



## PROPHECIES, PROMISES, AND WARNINGS

# Isaiah 17:1 - 18:7

### Isaiah Review:

The first 39 chapters of Isaiah deal with Judgment and the last 27 deal with comfort.

Many of the first 39 chapters are difficult, but will pay dividends by the time we reach the last part of the book.

Written by Isaiah over a period of about 62 years.

It concerns prophecy of Jerusalem and Judah, primarily, but also prophesy's about Israel (the northern kingdom).

## Chapter 17

### Verses 1-3

- Our challenging passage begins the same as chapters 13 and 15 with the word **burden**. We have seen that Isaiah message is called a burden because it contains the wrath of God. It's a heavy message for Isaiah to write, and heavy to hear. The root word for burden is to bear or lift up something, like an armor-bearer in battle.
- **Damascus.** Damascus is the capital city located in what today is Syria (Hebrew: Aram). We have heard of Damascus before because it was on the road to Damascus that Saul (the apostle Paul), saw Jesus Christ and his life was changed.
  - The city was called an oasis city, watered by two rivers, and was known for its agriculture as we will see mentioned often in the passage.
  - Several trade routes came through Damascus. One was a highway that ran along the coast, the other on the east side of the Jordan known as the King's Highway.
- The northern kingdom of Israel had allied with Syria (Isaiah 7:2) against the Assyrian threat. God is going to punish Syria because they went up to battle with Israel against Judah (Isaiah 7:1).
- Isaiah's message is directed against Damascus (and also Ephraim). **Damascus will cease from being a city...a ruinous heap.** Along with Damascus, **Ephraim** would be defeated by the Assyrians
  - B.C. 732 Syria was defeated.



- B.C. 722 Israel was defeated.
- But today, Damascus is still a city. When will this prophecy be fulfilled?

### Verses 4-6

- **In that day.** This phrase is going to be used in three sections, here in verses 4-6, and in verses 7-8, and 9-11. When this phrase is used it always refers to the time of God's wrath on His enemies followed by His blessings showered upon His people. Often, it has "eschatological" meaning (referring to the Tribulation and the Millennium), but sometimes it refers only to the current situation. In verses 4, 7, and 9 the phrase **in that day** could refer to the situation mentioned repeatedly, that is, the invasion of Syria and Israel by the Assyrian army. But as Dr. C.I. Scofield said, it could be an "intermingling of near and far."
- **Because the Assyrian army is going to attack Syria, Israel (because they were aligned with them) would face difficulties:**
  - **Fatness of his flesh grow lean.** Their bodies would waste away from hunger.
  - **And reaps the head (of grain) with his arm.** This may mean the fields are barren. There is only enough grain left to pick up with one arm.
  - **Two or three olives...four or five in its most fruitful branches.** Just as a few olives are left on the branches so only a few people would be left, but most of them would be slaughtered.

### Verses 7-8

- What does it take for people to turn to God? I think they must first realize they are sinful and need someone greater than themselves to turn to. Israel will one day turn to their Maker. Verse 7 is likely referring to the Tribulation period.
- **Look, respect.** The root word for **look** is from the Hebrew meaning "gaze." The word **respect** in the Hebrew means to "see."
  - Zechariah 12:10
  - Revelation 1:7

One day Israel will realize only the Lord could deliver them.

### Verses 9-11

- **His strong cities will be as forsaken.** This refers back to Damascus in verse 1. This has not happened yet, so it is a future prophecy of the desolation of Syria and Damascus that will occur along with many nations at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ when he will destroy all the nations that have come up against him at Armageddon. Described in the next three verses.
- **Because you have forgotten...** How easy it is to forget God. We often typically forget God in the good times. We must remember the **Rock of our stronghold.** (Isaiah 26:4, Rock of Ages; Psalm 18:2).

### Verses 12-14

- This is a time when **the nations...rushing of many waters...God will rebuke them and they will...be chased**
  - Psalm 2:2; Joel 3:11; Zechariah 14:2,3; Isaiah 63:1
- **Trouble.** Zephaniah 1:14.

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Chapter 18: 1-7**Verses 1 - 7**

- **Woe.** This word is used as an interjection of distress or a threat of a present or coming disaster. Woe is me!
- **Land shadowed with buzzing wings...** is the nation of Cush. The whirring wings refer to locusts. Cush was located in modern-day southern Egypt, Sudan, and northern Ethiopia.

It is difficult to know the meaning of this chapter. Apparently, the Cushites sent messengers to suggest to Israel that they form an alliance with them against the Assyrians.

- **Tall and smooth of skin** describes the Cushites who were a people who were tall, fearsome, and aggressive. They spoke a language that would have sounded strange to the Hebrews.
- Evidently, Isaiah told the Cushites to go back home and not try to form an alliance because the Lord would defeat the enemy in his own perfect timing: **When he lifts up a banner on the mountains, you see it; And when he blows a trumpet, you hear it.**

**Verses 4 - 6**

- A description of how God would defeat the Assyrians.

**Verse 7**

- **In that time a present will be brought.** After the defeat, then the Cushites could come and bring gifts to the Lord at Mount Zion where his name dwelt.
- This verse could be a reference to the Millennial kingdom when people from around the world will come to Zion (Jerusalem) and worship the LORD because of his gracious act (Zechariah 14:16).