

## Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

### Bible Study Notes: Isaiah Chapter 21 - 23

3/19/14

#### Chapter 21 Study Notes

##### A Prophecy Against Babylon - Verses 1-10

*A prophecy against the Desert by the Sea: Like whirlwinds sweeping through the southland, an invader comes from the desert, from a land of terror. <sup>2</sup> A dire vision has been shown to me: The traitor betrays, the looter takes loot. Elam, attack! Media, lay siege! I will bring to an end all the groaning she caused. <sup>3</sup> At this my body is racked with pain, pangs seize me, like those of a woman in labor; I am staggered by what I hear, I am bewildered by what I see. <sup>4</sup> My heart falters, fear makes me tremble; the twilight I longed for has become a horror to me. <sup>5</sup> They set the tables, they spread the rugs, they eat, they drink! Get up, you officers, oil the shields! <sup>6</sup> This is what the Lord says to me: "Go, post a lookout and have him report what he sees. <sup>7</sup> When he sees chariots with teams of horses, riders on donkeys or riders on camels, let him be alert, fully alert." <sup>8</sup> And the lookout shouted, "Day after day, my lord, I stand on the watchtower; every night I stay at my post. <sup>9</sup> Look, here comes a man in a chariot with a team of horses. And he gives back the answer: 'Babylon has fallen, has fallen! All the images of its gods lie shattered on the ground!'" <sup>10</sup> My people who are crushed on the threshing floor, I tell you what I have heard from the LORD Almighty, from the God of Israel.*

##### ISAIAS 21:1

Some scholars say this prophecy was fulfilled at Babylon's fall in 539 B.C. (see Daniel 5). But others say this was a prophecy of Babylon's revolt against Assyria around 700 B.C.

##### ISAIAS 21:5

If the prophecy refers to the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C., this may picture the feast in Daniel 5.

##### ISAIAS 21:6, 7

Watchmen on the city walls often appear in prophetic visions of destruction. They are the first to see trouble coming. The prophet Habakkuk was a watchman (Habakkuk 2:1). The vision of the chariots and warriors could represent the Medes and Persians attacking Babylon in 539 B.C.

##### ISAIAS 21:8, 9

Babylon was not only a great and powerful city, it was also filled with horrible sin (idolatry, witchcraft, and temple prostitution). Babylon was, and remains, a symbol of all that stands against God. Despite all its glory and power, Babylon would be destroyed, along with all its idols. They would give no help in time of trouble.

##### ISAIAS 21:10

Threshing and winnowing were two steps in ancient Israel's farming process. The heads of wheat (often used to symbolize Israel) were first trampled to break open the seeds and expose the valued grain inside (threshing). The seeds were then thrown into the air, and the worthless chaff blew away while the grain fell back to the ground (winnowing). Israel would experience this same kind of process: The sinful, rebellious people (worthless chaff) would be taken away, but God would keep the good "grain" to replenish Israel.

## **A Prophecy Against Edom – Verses 11-12**

*<sup>11</sup> A prophecy against Dumah: Someone calls to me from Seir, "Watchman, what is left of the night? Watchman, what is left of the night?"<sup>12</sup> The watchman replies, "Morning is coming, but also the night. If you would ask, then ask; and come back yet again."*

ISAIAH 21:11

Edom had been a constant enemy of God's people. It rejoiced when Israel fell to the Assyrians, and this sealed Edom's doom (34:8ff; 63:4). Seir was another name for Edom because the hill country of Seir was given to Esau and his descendants (see Joshua 24:4). Obadiah foretells, in great detail, the destruction of Edom.

## **A Prophecy Against Arabia – Verses 13-16**

*<sup>13</sup> A prophecy against Arabia: You caravans of Dedanites, who camp in the thickets of Arabia, <sup>14</sup> bring water for the thirsty; you who live in Tema, bring food for the fugitives. <sup>15</sup> They flee from the sword, from the drawn sword, from the bent bow and from the heat of battle. <sup>16</sup> This is what the Lord says to me: "Within one year, as a servant bound by contract would count it, all the splendor of Kedar will come to an end. <sup>17</sup> The survivors of the archers, the warriors of Kedar, will be few." The LORD, the God of Israel, has spoken.*

ISAIAH 21:13

The places listed here are all in Arabia. They are border cities that controlled the trade routes throughout the land. This is Isaiah's prediction of disaster.

# **Chapter 22 Study Notes**

## **A Prophecy Against Jerusalem – Verses 1-25**

*<sup>1</sup> An oracle concerning the Valley of Vision: What troubles you now, that you have all gone up on the roofs, <sup>2</sup> O town full of commotion, O city of tumult and revelry? Your slain were not killed by the sword, nor did they die in battle. <sup>3</sup> All your leaders have fled together; they have been captured without using the bow. All you who were caught were taken prisoner together, having fled while the enemy was still far away. <sup>4</sup> Therefore I said, "Turn away from me; let me weep bitterly. Do not try to console me over the destruction of my people." <sup>5</sup> The Lord, the LORD Almighty, has a day of tumult and trampling and terror in the Valley of Vision, a day of battering down walls and of crying out to the mountains. <sup>6</sup> Elam takes up the quiver, with her charioteers and horses; Kiruncovers the shield. <sup>7</sup> Your choicest valleys are full of chariots, and horsemen are posted at the city gates; <sup>8</sup> the defenses of Judah are stripped away. And you looked in that day to the weapons in the Palace of the Forest; <sup>9</sup> you saw that the City of David had many breaches in its defenses; you stored up water in the Lower Pool. <sup>10</sup> You counted the buildings in Jerusalem and tore down houses to strengthen the wall. <sup>11</sup> You built a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the Old Pool, but you did not look to the One who made it, or have regard for the One who planned it long ago. <sup>12</sup> The Lord, the LORD Almighty, called you on that day to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth. <sup>13</sup> But see, there is joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine! "Let us eat and drink," you say, "for tomorrow we die!" <sup>14</sup> The LORD Almighty has revealed this in my hearing: "Till your dying day this sin will not be atoned for," says the Lord, the LORD*

*Almighty. 15 This is what the Lord, the LORD Almighty, says: "Go, say to this steward, to Shebna, who is in charge of the palace: 16 What are you doing here and who gave you permission to cut out a grave for yourself here, hewing your grave on the height and chiseling your resting place in the rock? 17 "Beware, the LORD is about to take firm hold of you and hurl you away, O you mighty man. 18 He will roll you up tightly like a ball and throw you into a large country. There you will die and there your splendid chariots will remain-- you disgrace to your master's house! 19 I will depose you from your office, and you will be ousted from your position. 20 "In that day I will summon my servant, Eliakim son of Hilkiah. 21 I will clothe him with your robe and fasten your sash around him and hand your authority over to him. He will be a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. 22 I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. 23 I will drive him like a peg into a firm place; he will be a seat of honor for the house of his father. 24 All the glory of his family will hang on him: its offspring and offshoots--all its lesser vessels, from the bowls to all the jars. 25 "In that day," declares the LORD Almighty, "the peg driven into the firm place will give way; it will be sheared off and will fall, and the load hanging on it will be cut down." The LORD has spoken.*

### ISAIAH 22:1-13

"The Valley of Vision" refers to the city of Jerusalem, where God revealed himself. Jerusalem would be attacked unless God's people returned to him. Instead, they used every means of protection possible except asking God for help. They wanted to trust in their ingenuity, their weapons, and even their pagan neighbors (see 2 Chronicles 32 for the description of a siege of Jerusalem).

## Chapter 23 Study Notes

**A Prophecy Against Tyre – Verses 1-18** *1 An oracle concerning Tyre: Wail, O ships of Tarshish! For Tyre is destroyed and left without house or harbor. From the land of Cyprus word has come to them. 2 Be silent, you people of the island and you merchants of Sidon, whom the seafarers have enriched. 3 On the great waters came the grain of the Shihor; the harvest of the Nile was the revenue of Tyre, and she became the marketplace of the nations. 4 Be ashamed, O Sidon, and you, O fortress of the sea, for the sea has spoken: "I have neither been in labor nor given birth; I have neither reared sons nor brought up daughters. 5 When word comes to Egypt, they will be in anguish at the report from Tyre. 6 Cross over to Tarshish; wail, you people of the island. 7 Is this your city of revelry, the old, old city, whose feet have taken her to settle in far-off lands? 8 Who planned this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns, whose merchants are princes, whose traders are renowned in the earth? 9 The LORD Almighty planned it, to bring low the pride of all glory and to humble all who are renowned on the earth. 10 Till your land as along the Nile, O Daughter of Tarshish, for you no longer have a harbor. 11 The LORD has stretched out his hand over the sea and made its kingdoms tremble. He has given an order concerning Phoenicia that her fortresses be destroyed. 12 He said, "No more of your reveling, O Virgin Daughter of Sidon, now crushed! "Up, cross over to Cyprus; even there you will find no rest." 13 Look at the land of the Babylonians, this people that is now of no account! The Assyrians have made it a place for desert creatures; they raised up their siege towers, they stripped its fortresses bare and turned it into a ruin. 14 Wail, you ships of Tarshish; your fortress is destroyed! 15 At that time Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, the span of a king's life. But at the end of these seventy years, it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the prostitute: 16 "Take up a harp, walk through the city, O prostitute forgotten; play the harp well, sing many a song, so that you will be remembered." 17 At the end of seventy years, the LORD will deal with Tyre. She will return to her hire as a prostitute and will ply her trade with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth. 18 Yet her profit and her earnings will be set apart for the LORD; they will not be stored up or hoarded. Her profits will go to those who live before the LORD, for abundant food and fine clothes.*

#### ISAIAH 22:13, 14

The people said, "Let's eat, drink, and be merry," because they had given up hope. Attacked on every side (22:7), they should have repented (22:12), but they chose to feast instead. The root problem was that Judah did not trust God's power or his promises (see 56:12; 1 Corinthians 15:32). Today we still see people living without hope. There are two common responses to hopelessness: despair and self-indulgence. But we need not act as if we had no hope. As we face difficulties, our proper response should be to trust God and his promises.

#### ISAIAH 22:15-25

Shebna, a high court steward or official, was just as materialistic as the rest of the people in Jerusalem (22:13). He may have been in the group favoring an alliance with foreigners, thus ignoring Isaiah's advice. The Lord revealed that Shebna would lose his position and be replaced by Eliakim (22:20). Eliakim would be the "tent stake" driven firmly in place (22:23). Unfortunately, Eliakim too would fall (22:25).

#### ISAIAH 23:1FF

Isaiah's prophecies against other nations began in the east with Babylon (chapter 13) and ended in the west with Tyre in Phoenicia. Tyre was one of the most famous cities of the ancient world. A major trading center with a large seaport, Tyre was very wealthy and very evil. Tyre was rebuked by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:22, 27; 47:4), Ezekiel (Ezekiel 26-28), Joel (Joel 3:4-8), Amos (Amos 1:9, 10), and Zechariah (Zechariah 9:3, 4). This is another warning against political alliances with unstable neighbors.

#### ISAIAH 23:5

Why would Egypt experience "great sorrow" when Tyre fell? Egypt depended on Tyre's shipping expertise to promote and carry their products around the world. Egypt would lose an important trading partner with the fall of Tyre.

#### ISAIAH 23:9

God would destroy Tyre because he hated its people's pride. Pride separates people from God, and he will not tolerate it. As we examine our life, we must remember that all true accomplishment comes as a result of our Creator's help. We have no reason to take pride in ourselves.

#### ISAIAH 23:15, 16

Some scholars believe this is a literal 70 years; some say it is symbolic of a long period of time. If it is literal, this may have occurred between 700 and 630 B.C. during the Assyrian captivity of Israel, or it may have been during the 70-year captivity of the Jews in Babylon (605-536 B.C.). During the 70 years, the Jews would forget about Tyre. But when they returned from captivity, they would once again trade with Tyre.