.

I can raise up a banner I can send out a trumpet to the nation's as a matter of fact I can put the hurt on a Syria so bad that their corpses will litter the land and be Bird food for the prey for the birds of prey and it'll be Food for the wild beasts to come and eat on all winter long Ethiopians, no, thank you. I don't need your help Now what's interesting to me in this is that as the Lord God rejects the alliance with Ethiopia, it's almost as if the Lord isn't sore at them Judgment against the Ethiopians. It's almost like the Lord's just saying no.

Thanks. I Don't need it It's almost as if the Ethiopians are offering well-intentioned but harmful help The Lord says no we can do it here. I can raise up an army again matter of fact He says instead of us sending you ambassadors Why don't you send us some verse 7 in that time a present will be brought to the Lord of hosts from the people tall and smooth of skin and from a people terrible from the beginning onward a nation powerful and treading down whose land the rivers divide to the Place of the name of the Lord of hosts to Mount Zion.

The Lord says to the Ethiopians No, you know what you guys are going to bring us tribute You guys are going to come to us for a help come to us For what we can give you instead of us coming to what you can give us You know, it was fulfilled this prophecy was fulfilled, you know when it was fulfilled I'll give you one instance isn't it interesting that in the book of Acts one of the international people that come to faith in Jesus Christ is an Ethiopian eunuch Who came to Zion to worship and was led to Jesus Christ through the efforts of Philip the Evangelist and when he went back home Do you know what he did? He was on fire and he spread the gospel and in the second and third centuries of the church, especially there was a strong flourishing church in Ethiopia Which the Christian presence continues to this day My friends the Lord knows how to bring it back and he said to you the Ethiopians I know you're offering a shelter an alliance against these hearings We don't need it, but there's going to come a day when you're going to come to us for something we can give you That's the riches of the Messiah and the glory of the gospel Yeah Let me wrap this up Let's try to draw away three things. I know that a night like tonight your heads just kind of whoa. Whoa Moab Syria Damascus Ethiopia whoa, whoa Let's just try to remember three things, right? We saw prophecies against Moab Against Syria and Israel and against Ethiopia All right.

Let's let's take one thing from each one of them from the prophecy against Moab. Let's remember this To be merciful to those who are under the heavy hand of God Don't add to their misery Look for a way to relieve it Number two from the prophecy against Syria and Israel, you know, it struck me the passage on not forgetting the Lord How easy it is for us, especially when things are going good Forget the Lord friends. Let's not forget the Lord Then finally from the passage dealing with the Ethiopians God knows how to take care of himself Maybe the Ethiopians just wanted to help but God said don't need it.

I Know how to take care of myself. We don't have to fear for the Lord's cause. He knows how to take care of himself Thank you, Jesus.

He does not need me to defend him. I just got to get out of the way He does more than an adequate job of himself So let's take those things away from Moab and Syria and Ethiopia and next week we pick it up against Egypt now No Maybe we'll get into Babylon too as we'll see what the Lord has to say to the nations through the prophet Isaiah. Let's pray

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