

The Terrifying Prophecy against Babylon & Arabia

Scripture: Isaiah 21:1-17

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I. Historical Background and Biblical Context

Isaiah chapter 21 is a set of judgments proclaimed against the Gentile nations surrounding Judah at that time. The judgments of Babylon, Edom, and Arabia are covered in this chapter. Isaiah called out the sin of doomed pagan nations around Israel. Despite its tone of doom and judgment, this chapter gives a strong reminder of God's ultimate sovereignty over all nations. It encourages us to remain faithful and trust in God's divine plan, even when faced with distressing circumstances. It reassures us that God is in complete control, and His will is unfolding as He deems best. The prophet is speaking these words to these nations as a warning of the coming judgment so they will flee to Him and be saved. There is no other place to take refuge but in the Lord. Babylon was no refuge for the people. Jesus is the refuge and shelter. Proverbs 16:10, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run to it and we are safe." If we stand under the refuge of the shed blood of Jesus, we will be free from sin. The real danger is the wrath of God, the judgment of God. God has, by His grace, place a safe haven, a refuge called Jesus Christ. He is also speaking to the Jewish people to put their trust in Him and not these other nations. His message was not only to be a warning but of comfort also to His people. There is no other place to take refuge but in the Lord.

II. The Lesson: "The Terrifying Prophecy against Babylon & Arabia" Isaiah 21: 1-17

We had one oracle of Babylon earlier in Isaiah 13. Here in chapter 21, we have another oracle of Babylon's fall. The emphasis in chapter 13 was more on the end times when the final world power, referred to as Babylon would be destroyed. Here in chapter 21 the focus is on the

fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians around 538 B.C. when the people of Judah were being held captive in Babylon. God foretold Babylon's fall again and again through various prophecies so that His people might not be terrified at their fate when they were prisoners in Babylon. God wanted to give His people hope to hang on when they were going through great misery.

1. **vv. 1-4: A Dire Vision**

In this chapter, we have a prophecy of sad times coming, and heavy burdens. Isaiah received a burdensome vision about Babylon. He witnessed a fierce vision of the suffering would one day be experienced in Babylon. The people were attempted to trust in Babylon as an ally but Isaiah called it "the desert of the sea", that it should be destroyed by the Medes and Persians with a terrible destruction. Babylon was about to face the whirlwind of God's judgment. Babylon was going to be betrayed by its allies. In verse 2, "a dire vision has been shown to me: the traitor betrays, the looter takes loot. Elam attack! Media, lay siege! I will bring to end all the groaning she caused." Babylon's great empire was going to fall. If you are faithful to your calling, your ministry will not be easy. Isaiah was distressed as he saw what God was doing in the world. It was painful for him to give birth to his message. He stated the vision filled his body with pain. Pains had taken hold of him. They were like the pains of a woman having a baby. He is overwhelmed at the destruction of the people who exiled the Jews. He sees the vision of them getting destroyed. God takes no pleasure in bringing judgment on His people. We serve a compassionate God. We know Him as a just, good, faithful, merciful, holy, gracious, self-sufficient, and sovereign God. In the face of injustice, a just God casts judgment. Confronted by unholiness, a holy God responds. Judgment and wrath are not who God is; they are necessary responses of a holy and just God to the injustice of this fallen world.

2. **vv. 5-10. The Watchman's Report**

These verses take us to Daniel 5:1-6. Verse 5 describes what will be going on in the city of Babylon even as the enemy camps outside their gates. The king, Belshazzar, will be hosting a banquet. The king orders the guards to keep watch in the watchtowers while the guests eat and drink securely and make merry; and if, any alarm should be given, they would arise and put on their shields and be ready to give the enemy a warm reception. The Lord, in this vision to Isaiah showed the prophet the watchman set in his watch tower near the palace. This watchman here saw horsemen approaching and riding in a long line two abreast. He then saw other riders on donkeys, which were much in use among the Persians, and other riders on camels, which were likewise much in use among the Medes. The donkeys and camels signify the two nations combined against Babylon. The lookout continually manning their post see the riders and one of them called out that Babylon is fallen, and all her false gods have been shattered to the ground. Idolatry was a major factor in her destruction. Isaiah tells the people that this is the vision he was given from God. He speaks "O my threshed people, and my afflicted of the threshing floor!"

The church today is God's threshing floor. True believers are the wheat of God's threshing floor. Hypocrites are the chaff and straw. The wheat and chaff are now mixed together but there will be a finally and forever separated soon and very soon.

Isaiah assurance of the truth that God had given to him, upon which they could build their hopes were, "What I have heard for the Lord of hosts, The God of Israel, I have made known to you." The Lord of hosts, the Commander of the armies Who is gracious, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness have spoken. If God had said it, it will come to pass.

3. **vv. 11-12. The Prophecy against Edom**

This prophecy concerning Dumah is very short and not easily understood. We have what appears to be an Edomite calling to the watchman, who is Isaiah. The someone who called out of Seir (a

mountainous region of Edom) was more concerned for the public welfare than were the rest of the people. Isaiah has a vision of a man from Sier who wants a prophet to inform and instruct them. The question was asked twice, "What is left of the night?" The right person was asked because it was the watchman's responsibility to stay alert and to know what was going on. The watchman is awake when others are asleep. God's prophets and messengers are appointed to be watchmen. We must stay alert and on guard. We must work while it is day for night cometh that no man can work. We must stay awake for Jesus' coming will be as a thief in the night.

4. **vv. 13-17**. **The Prophecy of Arabia**

Arabia was a large country, that lay eastward and southward of the land of Canaan. Much of this was possessed by the descendants of Abraham. The Dedanites mentioned in verse 13 were descended from Dedan. The inhabitants of Tema and Kedar descended from Ishmael, Abraham's eldest son by the concubine, Hagar (Genesis 25:3, 13, 15). A destroying army will descend on them with a drawn sword, with a ready bent bow, and with all the grief of war. The poor country people would be forced to flee for shelter wherever they could find it. The caravans of the Dedanites provided the people of Tema with water and bread without them even asking for it.

In verse 16, we see that all the glory of Kedar will soon vanish away. They will be driven away by the enemy. Their archers, instead of defeating the enemy, will fall themselves and there will only be a few of these mighty men left. No matter how good they were, neither the skill of the archers nor the courage of mighty men can protect the people from the judgments of God when they come. All of this will happen in a short time. Within one year this judgment will come upon Kedar. Isaiah closes in verse 17 by saying this is going to happen because God says it is going to happen. Everything that God tells us that is going to happen will happen whether one believe it or not. God will right all wrongs. God's justice will prevail. Christ will set up a kingdom that will consist of peace, righteousness, and justice.

III. Conclusion

Some things that will help us to stay alert and watchful is as follows:

- a. Renew our minds daily in the Word of God.
- b. Renew our hearts daily in prayer.
- c. Clothe ourselves daily in the whole armor of God.
- d. Do not forsake meeting together to worship God and fellowship with other believers.

All man's effort to create security is a vain effort. Even if our barns are full, life is fragile and at any moment, everything can be taken away – hang on loosely with the things of this world and use them for God's purpose. We must stay on guard, keeping Jesus, not the world, as our highest goal. God's Word lets us know that only Jesus, His love, His Spirit, and His promise is our Hope. Let's set our minds and our hearts on things above. His return is our blessed hope. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus's blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus's name. On Christ, the Solid Rock, I stand – all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand. Come quickly Lord Jesus and deliver us from all evils.