



Highlights From the Book of Isaiah

To Download this lesson go to:

<http://www.purifiedbyfaith.com/Isaiah/Isaiah.htm>

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/ernest-meissonier/isaiah>

The Oracles Against the Nations (Isaiah 13-23)

Babylon (13:1–14:27)	“The Wilderness by the Sea” (Babylon) (21:1–10)
Philistia (14:28–32)	“Dumah” (Edom) (21:11–12)
Moab (15:1–16:14)	Arabia (21:13–17)
Damascus/ Israel (17:1–18:7)	“The Valley of Vision” (Judah) (22:1–25)
Egypt (19:1–20:6)	Tyre (23:1–18)

Oracle Against Judah and Jerusalem (Isaiah 22:1-25)

- The Oracle against Judah and Jerusalem breaks up into *two* major sections:
 - **22:1-14** – Addresses the conduct of the nation as a whole
 - **22:15-25** – Discusses two of the royal officials of Judah: Sheba and Eliakim
- Both of these accounts begin by asking the question “What are you doing?” (22:1,16) and then subsequently go on to condemn the sinful behavior of those involved.
- Because the outlook of the people of Judah was *indistinguishable* from that of the heathen around them, this prophesy of doom is included among Isaiah’s oracles concerning the *nations*.

Oracle Against Judah and Jerusalem (Isaiah 22:1-25)

- One of the difficulties we encounter as we try to interpret this particular prophesy is deciding which specific historical events are being described.¹
- The Hebrew verbs in this section are Hebrew *perfects* which are used to express a “completed action” or a “state of being”, but do *not* tell us whether the action is taking place in the past, present, or future.²

¹ Mackay, John L. – *A Study Commentary on Isaiah Volume I: Chapters 1-39* (p. 438)

² Pratico, Gary D. & Van Pelt, Miles V. – *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar*; Zondervan (p.129)

Oracle Against Judah and Jerusalem (Isaiah 22:1-25)

- Commentaries vary *significantly* in their view of which historical events Isaiah might be describing in this passage. Some possibilities are:
 - 711 BC – when the Assyrian king Sargon devastated Ashdod (a nearby city) but then withdrew without attacking Jerusalem
 - 701 BC – when the Assyrian king Sennacherib’s army was devastated by the LORD
 - 586 BC – when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians
- I believe this text describes events that occur during a *couple* of these time periods, which demonstrates that the people of Judah keep having the same kinds of problems over and over throughout their history.

Oracle Against Judah and Jerusalem (Isaiah 22:1-14)

22:1 *This is an oracle about the Valley of Vision: What is the reason that all of you go up to the rooftops?* ² *The noisy city is full of raucous sounds; the town is filled with revelry. Your slain were not cut down by the sword; they did not die in battle.* ³ *All your leaders ran away together— they fled to a distant place; all your refugees were captured together— they were captured without a single arrow being shot.* ⁴ *So I say: “Don’t look at me! I am weeping bitterly. Don’t try to console me concerning the destruction of my defenseless people.”* ⁵ *For the Sovereign LORD of Heaven’s Armies has planned a day of panic, defeat, and confusion. In the Valley of Vision people shout and cry out to the hill.* ⁶ *The Elamites picked up the quiver and came with chariots and horsemen; the men of Kir prepared the shield.* ⁷ *Your very best valleys were full of chariots; horsemen confidently took their positions at the gate.*

Oracle Against Judah and Jerusalem (Isaiah 22:1-14)

22:8 *He removed the defenses of Judah. At that time you looked for the weapons in the House of the Forest. ⁹ You saw the many breaks in the walls of the City of David; you stored up water in the lower pool. ¹⁰ You counted the houses in Jerusalem and demolished houses so you could have material to reinforce the wall. ¹¹ You made a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool— but you did not trust in the one who made it; you did not depend on the one who formed it long ago. ¹² At that time the Sovereign LORD of Heaven's Armies called for weeping and mourning, for shaved heads and sackcloth. ¹³ But look, there is outright celebration! You say, "Kill the ox and slaughter the sheep, eat meat and drink wine. Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!" ¹⁴ The LORD of Heaven's Armies told me this: "Certainly this sin will not be forgiven as long as you live," says the Sovereign LORD of Heaven's Armies.*

22:1 *This is an oracle about the Valley of Vision: What is the reason that all of you go up to the rooftops?*

- To whom is this oracle being addressed? Who are those addressed here as living in the “*Valley of Vision*”?
- A little further on in the context it becomes clear that the people being addressed here are the Jews living in Judah and, specifically, in the city of Jerusalem (see verses 8 and 10).
- The phrase “*Valley of Vision*” is an unusual description for Jerusalem which, though *surrounded* by valleys, was hardly a valley itself – it was, after all, located on Mount Zion!
- And why is it called the valley of “*Vision*”?

22:1 ***This is an oracle about the Valley of Vision: What is the reason that all of you go up to the rooftops?***

- The term “***Vision***” comes from a Hebrew root word that frequently refers to ***prophetic*** vision, or the reception of divine revelation.
- And so, Judah, and particularly Jerusalem, is described here as the land blessed by the revelation of God.
- The term “***Valley***” ***may*** have been used paradoxically: though the Jews living in this land enjoyed divinely given “***vision***” through God’s many prophets who were sent there, they ***still*** couldn’t see very far because they were (metaphorically) in a “***valley***” due to the fact that it repeated ***rejected*** those who brought them divine revelation.
- Even Jesus will say of them many years later: “***O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you!***”
- Therefore they are now given this ***ominous*** message that points to ***divine judgment***.

22:1 *This is an oracle about the Valley of Vision: **What is the reason that all of you go up to the rooftops?***

- The people of Jerusalem are given a word of prophetic *rebuke* here.
- They are on “*rooftops*” rejoicing and having a good time.
- The flat roofs were used at that time as places of social gathering.
- So, here we see that the inhabitants of Jerusalem are *partying* because they think their troubles are over.
- Their enemy has gone and, unaware of what the future holds, they’re now carefree.
- But Isaiah can’t join them in their revelry because he realizes that matters are not as simple as they assume.

22:2 *The noisy city is full of raucous sounds; the town is filled with revelry. Your slain were not cut down by the sword; they did not die in battle.*

- The **first** part of the verse continues with the description of Jerusalem's rejoicing.
- The city is "*full of raucous sounds*" as the whole population engages in "*revelry*".
- However, the **second** part of the verse stands in somber contrast to the prevailing sentiment in the city.
- Isaiah is announcing to Jerusalem that there will come a time when the population will sustain heavy casualties – though not through military action.
- Isaiah's prediction here would be an apt description of a population stuck down by **famine** or **plague** – **both** of which happened during the Babylonian siege in 586 BC.
- Jerusalem's problems were not over – the worst was still to come.

22:3 *All your leaders ran away together— they fled to a distant place; all your refugees were captured together— they were captured without a single arrow being shot.*

- The only biblical event corresponding to the description in this verse of “*leaders*” of the city fleeing from danger is that of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, and his men escaping from the city in the closing stages of the Babylonian siege.
- They were subsequently captured by the Babylonians (2 Kings 25:2-7).
- “*captured without a single arrow being shot*” indicates the ease with which they were captured.
- This was, in fact, the collapse of the *entire nation*, as “*all your refugees were captured together*” indicates.
- The scattered remains of the population of Judah were rounded up by the Babylonians even though many had “*fled to a distant place*”.

22:4 *So I say: “Don’t look at me! I am weeping bitterly. Don’t try to console me concerning the destruction of my defenseless people.”*

- With his knowledge of what surely awaits the people in the future, Isaiah couldn’t join them in their thoughtless jubilation.
- The people, on the other hand, couldn’t understand why Isaiah was unhappy over the deliverance of Jerusalem.
- But Isaiah saw that the people *misinterpreted* their situation.
- They *assumed* the Lord was pleased with them, and so they didn’t bother to examine their own conduct and realize that God was providing them with an opportunity for repentance.
- Isaiah foresaw that their *lack* of repentance would only ensure the “*destruction of my defenseless people*”.
- The people’s well-meaning but uncomprehending sympathy only intensifies Isaiah’s sorrow (cf. Luke 23:27-30)
- *True* comfort can only come when it is provided on a *proper* basis by the Lord himself.

22:5 *For the Sovereign LORD of Heaven's Armies has planned a day of panic, defeat, and confusion. In the Valley of Vision people shout and cry out to the hill.*

- “*For*” introduces a further justification for Isaiah’s attitude.
- Isaiah points to the fact that the “*Sovereign LORD*” has “*a day*” when he will intervene in the affairs of earth with ultimate authority.
- This day of impending judgment is described using three similar sounding words (in the Hebrew): “*panic, defeat, and confusion*”.
- Isaiah had *expected* the day of the Lord to involve judgment coming on their *enemies*.
- But *here* he sees judgement coming on the “*Valley of Vision*” – a land blessed with the revelation of God through the prophets whose warnings they ignored.
- In the day of reckoning coming on Jerusalem, distressed cries will echo from the hills that surround them – hills which will no longer serve as a source of security.

22:6 *The Elamites picked up the quiver and came with chariots and horsemen; the men of Kir prepared the shield.*

- This verse provides further details about the scene described in the preceding verses.
- The “*Elamites*” were a group known to have contributed troops to the Assyrian army. “*Kir*” is a distant land north of Mesopotamia.
- An army with men coming from such *far away* places would be *massive*, and having come so far would be *determined* to achieve its objectives.
- Furthermore, this massive army is described as being equipped with all the military technology of the day.
- The “*quiver*” fits with the reputation of those from the general area of Elam for archery. (cf. Jer 49:35)
- “*chariots and horsemen*” refer to the transport of troops that arrive fresh for battle, perhaps as a part of the calvary.
- The “*shield*” is “*prepared*” so as to be ready to engage in battle.

22:7 *Your very best valleys were full of chariots; horsemen confidently took their positions at the gate.*

- Isaiah continues to describe the future scene as though it has already taken place.
- “*Your very best valleys*” would be the most fertile places in the land and would be broad and relatively flat – ideal for chariot warfare.
- The troops have occupied and are spoiling the countryside.
- Furthermore, “*horsemen*”, cavalry detachments, have been stationed at the gates of Judah’s cities to *enforce* the siege.
- The invading forces have successfully, and seemingly without resistance, occupied the land.

22:8 *He removed the defenses of Judah. At that time you looked for the weapons in the House of the Forest.*

- A transition occurs in this verse.
- While the scene described in the previous verses seems to fit with the Babylonian invasion of 586 BC, commentators generally consider this and the **following** descriptions to be referring to activity in Hezekiah's day.
- In other words, Isaiah seems to go here from prophetically looking to the **future** to looking now at events in the **past**.
- Isaiah **now** seems to be looking **back** to preparations that were made prior to the Assyrian king Sennacherib's invasion in 701 BC.
- In recalling the panic measures of that time, he identifies their biggest problem – their failure to trust in the Lord.
- And because this lack of faith **continues** in the present day, it's going to result in **catastrophe**, not survival.

22:8 *He removed the defenses of Judah. At that time you looked for the weapons in the House of the Forest.*

- “**He removed**” refers to what the LORD did.
- “*the defenses of Judah*” which the LORD removed refers to the protection that the LORD gave to his people by his **presence** with them.
- By taking away his protecting presence and permitting the army of Sennacherib to advance against them, the LORD had been testing Judah so that they might become better acquainted with the sinful inclination of their own hearts.
- They **failed** the test.
- “*At that time*” that the Lord tested them they “**looked**”, **not** to the LORD, but “*the weapons in the House of the Forest*”.
- This was a building that was built by Solomon and was used as a royal storehouse for weapons and precious items.
- In other words, in a time of danger, the people turned to the **king** and his **stock of weapons** rather than to the Lord.

22:9 *You saw the many breaks in the walls of the City of David; you stored up water in the lower pool.* ¹⁰ *You counted the houses in Jerusalem and demolished houses so you could have material to reinforce the wall.*

- These verses list the actions they took when they saw the Assyrian army advancing towards them.
- As a matter of military strategy these actions were in themselves commendable.
- But Judah was expected to live by *more* than just military strategy.
- “*You*” here refers to the king and his officials as they surveyed the needs of the city.
- “*the City of David*” was a fortress situated in Zion, one of the oldest and best fortified parts of the city.
- It had not been maintained as it should have been, and so an inventory was made of existing deficiencies which were then fixed.

22:9 *You saw the many breaks in the walls of the City of David; you stored up water in the lower pool.* ¹⁰ *You counted the houses in Jerusalem and demolished houses so you could have material to reinforce the wall.*

- A secure water supply was of great importance in surviving a siege.
- One of the major weaknesses of Jerusalem was that her water was supplied by Gihon spring, located to the east *outside* the city walls.
- “*stor[ing] up water*” refers to a provision that was made for moving water from outside the city walls to large cisterns *within* the city walls.
- A census of houses was then taken, some of which were broken down and their stones were used to strengthen the wall that fortified the city.

22:11 *You made a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool— but you did not trust in the one who made it; you did not depend on the one who formed it long ago.*

- Next a description is given of further steps taken to secure a protected water supply “*between the two walls*” that enclosed the eastern and western hills of the city.
- Isaiah does not criticize these defensive measures as such.
- What he does is to highlight the glaring omission – the fact that they did not bring the LORD into the picture or recognize that their circumstances were in *his* hands.
- They forgot who was *really* king in Jerusalem and that he the one who “*made it*” – that is, the city – and “*formed it*” with the care exercised by a potter.
- The LORD is the one who has a plan for their deliverance and it is folly to ignore him and his ways.

22:12 *At that time the Sovereign LORD of Heaven's Armies called for weeping and mourning, for shaved heads and sackcloth.*

- “*At that time*” when the LORD tested the people by allowing the aggressor to advance, he “*called for*” and expected a response of:
 - “*weeping*” – the outward sign of inner repentance at their own conduct
 - “*mourning*” over how far their nation had departed from God
 - “*shaved heads*” caused by cutting the hair which was a conventional token of grief as was the wearing of “*sackcloth*”.
- The circumstances were such that a spiritually sensitive people would have heeded the divine alert that was being given and turned in repentance.
- They were also given prophets such as Micah and Isaiah to interpret these events for them – but still there was no repentance.

22:13 *But look, there is outright celebration! You say, "Kill the ox and slaughter the sheep, eat meat and drink wine. Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"*

- Instead of responding with repentance, the citizens of Jerusalem showed no regard for the Lord, and engaged in revelry and feasting.
- Now it becomes clear that Isaiah had disassociated himself from them because they were spiritually defiant.
- They rejected the divine warning about the dire spiritual condition of their nation, and were intent on enjoying themselves by pursuing a hedonistic lifestyle which Isaiah sums up as *"Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"*.
- There is no thought of God, no consideration for being called to account by him (cf. 1 Cor 15:32)

22:14 *The LORD of Heaven's Armies told me this: "Certainly this sin will not be forgiven as long as you live," says the Sovereign LORD of Heaven's Armies.*

- "*Certainly*" indicates that what is about to be said is a solemn oath.
- "*This sin will not be forgiven*".
- By ignoring God and living a self-centered and self-reliant life they have put a barrier between themselves and God which **cannot** be overcome.
- Unlike Isaiah, they had **not** responded to the revelation of God with a confession of: "*Woe to me! I am destroyed, for my lips are contaminated by sin, and I live among people whose lips are contaminated by sin.*" (Isaiah 6:5)
- And so no seraph had flown to extend mercy to them.

Next Time

I plan to cover the last portion of this “*oracle*” against Jerusalem in **Isaiah 22:15-25** where Isaiah addresses the fortunes of two royal officials in Jerusalem: Sheba and Eliakim

Class Discussion Time



Class Discussion Time

- This passage describes a nation (Judah) that is facing a national calamity from a large foreign army as a result of God's judgment on that nation.
- And yet the people are too busy partying and focusing on their own pleasures to even notice.
- Do you think we are in a similar situation in our day?
- If so, following the principles at play in this passage, what should be our **first** priority as a nation? What would that look like?
- Is there also a place in our day for making physical preparations for a possible future disaster?