

WEEK 41.

2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Isaiah, Micah, Psalm, Hosea (Isaiah Prophecies Judgment and the Messiah, also, Micah and Hosea Prophecy and Hezekiah is Faithful).

Sunday ([2 Chronicles 27](#), [Isaiah 9–12](#))

2 Chronicles

Jotham's Reign

27:1 Jotham was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother was Jerusha the daughter of Zadok. 27:2 He did what the Lord approved, just as his father Uzziah had done. (He did not, however, have the audacity to enter the temple.) Yet the people were still sinning.

27:3 He built the Upper Gate to the Lord's temple and did a lot of work on the wall in the area known as Ophel. 27:4 He built cities in the hill country of Judah and fortresses and towers in the forests.

27:5 He launched a military campaign against the king of the Ammonites and defeated them. That year the Ammonites paid him 100 talents of silver, 10,000 kors of wheat, and 10,000 kors of barley. The Ammonites also paid this same amount of annual tribute the next two years.

27:6 Jotham grew powerful because he was determined to please the Lord his God. 27:7 The rest of the events of Jotham's reign, including all his military campaigns and his accomplishments, are recorded in the scroll of the kings of Israel and Judah. 27:8 He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for sixteen years in Jerusalem. 27:9 Jotham passed away and was buried in the City of David. His son Ahaz replaced him as king.

Isaiah

9:1 The gloom will be dispelled for those who were anxious. In earlier times he humiliated the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali; but now he brings honor to the way of the sea, the region beyond the Jordan, and Galilee of the nations.

9:2 The people walking in darkness see a bright light; light shines on those who live in a land of deep darkness.

9:3 You have enlarged the nation; you give them great joy. They rejoice in your presence as harvesters rejoice; as warriors celebrate when they divide up the plunder.

9:4 For their oppressive yoke and the club that strikes their shoulders, the cudgel the oppressor uses on them, you have shattered, as in the day of Midian's defeat.

9:5 Indeed every boot that marches and shakes the earth and every garment dragged through blood is used as fuel for the fire.

9:6 For a child has been born to us, a son has been given to us. He shoulders responsibility and is called:

Extraordinary Strategist,

Mighty God,

Everlasting Father,

Prince of Peace.

9:7 His dominion will be vast and he will bring immeasurable prosperity. He will rule on David's throne and over David's kingdom, establishing it and strengthening it by promoting justice and fairness, from this time forward and forevermore. The Lord's intense devotion to his people will accomplish this.

9:8 God's Judgment Intensifies The sovereign master decreed judgment on Jacob, and it fell on Israel.

9:9 All the people were aware of it, the people of Ephraim and those living in Samaria. Yet with pride and an arrogant attitude, they said,

9:10 "The bricks have fallen, but we will rebuild with chiseled stone; the sycamore fig trees have been cut down, but we will replace them with cedars."

9:11 Then the Lord provoked their adversaries to attack them, he stirred up their enemies –

9:12 Syria from the east, and the Philistines from the west, they gobbled up Israelite territory. Despite all this, his anger does not subside, and his hand is ready to strike again.

9:13 The people did not return to the one who struck them, they did not seek reconciliation with the Lord who commands armies.

9:14 So the Lord cut off Israel's head and tail, both the shoots and stalk in one day.

9:15 The leaders and the highly respected people are the head, the prophets who teach lies are the tail.

9:16 The leaders of this nation were misleading people, and the people being led were destroyed.

9:17 So the sovereign master was not pleased with their young men, he took no pity on their orphans and widows; for the whole nation was godless and did wicked things, every mouth was speaking disgraceful words. Despite all this, his anger does not subside, and his hand is ready to strike again.

9:18 For evil burned like a fire, it consumed thorns and briars; it burned up the thickets of the forest, and they went up in smoke.

9:19 Because of the anger of the Lord who commands armies, the land was scorched, and the people became fuel for the fire. People had no compassion on one another.

9:20 They devoured on the right, but were still hungry, they ate on the left, but were not satisfied. People even ate the flesh of their own arm!

9:21 Manasseh fought against Ephraim, and Ephraim against Manasseh; together they fought against Judah. Despite all this, his anger does not subside, and his hand is ready to strike again.

10:1 Those who enact unjust policies are as good as dead, those who are always instituting unfair regulations,

10:2 to keep the poor from getting fair treatment, and to deprive the oppressed among my people of justice, so they can steal what widows own, and loot what belongs to orphans.

10:3 What will you do on judgment day, when destruction arrives from a distant place? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your wealth?

10:4 You will have no place to go, except to kneel with the prisoners, or to fall among those who have been killed. Despite all this, his anger does not subside, and his hand is ready to strike again.

The Lord Turns on Arrogant Assyria

10:5 Assyria, the club I use to vent my anger, is as good as dead, a cudgel with which I angrily punish.

10:6 I sent him against a godless nation, I ordered him to attack the people with whom I was angry, to take plunder and to carry away loot, to trample them down like dirt in the streets.

10:7 But he does not agree with this, his mind does not reason this way, for his goal is to destroy, and to eliminate many nations.

10:8 Indeed, he says: "Are not my officials all kings?"

10:9 Is not Calneh like Carchemish? Hamath like Arpad? Samaria like Damascus?

10:10 I overpowered kingdoms ruled by idols, whose carved images were more impressive than Jerusalem's or Samaria's.

10:11 As I have done to Samaria and its idols, so I will do to Jerusalem and its idols."

10:12 But when the sovereign master finishes judging Mount Zion and Jerusalem, then I will punish the king of Assyria for what he has proudly planned and for the arrogant attitude he displays. 10:13 For he says: "By my strong hand I have accomplished this, by my strategy that I devised. I invaded the territory of nations, and looted their storehouses. Like a mighty conqueror, I brought down rulers.

10:14 My hand discovered the wealth of the nations, as if it were in a nest, as one gathers up abandoned eggs, I gathered up the whole earth. There was no wing flapping, or open mouth chirping."

10:15 Does an ax exalt itself over the one who wields it, or a saw magnify itself over the one who cuts with it? As if a scepter should brandish the one who raises it, or a staff should lift up what is not made of wood!

10:16 For this reason the sovereign master, the Lord who commands armies, will make his healthy ones emaciated. His majestic glory will go up in smoke.

10:17 The light of Israel will become a fire, their Holy One will become a flame; it will burn and consume the Assyrian king's briars and his thorns in one day.

10:18 The splendor of his forest and his orchard will be completely destroyed, as when a sick man's life ebbs away.

10:19 There will be so few trees left in his forest, a child will be able to count them.

10:20 At that time those left in Israel, those who remain of the family of Jacob, will no longer rely on a foreign leader that abuses them. Instead they will truly rely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. 10:21 A remnant will come back, a remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. 10:22 For though your people, Israel, are as numerous as the sand on the seashore, only a remnant will come back. Destruction has been decreed; just punishment is about to engulf you.

10:23 The sovereign master, the Lord who commands armies, is certainly ready to carry out the decreed destruction throughout the land.

10:24 So here is what the sovereign master, the Lord who commands armies, says: "My people who live in Zion, do not be afraid of Assyria, even though they beat you with a club and lift their cudgel against you as Egypt did. 10:25 For very soon my fury will subside, and my anger will be directed toward their destruction." 10:26 The Lord who commands armies is about to beat them with a whip, similar to the way he struck down Midian at the rock of Oreb. He will use his staff against the sea, lifting it up as he did in Egypt.

10:27 At that time the Lord will remove their burden from your shoulders, and their yoke from your neck; the yoke will be taken off because your neck will be too large.

10:28 They attacked Aiath, moved through Migron, depositing their supplies at Micmash.

10:29 They went through the pass, spent the night at Geba. Ramah trembled, Gibeah of Saul ran away.

10:30 Shout out, daughter of Gallim! Pay attention, Laishah! Answer her, Anathoth!

10:31 Madmenah flees, the residents of Gebim have hidden.

10:32 This very day, standing in Nob, they shake their fist at Daughter Zion's mountain – at the hill of Jerusalem.

10:33 Look, the sovereign master, the Lord who commands armies, is ready to cut off the branches with terrifying power. The tallest trees will be cut down, the loftiest ones will be brought low.

10:34 The thickets of the forest will be chopped down with an ax, and mighty Lebanon will fall.

An Ideal King Establishes a Kingdom of Peace

11:1 A shoot will grow out of Jesse's root stock, a bud will sprout from his roots.

11:2 The Lord's spirit will rest on him – a spirit that gives extraordinary wisdom, a spirit that provides the ability to execute plans, a spirit that produces absolute loyalty to the Lord.

11:3 He will take delight in obeying the Lord. He will not judge by mere appearances, or make decisions on the basis of hearsay.

11:4 He will treat the poor fairly, and make right decisions for the downtrodden of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and order the wicked to be executed.

11:5 Justice will be like a belt around his waist, integrity will be like a belt around his hips.

11:6 A wolf will reside with a lamb, and a leopard will lie down with a young goat; an ox and a young lion will graze together, as a small child leads them along.

11:7 A cow and a bear will graze together, their young will lie down together. A lion, like an ox, will eat straw.

11:8 A baby will play over the hole of a snake; over the nest of a serpent an infant will put his hand.

11:9 They will no longer injure or destroy on my entire royal mountain. For there will be universal submission to the Lord's sovereignty, just as the waters completely cover the sea.

Israel is Reclaimed and Reunited

11:10 At that time a root from Jesse will stand like a signal flag for the nations. Nations will look to him for guidance, and his residence will be majestic. 11:11 At that time the sovereign master will again lift his hand to reclaim the remnant of his people from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and the seacoasts.

11:12 He will lift a signal flag for the nations; he will gather Israel's dispersed people and assemble Judah's scattered people from the four corners of the earth.

11:13 Ephraim's jealousy will end, and Judah's hostility will be eliminated. Ephraim will no longer be jealous of Judah, and Judah will no longer be hostile toward Ephraim.

11:14 They will swoop down on the Philistine hills to the west; together they will loot the people of the east. They will take over Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites will be their subjects.

11:15 The Lord will divide the gulf of the Egyptian Sea; he will wave his hand over the Euphrates River and send a strong wind, he will turn it into seven dried-up streams, and enable them to walk across in their sandals.

11:16 There will be a highway leading out of Assyria for the remnant of his people, just as there was for Israel, when they went up from the land of Egypt.

12:1 At that time you will say: "I praise you, O Lord, for even though you were angry with me, your anger subsided, and you consoled me.

12:2 Look, God is my deliverer! I will trust in him and not fear. For the Lord gives me strength and protects me; he has become my deliverer."

12:3 Joyfully you will draw water from the springs of deliverance.

12:4 At that time you will say: "Praise the Lord! Ask him for help! Publicize his mighty acts among the nations! Make it known that he is unique!

12:5 Sing to the Lord, for he has done magnificent things, let this be known throughout the earth!

12:6 Cry out and shout for joy, O citizens of Zion, for the Holy One of Israel acts mightily among you!"

PRAYER

Lord, humankind had an intimate relationship with You in Eden and chose to rebel, Israel has You as their King yet rebelliously-demanded a mere human king, and now that it had been proved that no king or prophet could lead them back to You – You promised a Savior. May I always remember that there is no such thing as works-righteousness, because the entire history of humankind since the Fall proved it impossible; there is only the gift of Jesus the Christ. When You return – in the form of a glorified Jesus the Christ – it will be to restore the earth and all that is on and in and above it to essentially that which was the pre-Fall Edenic condition.

SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Isaiah brought to a hopeless people a promise of hope from the Lord God, that a Child was to come Who would bring an eternity of freedom and peace, that that Child would be of the same 'kind' as the Lord God – not a mere man – fulfilling perfectly the promise of the perfected 'Davidic king' - which no mere fallen man could ever fill.

Meanwhile, the anger of the Lord God against the rebellious Israelites would continue, making their punishment complete.

The "arrogant" and "godless" Assyrians, and their demonically-insane barbarism, would be punished as well. The Lord God would bring them low, taking away everything that they had not earned as a result of Him using them as His divine "cudgel", therefore leaving nothing. The burdensome domination of Israeli territory would be lifted.

In the end of this era of history the Lord God would bring back only a remnant of the huge diaspora (displaced population) of Israelites.

The prophesy of the Lord God, as delivered through Isaiah, elaborated upon the coming Messiah, describing the pre-Fall Edenic peace that would come to all people and to every creature because "... there will be universal submission to the Lord's sovereignty, just as the waters completely cover the sea.

He promised to gather-in all of the dispersed people of Israel, indeed to even dry-up the Euphrates so that the path of their travel home would be eased.

Praise and thanks and worship would flow like a river “At that time you will say: “I praise you, O Lord, for even though you were angry with me, your anger subsided, and you consoled me.”

“Look, God is my deliverer! I will trust in him and not fear. For the Lord gives me strength and protects me; he has become my deliverer.”

“Joyfully you will draw water from the springs of deliverance.

“At that time you will say: “Praise the Lord! Ask him for help! Publicize his mighty acts among the nations! Make it known that he is unique!

“Sing to the Lord, for he has done magnificent things, let this be known throughout the earth!

“Cry out and shout for joy, O citizens of Zion, for the Holy One of Israel acts mightily among you!”“

Jotham was generally loyal to the Lord God, though the people were not, and the Lord God gave him military victory and otherwise blessed his reign.

INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

CONSIDER

God declared that His patience with the chronically-rebellious Israel had come to an end – so the prophesy through Isaiah merely spelled-out how the consequences would play-out. No room is left in this prophesy of the coming Messiah that He is anything short of a member of the unique trinitarian-God, as it is written “At that time a root from Jesse will stand like a signal flag for the nations. Nations will look to him for guidance, and his residence will be majestic. At that time the sovereign master will again lift his hand to reclaim the remnant of his people ...” The Messiah, Jesus the Christ, is also “The Sovereign Master”.

DISCUSS

Why would the Lord God only restore a remnant, rather than the millions of Israelites who had been scattered far and wide? Is there any doubt that this section of text describes the return of Jesus “... universal submission to the Lord’s sovereignty ...”, since such a submission has never before occurred?

REFLECT

While the people of his time did not really comprehend the enormity of the prophesied Savior, Whom the Lord God was announcing through Isaiah, it did establish a baseline for recognizing the One and only Messiah. The natural response of a freed people is praise and thanks.

SHARE

When have you observed someone in business, politics, or sports boasting about a success which they clearly did not earn all on their own? Have you ever imagined what the 'restored Eden' might be and look like?

FAITH IN ACTION

PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you a place in your life where something has been accomplished for which you have not yet given the Lord God full credit and to give you a renewed desire to be absolutely surrendered to the Lordship of Christ in your life.

ACT

Today I will humbly acknowledge the blessing of the Lord God which provided for me a success that I have pridefully imagined to be my accomplishment alone. I will prayerfully contemplate then submit to partner with the Holy Spirit one more part of my life, one which I have withheld from Him. While keeping that one under His Lordship, I will then add another and another ... continuing until my temporary days on this temporary earth have ended.

Be Specific _____

Monday ([Micah 1–7](#))

Introduction

1:1 This is the prophetic message that the Lord gave to Micah of Moresheth. He delivered this message during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. The prophecies pertain to Samaria and Jerusalem.

The Judge is Coming

1:2 Listen, all you nations! Pay attention, all inhabitants of earth! The sovereign Lord will testify against you; the Lord will accuse you from his majestic palace.

1:3 Look, the Lord is coming out of his dwelling place! He will descend and march on the earth's mountaintops!

1:4 The mountains will disintegrate beneath him, and the valleys will be split in two. The mountains will melt like wax in a fire, the rocks will slide down like water cascading down a steep slope.

1:5 All this is because of Jacob's rebellion and the sins of the nation of Israel. How has Jacob rebelled, you ask? Samaria epitomizes their rebellion! Where are Judah's pagan worship centers, you ask? They are right in Jerusalem!

1:6 "I will turn Samaria into a heap of ruins in an open field – vineyards will be planted there! I will tumble the rubble of her stone walls down into the valley, and tear down her fortifications to their foundations.

1:7 All her carved idols will be smashed to pieces; all her metal cult statues will be destroyed by fire. I will make a waste heap of all her images. Since she gathered the metal as a prostitute collects her wages, the idols will become a prostitute's wages again."

1:8 For this reason I will mourn and wail; I will walk around barefoot and without my outer garments. I will howl like a wild dog, and screech like an owl.

1:9 For Samaria's disease is incurable. It has infected Judah; it has spread to the leadership of my people and has even contaminated Jerusalem!

1:10 Don't spread the news in Gath! Don't shed even a single tear! In Beth Leaphrah sit in the dust!

1:11 Residents of Shaphir, pass by in nakedness and humiliation! The residents of Zaanan can't leave their city. Beth Ezel mourns, "He takes from you what he desires."

1:12 Indeed, the residents of Maroth hope for something good to happen, though the Lord has sent disaster against the city of Jerusalem.

1:13 Residents of Lachish, hitch the horses to the chariots! You influenced Daughter Zion to sin, for Israel's rebellious deeds can be traced back to you!

1:14 Therefore you will have to say farewell to Moresheth Gath. The residents of Achzib will be as disappointing as a dried up well to the kings of Israel.

1:15 Residents of Mareshah, a conqueror will attack you, the leaders of Israel shall flee to Adullam.

1:16 Shave your heads bald as you mourn for the children you love; shave your foreheads as bald as an eagle, for they are taken from you into exile.

Land Robbers Will Lose their Land

2:1 Those who devise sinful plans are as good as dead, those who dream about doing evil as they lie in bed. As soon as morning dawns they carry out their plans, because they have the power to do so.

2:2 They confiscate the fields they desire, and seize the houses they want. They defraud people of their homes, and deprive people of the land they have inherited.

2:3 Therefore the Lord says this: “Look, I am devising disaster for this nation! It will be like a yoke from which you cannot free your neck. You will no longer walk proudly, for it will be a time of catastrophe.

2:4 In that day people will sing this taunt song to you – they will mock you with this lament: ‘We are completely destroyed; they sell off the property of my people. How they remove it from me! They assign our fields to the conqueror.’

2:5 Therefore no one will assign you land in the Lord’s community.

2:6 ‘Don’t preach with such impassioned rhetoric,’ they say excitedly. ‘These prophets should not preach of such things; we will not be overtaken by humiliation.’

2:7 Does the family of Jacob say, ‘The Lord’s patience can’t be exhausted – he would never do such things’? To be sure, my commands bring a reward for those who obey them,

2:8 but you rise up as an enemy against my people. You steal a robe from a friend, from those who pass by peacefully as if returning from a war.

2:9 You wrongly evict widows among my people from their cherished homes. You defraud their children of their prized inheritance.

2:10 But you are the ones who will be forced to leave! For this land is not secure! Sin will thoroughly destroy it!

2:11 If a lying windbag should come and say, ‘I’ll promise you blessings of wine and beer,’ he would be just the right preacher for these people!

The Lord Will Restore His People

2:12 I will certainly gather all of you, O Jacob, I will certainly assemble those Israelites who remain. I will bring them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in the middle of a pasture; they will be so numerous that they will make a lot of noise.

2:13 The one who can break through barriers will lead them out they will break out, pass through the gate, and leave. Their king will advance before them, The Lord himself will lead them.

God Will Judge Judah's Sinful Leaders

3:1 I said, "Listen, you leaders of Jacob, you rulers of the nation of Israel! You ought to know what is just,

3:2 yet you hate what is good, and love what is evil. You flay my people's skin and rip the flesh from their bones.

3:3 You devour my people's flesh, strip off their skin, and crush their bones. You chop them up like flesh in a pot – like meat in a kettle.

3:4 Someday these sinners will cry to the Lord for help, but he will not answer them. He will hide his face from them at that time, because they have done such wicked deeds."

3:5 This is what the Lord says: "The prophets who mislead my people are as good as dead. If someone gives them enough to eat, they offer an oracle of peace. But if someone does not give them food, they are ready to declare war on him.

3:6 Therefore night will fall, and you will receive no visions; it will grow dark, and you will no longer be able to read the omens. The sun will set on these prophets, and the daylight will turn to darkness over their heads.

3:7 The prophets will be ashamed; the omen readers will be humiliated. All of them will cover their mouths, for they will receive no divine oracles."

3:8 But I am full of the courage that the Lord's Spirit gives, and have a strong commitment to justice. This enables me to confront Jacob with its rebellion, and Israel with its sin.

3:9 Listen to this, you leaders of the family of Jacob, you rulers of the nation of Israel! You hate justice and pervert all that is right.

3:10 You build Zion through bloody crimes, Jerusalem through unjust violence.

3:11 Her leaders take bribes when they decide legal cases, her priests proclaim rulings for profit, and her prophets read omens for pay. Yet they claim to trust the Lord and say, "The Lord is among us. Disaster will not overtake us!"

3:12 Therefore, because of you, Zion will be plowed up like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, and the Temple Mount will become a hill overgrown with brush!

Better Days Ahead for Jerusalem

4:1 In the future the Lord's Temple Mount will be the most important mountain of all; it will be more prominent than other hills. People will stream to it.

4:2 Many nations will come, saying, "Come on! Let's go up to the Lord's mountain, to the temple of Jacob's God, so he can teach us his commands and we can live by his laws." For Zion will be the source of instruction; the Lord's teachings will proceed from Jerusalem.

4:3 He will arbitrate between many peoples and settle disputes between many distant nations. They will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations will not use weapons against other nations, and they will no longer train for war.

4:4 Each will sit under his own grapevine or under his own fig tree without any fear. The Lord who commands armies has decreed it.

4:5 Though all the nations follow their respective gods, we will follow the Lord our God forever.

Restoration Will Follow Crisis

4:6 "In that day," says the Lord, "I will gather the lame, and assemble the outcasts whom I injured.

4:7 I will transform the lame into the nucleus of a new nation, and those far off into a mighty nation. The Lord will reign over them on Mount Zion, from that day forward and forevermore."

4:8 As for you, watchtower for the flock, fortress of Daughter Zion – your former dominion will be restored, the sovereignty that belongs to Daughter Jerusalem.

4:9 Jerusalem, why are you now shouting so loudly? Has your king disappeared? Has your wise leader been destroyed? Is this why pain grips you as if you were a woman in labor?

4:10 Twist and strain, Daughter Zion, as if you were in labor! For you will leave the city and live in the open field. You will go to Babylon, but there you will be rescued. There the Lord will deliver you from the power of your enemies.

4:11 Many nations have now assembled against you. They say, "Jerusalem must be desecrated, so we can gloat over Zion!"

4:12 But they do not know what the Lord is planning; they do not understand his strategy. He has gathered them like stalks of grain to be threshed at the threshing floor.

4:13 "Get up and thresh, Daughter Zion! For I will give you iron horns; I will give you bronze hooves, and you will crush many nations." You will devote to the Lord the spoils you take from them, and dedicate their wealth to the sovereign Ruler of the whole earth.

5:1 But now slash yourself, daughter surrounded by soldiers! We are besieged! With a scepter they strike Israel's ruler on the side of his face.

A King Will Come and a Remnant Will Prosper

5:2 As for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, seemingly insignificant among the clans of Judah – from you a king will emerge who will rule over Israel on my behalf, one whose origins are in the distant past.

5:3 So the Lord will hand the people of Israel over to their enemies until the time when the woman in labor gives birth. Then the rest of the king's countrymen will return to be reunited with the people of Israel.

5:4 He will assume his post and shepherd the people by the Lord's strength, by the sovereign authority of the Lord his God. They will live securely, for at that time he will be honored even in the distant regions of the earth.

5:5 He will give us peace. Should the Assyrians try to invade our land and attempt to set foot in our fortresses, we will send against them seven shepherd-rulers, make that eight commanders.

5:6 They will rule the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod with a drawn sword. Our king will rescue us from the Assyrians should they attempt to invade our land and try to set foot in our territory.

5:7 Those survivors from Jacob will live in the midst of many nations. They will be like the dew the Lord sends, like the rain on the grass, that does not hope for men to come or wait around for humans to arrive.

5:8 Those survivors from Jacob will live among the nations, in the midst of many peoples. They will be like a lion among the animals of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which attacks when it passes through; it rips its prey and there is no one to stop it.

5:9 Lift your hand triumphantly against your adversaries; may all your enemies be destroyed!

The Lord Will Purify His People

5:10 "In that day," says the Lord, "I will destroy your horses from your midst, and smash your chariots.

5:11 I will destroy the cities of your land, and tear down all your fortresses.

5:12 I will remove the sorcery that you practice, and you will no longer have omen readers living among you.

5:13 I will remove your idols and sacred pillars from your midst; you will no longer worship what your own hands made.

5:14 I will uproot your images of Asherah from your midst, and destroy your idols.

5:15 I will angrily seek vengeance on the nations that do not obey me.”

The Lord Demands Justice, not Ritual

6:1 Listen to what the Lord says: “Get up! Defend yourself before the mountains! Present your case before the hills!”

6:2 Hear the Lord’s accusation, you mountains, you enduring foundations of the earth! For the Lord has a case against his people; he has a dispute with Israel!

6:3 “My people, how have I wronged you? How have I wearied you? Answer me!

6:4 In fact, I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I delivered you from that place of slavery. I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to lead you.

6:5 My people, recall how King Balak of Moab planned to harm you, how Balaam son of Beor responded to him. Recall how you journeyed from Shittim to Gilgal, so you might acknowledge that the Lord has treated you fairly.”

6:6 With what should I enter the Lord’s presence? With what should I bow before the sovereign God? Should I enter his presence with burnt offerings, with year-old calves?

6:7 Will the Lord accept a thousand rams, or ten thousand streams of olive oil? Should I give him my firstborn child as payment for my rebellion, my offspring – my own flesh and blood – for my sin?

6:8 He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord really wants from you: He wants you to promote justice, to be faithful, and to live obediently before your God.

6:9 Listen! The Lord is calling to the city! It is wise to respect your authority, O Lord! Listen, O nation, and those assembled in the city!

6:10 “I will not overlook, O sinful house, the dishonest gain you have hoarded away, or the smaller-than-standard measure I hate so much.

6:11 I do not condone the use of rigged scales, or a bag of deceptive weights.

6:12 The city's rich men think nothing of resorting to violence; her inhabitants lie, their tongues speak deceptive words.

6:13 I will strike you brutally and destroy you because of your sin.

6:14 You will eat, but not be satisfied. Even if you have the strength to overtake some prey, you will not be able to carry it away; if you do happen to carry away something, I will deliver it over to the sword.

6:15 You will plant crops, but will not harvest them; you will squeeze oil from the olives, but you will have no oil to rub on your bodies; you will squeeze juice from the grapes, but you will have no wine to drink.

6:16 You implement the regulations of Omri, and all the practices of Ahab's dynasty; you follow their policies. Therefore I will make you an appalling sight, the city's inhabitants will be taunted derisively, and nations will mock all of you."

Micah Laments Judah's Sin

7:1 I am depressed! Indeed, it is as if the summer fruit has been gathered, and the grapes have been harvested. There is no grape cluster to eat, no fresh figs that I crave so much.

7:2 Faithful men have disappeared from the land; there are no godly men left. They all wait in ambush so they can shed blood; they hunt their own brother with a net.

7:3 They are determined to be experts at doing evil; government officials and judges take bribes, prominent men make demands, and they all do what is necessary to satisfy them.

7:4 The best of them is like a thorn; the most godly among them are more dangerous than a row of thorn bushes. The day you try to avoid by posting watchmen – your appointed time of punishment – is on the way, and then you will experience confusion.

7:5 Do not rely on a friend; do not trust a companion! Don't even share secrets with the one who lies in your arms!

7:6 For a son thinks his father is a fool, a daughter challenges her mother, and a daughter-in-law her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are his own servants.

7:7 But I will keep watching for the Lord; I will wait for the God who delivers me. My God will hear my lament.

Jerusalem Will Be Vindicated

7:8 My enemies, do not gloat over me! Though I have fallen, I will get up. Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light.

7:9 I must endure the Lord's anger, for I have sinned against him. But then he will defend my cause, and accomplish justice on my behalf. He will lead me out into the light; I will experience firsthand his deliverance.

7:10 When my enemies see this, they will be covered with shame. They say to me, "Where is the Lord your God?" I will gloat over them. Then they will be trampled down like mud in the streets.

7:11 It will be a day for rebuilding your walls; in that day your boundary will be extended.

A Closing Prayer

7:12 In that day people will come to you from Assyria as far as Egypt, from Egypt as far as the Euphrates River, from the seacoasts and the mountains.

7:13 The earth will become desolate because of what its inhabitants have done.

7:14 Shepherd your people with your shepherd's rod, the flock that belongs to you, the one that lives alone in a thicket, in the midst of a pastureland. Allow them to graze in Bashan and Gilead, as they did in the old days.

7:15 "As in the days when you departed from the land of Egypt, I will show you miraculous deeds."

7:16 Nations will see this and be disappointed by all their strength, they will put their hands over their mouths, and act as if they were deaf.

7:17 They will lick the dust like a snake, like serpents crawling on the ground. They will come trembling from their strongholds to the Lord our God; they will be terrified of you.

7:18 There is no other God like you! You forgive sin and pardon the rebellion of those who remain among your people. You do not remain angry forever, but delight in showing loyal love.

7:19 You will once again have mercy on us; you will conquer our evil deeds; you will hurl our sins into the depths of the sea.

7:20 You will be loyal to Jacob and extend your loyal love to Abraham, which you promised on oath to our ancestors in ancient times.

PRAYER

Lord, Your consistent message was of teaching, encouraging, and facilitating, followed by warning when the people drifted, followed by judgment when they were unrepentant, but then You always held-out the possibility of redemption. May I know Your heart so that when I stumble I return to You with a repentant heart – knowing that You love to restore.

SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Micah was the Lord God's prophet of warning and of judgment primarily to Samaria, and also to Jerusalem and Judah.

He delivered the Lord's list of charges against Samaria for their worship of false idols and for spreading that to Jerusalem.

Micah challenged the people that their hearts had become so corrupted that they only wanted to hear what they wanted to hear instead of the Lord God's truth "If a lying windbag should come and say, 'I'll promise you blessings of wine and beer,' he would be just the right preacher for these people!"

He spoke of hope in the future "In that day," says the Lord, "I will gather the lame, and assemble the outcasts whom I injured."

Micah warned that those who gloated as they attacked Jerusalem would themselves suffer later "But they do not know what the Lord is planning; they do not understand his strategy. He has gathered them like stalks of grain to be threshed at the threshing floor."

He warned Judah that the corruption was so complete "Do not rely on a friend; do not trust a companion! Don't even share secrets with the one who lies in your arms! For a son thinks his father is a fool, a daughter challenges her mother, and a daughter-in-law her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are his own servants." Then he contrasted their condition with his own "But I will keep watching for the Lord; I will wait for the God who delivers me. My God will hear my lament."

Micah concluded with a word of hope "There is no other God like you! You forgive sin and pardon the rebellion of those who remain among your people. You do not remain angry forever, but delight in showing loyal love. You will once again have mercy on us; you will conquer our evil deeds; you will hurl our sins into the depths of the sea. You will be loyal to Jacob and extend your loyal love to Abraham, which you promised on oath to our ancestors in ancient times."

INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

CONSIDER

The corrupting impact of false idols and a deadened heart toward the Lord God makes people vulnerable to easy deception by false teachers.

DISCUSS

Given the apparent utter-depravity of the people why would Micah pray with assurance that the Lord God would restore them?

REFLECT

The corruption was so bad that one could not even trust ones wife or other relatives or servants.

SHARE

When have you experienced or observed a social environment where the people were so depraved that none of them could reasonably trust one-another?

FAITH IN ACTION

PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you someone, or some Christian organization, that is under attack and needs hope that the Lord God will sustain and restore them - and that the attackers will be repelled by the Lord and given their just-reward.

ACT

Today I will pray for the person or organization You have designated and, as-appropriate, I will make some kind of contact to share a word of encouragement and of hope.

Be Specific _____

Tuesday ([2 Chronicles 28](#), [2 Kings 16-17](#))

2 Chronicles

Ahaz's Reign

28:1 Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for sixteen years in Jerusalem. He did not do what pleased the Lord, in contrast to his ancestor David. 28:2 He followed in the footsteps of the kings of Israel; he also made images of the Baals. 28:3 He offered sacrifices in the Valley of Ben-Hinnom and passed his sons through the fire, a horrible sin practiced by the nations whom the Lord drove out before the Israelites. 28:4 He offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.

28:5 The Lord his God handed him over to the king of Syria. The Syrians defeated him and deported many captives to Damascus. He was also handed over to the king of Israel, who thoroughly defeated him. 28:6 In one day King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel killed 120,000 warriors in Judah, because they had

abandoned the Lord God of their ancestors. 28:7 Zikri, an Ephraimite warrior, killed the king's son Maaseiah, Azrikam, the supervisor of the palace, and Elkanah, the king's second-in-command. 28:8 The Israelites seized from their brothers 200,000 wives, sons, and daughters. They also carried off a huge amount of plunder and took it back to Samaria.

28:9 Oded, a prophet of the Lord, was there. He went to meet the army as they arrived in Samaria and said to them: "Look, because the Lord God of your ancestors was angry with Judah he handed them over to you. You have killed them so mercilessly that God has taken notice. 28:10 And now you are planning to enslave the people of Judah and Jerusalem. Yet are you not also guilty before the Lord your God? 28:11 Now listen to me! Send back those you have seized from your brothers, for the Lord is very angry at you!" 28:12 So some of the Ephraimite family leaders, Azariah son of Jehochanan, Berechiah son of Meshillemoth, Jechizkiah son of Shallum, and Amasa son of Hadlai confronted those returning from the battle. 28:13 They said to them, "Don't bring those captives here! Are you planning on making us even more sinful and guilty before the Lord? Our guilt is already great and the Lord is very angry at Israel." 28:14 So the soldiers released the captives and the plunder before the officials and the entire assembly. 28:15 Men were assigned to take the prisoners and find clothes among the plunder for those who were naked. So they clothed them, supplied them with sandals, gave them food and drink, and provided them with oil to rub on their skin. They put the ones who couldn't walk on donkeys. They brought them back to their brothers at Jericho, the city of the date palm trees, and then returned to Samaria.

28:16 At that time King Ahaz asked the king of Assyria for help. 28:17 The Edomites had again invaded and defeated Judah and carried off captives. 28:18 The Philistines had raided the cities of Judah in the lowlands and the Negev. They captured and settled in Beth Shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, Soco and its surrounding villages, Timnah and its surrounding villages, and Gimzo and its surrounding villages. 28:19 The Lord humiliated Judah because of King Ahaz of Israel, for he encouraged Judah to sin and was very unfaithful to the Lord. 28:20 King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria came, but he gave him more trouble than support. 28:21 Ahaz gathered riches from the Lord's temple, the royal palace, and the officials and gave them to the king of Assyria, but that did not help.

28:22 During his time of trouble King Ahaz was even more unfaithful to the Lord. 28:23 He offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus whom he thought had defeated him. He reasoned, "Since the gods of the kings of Damascus helped them, I will sacrifice to them so they will help me." But they caused him and all Israel to stumble. 28:24 Ahaz gathered the items in God's temple and removed them. He shut the doors of the Lord's temple and erected altars on every street corner in Jerusalem. 28:25 In every city throughout Judah he set up high places to offer sacrifices to other gods. He angered the Lord God of his ancestors.

28:26 The rest of the events of Ahaz's reign, including his accomplishments from start to finish, are recorded in the Scroll of the Kings of Judah and Israel. 28:27 Ahaz passed away and was buried in the City of David; they did not bring him to the tombs of the kings of Israel. His son Hezekiah replaced him as king.

2 Kings

Ahaz's Reign over Judah

16:1 In the seventeenth year of the reign of Pekah son of Remaliah, Jotham's son Ahaz became king over Judah. 16:2 Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for sixteen years in Jerusalem. He did not do what pleased the Lord his God, in contrast to his ancestor David. 16:3 He followed in the footsteps of the kings of Israel. He passed his son through the fire, a horrible sin practiced by the nations whom the Lord drove out from before the Israelites. 16:4 He offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.

16:5 At that time King Rezin of Syria and King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel attacked Jerusalem. They besieged Ahaz, but were unable to conquer him. 16:6 (At that time King Rezin of Syria recovered Elat for Syria; he drove the Judahites from there. Syrians arrived in Elat and live there to this very day.) 16:7 Ahaz sent messengers to King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your dependent. March up and rescue me from the power of the king of Syria and the king of Israel, who have attacked me." 16:8 Then Ahaz took the silver and gold that were in the Lord's temple and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent it as tribute to the king of Assyria. 16:9 The king of Assyria responded favorably to his request; he attacked Damascus and captured it. He deported the people to Kir and executed Rezin.

16:10 When King Ahaz went to meet with King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria in Damascus, he saw the altar there. King Ahaz sent to Uriah the priest a drawing of the altar and a blueprint for its design. 16:11 Uriah the priest built an altar in conformity to the plans King Ahaz had sent from Damascus. Uriah the priest finished it before King Ahaz arrived back from Damascus. 16:12 When the king arrived back from Damascus and saw the altar, he approached it and offered a sacrifice on it. 16:13 He offered his burnt sacrifice and his grain offering. He poured out his libation and sprinkled the blood from his peace offerings on the altar. 16:14 He moved the bronze altar that stood in the Lord's presence from the front of the temple (between the altar and the Lord's temple) and put it on the north side of the new altar. 16:15 King Ahaz ordered Uriah the priest, "On the large altar offer the morning burnt sacrifice, the evening grain offering, the royal burnt sacrifices and grain offering, the burnt sacrifice for all the people of Israel, their grain offering, and their libations. Sprinkle all the blood of the burnt sacrifice and other sacrifices on it. The bronze altar will be for my personal use." 16:16 So Uriah the priest did exactly as King Ahaz ordered.

16:17 King Ahaz took off the frames of the movable stands, and removed the basins from them. He took "The Sea" down from the bronze bulls that supported it and put it on the pavement. 16:18 He also removed the Sabbath awning that had been built in the temple and the king's outer entranceway, on account of the king of Assyria.

16:19 The rest of the events of Ahaz's reign, including his accomplishments, are recorded in the scroll called the Annals of the Kings of Judah. 16:20 Ahaz passed away and was buried with his ancestors in the city of David. His son Hezekiah replaced him as king.

Hoshea's Reign over Israel

17:1 In the twelfth year of King Ahaz's reign over Judah, Hoshea son of Elah became king over Israel. He reigned in Samaria for nine years. 17:2 He did evil in the sight of the Lord, but not to the same degree as the Israelite kings who preceded him. 17:3 King Shalmaneser of Assyria threatened him; Hoshea became his subject and paid him tribute. 17:4 The king of Assyria discovered that Hoshea was planning a revolt. Hoshea had sent messengers to King So of Egypt and had not sent his annual tribute to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria arrested him and imprisoned him. 17:5 The king of Assyria marched through the whole land. He attacked Samaria and besieged it for three years. 17:6 In the ninth year of Hoshea's reign, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and deported the people of Israel to Assyria. He settled them in Halah, along the Habor (the river of Gozan), and in the cities of the Medes.

A Summary of Israel's Sinful History

17:7 This happened because the Israelites sinned against the Lord their God, who brought them up from the land of Egypt and freed them from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshiped other gods; 17:8 they observed the practices of the nations whom the Lord had driven out from before Israel, and followed the example of the kings of Israel. 17:9 The Israelites said things about the Lord their God that were not right. They built high places in all their cities, from the watchtower to the fortress. 17:10 They set up sacred pillars and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every green tree. 17:11 They burned incense on all the high places just like the nations whom the Lord had driven away from before them. Their evil practices made the Lord angry. 17:12 They worshiped the disgusting idols in blatant disregard of the Lord's command.

17:13 The Lord solemnly warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and all the seers, "Turn back from your evil ways; obey my commandments and rules that are recorded in the law. I ordered your ancestors to keep this law and sent my servants the prophets to remind you of its demands." 17:14 But they did not pay attention and were as stubborn as their ancestors, who had not trusted the Lord their God. 17:15 They rejected his rules, the covenant he had made with their ancestors, and the laws he had commanded them to obey. They paid allegiance to worthless idols, and so became worthless to the Lord. They copied the practices of the surrounding nations in blatant disregard of the Lord's command. 17:16 They abandoned all the commandments of the Lord their God; they made two metal calves and an Asherah pole, bowed down to all the stars in the sky, and worshiped Baal. 17:17 They passed their sons and daughters through the fire, and practiced divination and omen reading. They committed themselves to doing evil in the sight of the Lord and made him angry.

17:18 So the Lord was furious with Israel and rejected them; only the tribe of Judah was left. 17:19 Judah also failed to keep the commandments of the Lord their God; they followed Israel's example. 17:20 So the Lord rejected all of Israel's descendants; he humiliated them and handed them over to robbers, until he had thrown them from his presence. 17:21 He tore Israel away from David's dynasty, and Jeroboam son of Nebat became their king. Jeroboam drove Israel away from the Lord and encouraged them to commit a serious sin. 17:22 The Israelites followed in the sinful ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat and did not repudiate them. 17:23 Finally the Lord rejected Israel just as he had warned he would do through all his servants the prophets. Israel was deported from its land to Assyria and remains there to this very day.

The King of Assyria Populates Israel with Foreigners

17:24 The king of Assyria brought foreigners from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim and settled them in the cities of Samaria in place of the Israelites. They took possession of Samaria and lived in its cities. 17:25 When they first moved in, they did not worship the Lord. So the Lord sent lions among them and the lions were killing them. 17:26 The king of Assyria was told, "The nations whom you deported and settled in the cities of Samaria do not know the requirements of the God of the land, so he has sent lions among them. They are killing the people because they do not know the requirements of the God of the land." 17:27 So the king of Assyria ordered, "Take back one of the priests whom you deported from there. He must settle there and teach them the requirements of the God of the land." 17:28 So one of the priests whom they had deported from Samaria went back and settled in Bethel. He taught them how to worship the Lord.

17:29 But each of these nations made its own gods and put them in the shrines on the high places that the people of Samaria had made. Each nation did this in the cities where they lived. 17:30 The people from Babylon made Succoth Benoth, the people from Cuth made Nergal, the people from Hamath made Ashima, 17:31 the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burned their sons in the fire as an offering to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. 17:32 At the same time they worshiped the Lord. They appointed some of their own people to serve as priests in the shrines on the high places. 17:33 They were worshiping the Lord and at the same time serving their own gods in accordance with the practices of the nations from which they had been deported.

17:34 To this very day they observe their earlier practices. They do not worship the Lord; they do not obey the rules, regulations, law, and commandments that the Lord gave the descendants of Jacob, whom he renamed Israel. 17:35 The Lord made an agreement with them and instructed them, "You must not worship other gods. Do not bow down to them, serve them, or offer sacrifices to them. 17:36 Instead you must worship the Lord, who brought you up from the land of Egypt by his great power and military ability; bow down to him and offer sacrifices to him. 17:37 You must carefully obey at all times the rules, regulations, law, and commandments he wrote down for you. You must not worship other gods. 17:38 You must never forget the agreement I made with you, and you must not worship other gods. 17:39 Instead you must worship the Lord your God; then he will rescue you from the power of all your

enemies.” 17:40 But they pay no attention; instead they observe their earlier practices. 17:41 These nations are worshiping the Lord and at the same time serving their idols; their sons and grandsons do just as their fathers have done, to this very day.

PRAYER

Lord, the chronic disobedience of the king, and of the people, led to terrible trouble, yet You patiently defended the essence of Israel and Judah. May I remember that my choices have consequences; upon the blessings you wish to bestow for obedience, and upon the troubles that will come from disobedience. Your ancient people of Israel refused to learn and to obey and thus squandered the blessing of the Promised Land and surrendered the gift of freedom You had given them. May I learn to be more obedient so that I do not become again a servant of the sin of this fallen world.

SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Ahaz was king of Judah for sixteen years, he was an evil king who even passed his son through the fire. King Rezin of Syria and King Pekah of Israel attacked so Ahaz appealed to King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria – sending him all the silver and gold in the temple and royal residence and offering to become his dependent were he to rescue him.

The Assyrians agreed and attacked Damascus, deporting the people, and killing king Rezin.

Ahaz traveled to Assyria to see the king and while there he saw the altar. He drew diagrams then sent word to Uriah the priest to duplicate them, which he did. Upon Ahaz’s return he initiated new schedules for regular sacrifices and otherwise rearranged things in the temple.

Ahaz was unfaithful to the Lord God as king of Judah so he was handed over to his enemies in Israel, who took his wealth and many captives, Israel also took 200,000 wives and others but the prophet challenged the leaders of Israel who challenged the army who then released them. Ahaz multiplied false worship throughout Judah but when he died he was not buried in the royal tombs.

Hoshea was king of Israel for nine years and while he was not as evil as many who came before him he still failed to follow the Lord fully. King Shalmaneser of Assyria threatened to invade Israel so Hoshea submitted Israel and paid tribute.

Hoshea then decided to ask Egypt for assistance in a rebellion against Assyria and Shalmaneser discovered the plan, arrested Hoshea and laid siege against Israel for three years, finally overwhelming it and deporting the people.

The Lord God rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt, brought them to the promised land, and then caused them to be removed from the Promised Land due to their chronic disobedience.

Assyria repopulated the Promised Land with foreigners who again filled it with pagan worship of false gods.

The Lord God sent lions among the foreigners and many were killed so that the Assyrians brought back priests from the deported Israelites to teach them how to worship what they superstitiously understood as “the god of the land”. They added those Israelite worship rituals to their pagan rituals.

INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

CONSIDER

Despite generations of evidence that obedience brought blessings to the king and the people alike Ahaz followed his foolish predecessors and disrespected the Lord God.

DISCUSS

When Israel saw Assyria deport so many from Judah why would they not desperately seek a way to please the Lord God so that they would be protected from the same fate?

REFLECT

Assyria became the major power in the region, obliterating Damascus and essentially controlling both Israel and Judah. The Promised Land reverted to its Fallen and cursed condition despite all that the Lord God did to make it a wonderful home for Israel.

SHARE

When have you experienced a terrible experience, causing you to return your attention to the Lord?
When have you experienced or observed poor decisions made over and over despite the clear evidence that they would lead to bad results?

FAITH IN ACTION

PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to drive a wedge between anything in the world which distracts you from the priority of your relationship with the Lord God and to reveal to you a place in your life where you are being disobedient.

ACT

Today I will listen to the Holy Spirit and obey. I will turn away from the idols and obsessions of this temporary world and rather give my attention and worship to the eternal things of God. I will repent (confess and turn away from) my rebellion. It may be a failure to pray, a failure to fellowship, a failure to

serve, a failure to witness, a failure to resist or to flee sin. I will ask a fellow believer to pray in-agreement for my surrender of this place in my life and to be my accountability partner as I cooperate with the Holy Spirit in never returning to that sin.

Be Specific _____

Wednesday ([Isaiah 13–27](#))

The Lord Will Judge Babylon

13:1 This is a message about Babylon that God revealed to Isaiah son of Amoz:

13:2 On a bare hill raise a signal flag, shout to them, wave your hand, so they might enter the gates of the princes!

13:3 I have given orders to my chosen soldiers; I have summoned the warriors through whom I will vent my anger, my boasting, arrogant ones.

13:4 There is a loud noise on the mountains – it sounds like a large army! There is great commotion among the kingdoms – nations are being assembled! The Lord who commands armies is mustering forces for battle.

13:5 They come from a distant land, from the horizon. It is the Lord with his instruments of judgment, coming to destroy the whole earth.

13:6 Wail, for the Lord's day of judgment is near; it comes with all the destructive power of the sovereign judge.

13:7 For this reason all hands hang limp, every human heart loses its courage.

13:8 They panic – cramps and pain seize hold of them like those of a woman who is straining to give birth. They look at one another in astonishment; their faces are flushed red.

13:9 Look, the Lord's day of judgment is coming; it is a day of cruelty and savage, raging anger, destroying the earth and annihilating its sinners.

13:10 Indeed the stars in the sky and their constellations no longer give out their light; the sun is darkened as soon as it rises, and the moon does not shine.

13:11 I will punish the world for its evil, and wicked people for their sin. I will put an end to the pride of the insolent, I will bring down the arrogance of tyrants.

13:12 I will make human beings more scarce than pure gold, and people more scarce than gold from Ophir.

13:13 So I will shake the heavens, and the earth will shake loose from its foundation, because of the fury of the Lord who commands armies, in the day he vents his raging anger.

13:14 Like a frightened gazelle or a sheep with no shepherd, each will turn toward home, each will run to his homeland.

13:15 Everyone who is caught will be stabbed; everyone who is seized will die by the sword.

13:16 Their children will be smashed to pieces before their very eyes; their houses will be looted and their wives raped.

13:17 Look, I am stirring up the Medes to attack them; they are not concerned about silver, nor are they interested in gold.

13:18 Their arrows will cut young men to ribbons; they have no compassion on a person's offspring, they will not look with pity on children.

13:19 Babylon, the most admired of kingdoms, the Chaldeans' source of honor and pride, will be destroyed by God just as Sodom and Gomorrah were.

13:20 No one will live there again; no one will ever reside there again. No bedouin will camp there, no shepherds will rest their flocks there.

13:21 Wild animals will rest there, the ruined houses will be full of hyenas. Ostriches will live there, wild goats will skip among the ruins.

13:22 Wild dogs will yip in her ruined fortresses, jackals will yelp in the once-splendid palaces. Her time is almost up, her days will not be prolonged.

14:1 The Lord will certainly have compassion on Jacob; he will again choose Israel as his special people and restore them to their land. Resident foreigners will join them and unite with the family of Jacob. 14:2 Nations will take them and bring them back to their own place. Then the family of Jacob will make foreigners their servants as they settle in the Lord's land. They will make their captors captives and rule over the ones who oppressed them. 14:3 When the Lord gives you relief from your suffering and anxiety, and from the hard labor which you were made to perform, 14:4 you will taunt the king of Babylon with these words: "Look how the oppressor has met his end! Hostility has ceased!

14:5 The Lord has broken the club of the wicked, the scepter of rulers.

14:6 It furiously struck down nations with unceasing blows. It angrily ruled over nations, oppressing them without restraint.

14:7 The whole earth rests and is quiet; they break into song.

14:8 The evergreens also rejoice over your demise, as do the cedars of Lebanon, singing, 'Since you fell asleep, no woodsman comes up to chop us down!'

14:9 Sheol below is stirred up about you, ready to meet you when you arrive. It rouses the spirits of the dead for you, all the former leaders of the earth; it makes all the former kings of the nations rise from their thrones.

14:10 All of them respond to you, saying: 'You too have become weak like us! You have become just like us!'

14:11 Your splendor has been brought down to Sheol, as well as the sound of your stringed instruments. You lie on a bed of maggots, with a blanket of worms over you.

14:12 Look how you have fallen from the sky, O shining one, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the ground, O conqueror of the nations!

14:13 You said to yourself, "I will climb up to the sky. Above the stars of El I will set up my throne. I will rule on the mountain of assembly on the remote slopes of Zaphon.

14:14 I will climb up to the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High!"

14:15 But you were brought down to Sheol, to the remote slopes of the pit.

14:16 Those who see you stare at you, they look at you carefully, thinking: "Is this the man who shook the earth, the one who made kingdoms tremble?"

14:17 Is this the one who made the world like a desert, who ruined its cities, and refused to free his prisoners so they could return home?"

14:18 As for all the kings of the nations, all of them lie down in splendor, each in his own tomb.

14:19 But you have been thrown out of your grave like a shoot that is thrown away. You lie among the slain, among those who have been slashed by the sword, among those headed for the stones of the pit, as if you were a mangled corpse.

14:20 You will not be buried with them, because you destroyed your land and killed your people. The offspring of the wicked will never be mentioned again.

14:21 Prepare to execute his sons for the sins their ancestors have committed. They must not rise up and take possession of the earth, or fill the surface of the world with cities.”

14:22 “I will rise up against them,” says the Lord who commands armies. “I will blot out all remembrance of Babylon and destroy all her people, including the offspring she produces,” says the Lord.

14:23 “I will turn her into a place that is overrun with wild animals and covered with pools of stagnant water. I will get rid of her, just as one sweeps away dirt with a broom,” says the Lord who commands armies.

14:24 The Lord who commands armies makes this solemn vow: “Be sure of this: Just as I have intended, so it will be; just as I have planned, it will happen.

14:25 I will break Assyria in my land, I will trample them underfoot on my hills. Their yoke will be removed from my people, the burden will be lifted from their shoulders.

14:26 This is the plan I have devised for the whole earth; my hand is ready to strike all the nations.”

14:27 Indeed, the Lord who commands armies has a plan, and who can possibly frustrate it? His hand is ready to strike, and who can possibly stop it?

The Lord Will Judge the Philistines

14:28 In the year King Ahaz died, this message was revealed:

14:29 Don’t be so happy, all you Philistines, just because the club that beat you has been broken! For a viper will grow out of the serpent’s root, and its fruit will be a darting adder.

14:30 The poor will graze in my pastures; the needy will rest securely. But I will kill your root by famine; it will put to death all your survivors.

14:31 Wail, O city gate! Cry out, O city! Melt with fear, all you Philistines! For out of the north comes a cloud of smoke, and there are no stragglers in its ranks.

14:32 How will they respond to the messengers of this nation? Indeed, the Lord has made Zion secure; the oppressed among his people will find safety in her.

The Lord Will Judge Moab

15:1 Here is a message about Moab: Indeed, in a night it is devastated, Ar of Moab is destroyed! Indeed, in a night it is devastated, Kir of Moab is destroyed!

15:2 They went up to the temple, the people of Dibon went up to the high places to lament. Because of what happened to Nebo and Medeba, Moab wails. Every head is shaved bare, every beard is trimmed off.

15:3 In their streets they wear sackcloth; on their roofs and in their town squares all of them wail, they fall down weeping.

15:4 The people of Heshbon and Elealeh cry out, their voices are heard as far away as Jahaz. For this reason Moab's soldiers shout in distress; their courage wavers.

15:5 My heart cries out because of Moab's plight, and for the fugitives stretched out as far as Zoar and Eglath Shelishiyah. For they weep as they make their way up the ascent of Luhith; they loudly lament their demise on the road to Horonaim.

15:6 For the waters of Nimrim are gone; the grass is dried up, the vegetation has disappeared, and there are no plants.

15:7 For this reason what they have made and stored up, they carry over the Stream of the Poplars.

15:8 Indeed, the cries of distress echo throughout Moabite territory; their wailing can be heard in Eglaim and Beer Elim.

15:9 Indeed, the waters of Dimon are full of blood! Indeed, I will heap even more trouble on Dimon. A lion will attack the Moabite fugitives and the people left in the land.

16:1 Send rams as tribute to the ruler of the land, from Sela in the desert to the hill of Daughter Zion.

16:2 At the fords of the Arnon the Moabite women are like a bird that flies about when forced from its nest.

16:3 "Bring a plan, make a decision! Provide some shade in the middle of the day! Hide the fugitives! Do not betray the one who tries to escape!

16:4 Please let the Moabite fugitives live among you. Hide them from the destroyer!" Certainly the one who applies pressure will cease, the destroyer will come to an end, those who trample will disappear from the earth.

16:5 Then a trustworthy king will be established; he will rule in a reliable manner, this one from David's family. He will be sure to make just decisions and will be experienced in executing justice.

16:6 We have heard about Moab's pride, their great arrogance, their boasting, pride, and excess. But their boastful claims are empty!

16:7 So Moab wails over its demise – they all wail! Completely devastated, they moan about what has happened to the raisin cakes of Kir Hareseth.

16:8 For the fields of Heshbon are dried up, as well as the vines of Sibmah. The rulers of the nations trample all over its vines, which reach Jazer and spread to the desert; their shoots spread out and cross the sea.

16:9 So I weep along with Jazer over the vines of Sibmah. I will saturate you with my tears, Heshbon and Elealeh, for the conquering invaders shout triumphantly over your fruit and crops.

16:10 Joy and happiness disappear from the orchards, and in the vineyards no one rejoices or shouts; no one treads out juice in the wine vats – I have brought the joyful shouts to an end.

16:11 So my heart constantly sighs for Moab, like the strumming of a harp, my inner being sighs for Kir Hareseth.

16:12 When the Moabites plead with all their might at their high places, and enter their temples to pray, their prayers will be ineffective!

16:13 This is the message the Lord previously announced about Moab. 16:14 Now the Lord makes this announcement: “Within exactly three years Moab’s splendor will disappear, along with all her many people; there will be just a few, insignificant survivors left.”

The Lord Will Judge Damascus

17:1 Here is a message about Damascus: “Look, Damascus is no longer a city, it is a heap of ruins!

17:2 The cities of Aroer are abandoned. They will be used for herds, which will lie down there in peace.

17:3 Fortified cities will disappear from Ephraim, and Damascus will lose its kingdom. The survivors in Syria will end up like the splendor of the Israelites,” says the Lord who commands armies.

17:4 “At that time Jacob’s splendor will be greatly diminished, and he will become skin and bones.

17:5 It will be as when one gathers the grain harvest, and his hand gleans the ear of grain. It will be like one gathering the ears of grain in the Valley of Rephaim.

17:6 There will be some left behind, like when an olive tree is beaten – two or three ripe olives remain toward the very top, four or five on its fruitful branches,” says the Lord God of Israel.

17:7 At that time men will trust in their creator; they will depend on the Holy One of Israel.

17:8 They will no longer trust in the altars their hands made, or depend on the Asherah poles and incense altars their fingers made.

17:9 At that time their fortified cities will be like the abandoned summits of the Amorites, which they abandoned because of the Israelites; there will be desolation.

17:10 For you ignore the God who rescues you; you pay no attention to your strong protector. So this is what happens: You cultivate beautiful plants and plant exotic vines.

17:11 The day you begin cultivating, you do what you can to make it grow; the morning you begin planting, you do what you can to make it sprout. Yet the harvest will disappear in the day of disease and incurable pain.

17:12 The many nations massing together are as good as dead, those who make a commotion as loud as the roaring of the sea's waves. The people making such an uproar are as good as dead, those who make an uproar as loud as the roaring of powerful waves.

17:13 Though these people make an uproar as loud as the roaring of powerful waves, when he shouts at them, they will flee to a distant land, driven before the wind like dead weeds on the hills, or like dead thistles before a strong gale.

17:14 In the evening there is sudden terror; by morning they vanish. This is the fate of those who try to plunder us, the destiny of those who try to loot us!

The Lord Will Judge a Distant Land in the South

18:1 The land of buzzing wings is as good as dead, the one beyond the rivers of Cush,

18:2 that sends messengers by sea, who glide over the water's surface in boats made of papyrus. Go, you swift messengers, to a nation of tall, smooth-skinned people, to a people that are feared far and wide, to a nation strong and victorious, whose land rivers divide.

18:3 All you who live in the world, who reside on the earth, you will see a signal flag raised on the mountains; you will hear a trumpet being blown.

18:4 For this is what the Lord has told me: "I will wait and watch from my place, like scorching heat produced by the sunlight, like a cloud of mist in the heat of harvest."

18:5 For before the harvest, when the bud has sprouted, and the ripening fruit appears, he will cut off the unproductive shoots with pruning knives; he will prune the tendrils.

18:6 They will all be left for the birds of the hills and the wild animals; the birds will eat them during the summer, and all the wild animals will eat them during the winter.

18:7 At that time tribute will be brought to the Lord who commands armies, by a people that are tall and smooth-skinned, a people that are feared far and wide, a nation strong and victorious, whose land rivers divide. The tribute will be brought to the place where the Lord who commands armies has chosen to reside, on Mount Zion.

The Lord Will Judge Egypt

19:1 Here is a message about Egypt: Look, the Lord rides on a swift-moving cloud and approaches Egypt. The idols of Egypt tremble before him; the Egyptians lose their courage.

19:2 "I will provoke civil strife in Egypt, brothers will fight with each other, as will neighbors, cities, and kingdoms.

19:3 The Egyptians will panic, and I will confuse their strategy. They will seek guidance from the idols and from the spirits of the dead, from the pits used to conjure up underworld spirits, and from the magicians.

19:4 I will hand Egypt over to a harsh master; a powerful king will rule over them," says the sovereign master, the Lord who commands armies.

19:5 The water of the sea will be dried up, and the river will dry up and be empty.

19:6 The canals will stink; the streams of Egypt will trickle and then dry up; the bulrushes and reeds will decay,

19:7 along with the plants by the mouth of the river. All the cultivated land near the river will turn to dust and be blown away.

19:8 The fishermen will mourn and lament, all those who cast a fishhook into the river, and those who spread out a net on the water's surface will grieve.

19:9 Those who make clothes from combed flax will be embarrassed; those who weave will turn pale.

19:10 Those who make cloth will be demoralized; all the hired workers will be depressed.

19:11 The officials of Zoan are nothing but fools; Pharaoh's wise advisers give stupid advice. How dare you say to Pharaoh, "I am one of the sages, one well-versed in the writings of the ancient kings?"

19:12 But where, oh where, are your wise men? Let them tell you, let them find out what the Lord who commands armies has planned for Egypt.

19:13 The officials of Zoan are fools, the officials of Memphis are misled; the rulers of her tribes lead Egypt astray.

19:14 The Lord has made them undiscerning; they lead Egypt astray in all she does, so that she is like a drunk sliding around in his own vomit.

19:15 Egypt will not be able to do a thing, head or tail, shoots and stalk.

19:16 At that time the Egyptians will be like women. They will tremble and fear because the Lord who commands armies brandishes his fist against them. 19:17 The land of Judah will humiliate Egypt. Everyone who hears about Judah will be afraid because of what the Lord who commands armies is planning to do to them.

19:18 At that time five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the Lord who commands armies. One will be called the City of the Sun. 19:19 At that time there will be an altar for the Lord in the middle of the land of Egypt, as well as a sacred pillar dedicated to the Lord at its border. 19:20 It will become a visual reminder in the land of Egypt of the Lord who commands armies. When they cry out to the Lord because of oppressors, he will send them a deliverer and defender who will rescue them. 19:21 The Lord will reveal himself to the Egyptians, and they will acknowledge the Lord's authority at that time. They will present sacrifices and offerings; they will make vows to the Lord and fulfill them. 19:22 The Lord will strike Egypt, striking and then healing them. They will turn to the Lord and he will listen to their prayers and heal them.

19:23 At that time there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will visit Egypt, and the Egyptians will visit Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. 19:24 At that time Israel will be the third member of the group, along with Egypt and Assyria, and will be a recipient of blessing in the earth. 19:25 The Lord who commands armies will pronounce a blessing over the earth, saying, "Blessed be my people, Egypt, and the work of my hands, Assyria, and my special possession, Israel!"

20:1 The Lord revealed the following message during the year in which King Sargon of Assyria sent his commanding general to Ashdod, and he fought against it and captured it. 20:2 At that time the Lord announced through Isaiah son of Amoz: "Go, remove the sackcloth from your waist and take your sandals off your feet." He did as instructed and walked around in undergarments and barefoot. 20:3 Later the Lord explained, "In the same way that my servant Isaiah has walked around in undergarments and barefoot for the past three years, as an object lesson and omen pertaining to Egypt and Cush, 20:4 so the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush, both young and old. They will be in undergarments and barefoot, with the buttocks exposed; the Egyptians will be publicly humiliated. 20:5 Those who put their hope in Cush and took pride in Egypt will be afraid and embarrassed. 20:6 At

that time those who live on this coast will say, 'Look what has happened to our source of hope to whom we fled for help, expecting to be rescued from the king of Assyria! How can we escape now?'"

The Lord Will Judge Babylon

21:1 Here is a message about the Desert by the Sea: Like strong winds blowing in the south, one invades from the desert, from a land that is feared.

21:2 I have received a distressing message: "The deceiver deceives, the destroyer destroys. Attack, you Elamites! Lay siege, you Medes! I will put an end to all the groaning!"

21:3 For this reason my stomach churns; cramps overwhelm me like the contractions of a woman in labor. I am disturbed by what I hear, horrified by what I see.

21:4 My heart palpitates, I shake in fear; the twilight I desired has brought me terror.

21:5 Arrange the table, lay out the carpet, eat and drink! Get up, you officers, smear oil on the shields!

21:6 For this is what the sovereign master has told me: "Go, post a guard! He must report what he sees.

21:7 When he sees chariots, teams of horses, riders on donkeys, riders on camels, he must be alert, very alert."

21:8 Then the guard cries out: "On the watchtower, O sovereign master, I stand all day long; at my post I am stationed every night.

21:9 Look what's coming! A charioteer, a team of horses." When questioned, he replies, "Babylon has fallen, fallen! All the idols of her gods lie shattered on the ground!"

21:10 O my downtrodden people, crushed like stalks on the threshing floor, what I have heard from the Lord who commands armies, the God of Israel, I have reported to you.

Bad News for Seir

21:11 Here is a message about Dumah: Someone calls to me from Seir, "Watchman, what is left of the night? Watchman, what is left of the night?"

21:12 The watchman replies, "Morning is coming, but then night. If you want to ask, ask; come back again."

The Lord Will Judge Arabia

21:13 Here is a message about Arabia: In the thicket of Arabia you spend the night, you Dedanite caravans.

21:14 Bring out some water for the thirsty. You who live in the land of Tema, bring some food for the fugitives.

21:15 For they flee from the swords – from the drawn sword and from the battle-ready bow and from the severity of the battle.

21:16 For this is what the sovereign master has told me: “Within exactly one year all the splendor of Kedar will come to an end. 21:17 Just a handful of archers, the warriors of Kedar, will be left.” Indeed, the Lord God of Israel has spoken.

The Lord Will Judge Jerusalem

22:1 Here is a message about the Valley of Vision: What is the reason that all of you go up to the rooftops?

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.

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.

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.”

22:5 For the sovereign master, the Lord who commands armies, has planned a day of panic, defeat, and confusion. In the Valley of Vision people shout and cry out to the hill.

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

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

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

22:9 You saw the many breaks in the walls of the city of David; you stored up water in the lower pool.

22:10 You counted the houses in Jerusalem, and demolished houses so you could have material to reinforce the wall.

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!

22:12 At that time the sovereign master, the Lord who commands armies, called for weeping and mourning, for shaved heads and sackcloth.

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!”

22:14 The Lord who commands armies told me this: “Certainly this sin will not be forgiven as long as you live,” says the sovereign master, the Lord who commands armies.

22:15 This is what the sovereign master, the Lord who commands armies, says: “Go visit this administrator, Shebna, who supervises the palace, and tell him:

22:16 ‘What right do you have to be here? What relatives do you have buried here? Why do you chisel out a tomb for yourself here? He chisels out his burial site in an elevated place, he carves out his tomb on a cliff.

22:17 Look, the Lord will throw you far away, you mere man! He will wrap you up tightly.

22:18 He will wind you up tightly into a ball and throw you into a wide, open land. There you will die, and there with you will be your impressive chariots, which bring disgrace to the house of your master.

22:19 I will remove you from your office; you will be thrown down from your position.

22:20 “At that time I will summon my servant Eliakim, son of Hilkiah. 22:21 I will put your robe on him, tie your belt around him, and transfer your authority to him. He will become a protector of the residents of Jerusalem and of the people of Judah. 22:22 I will place the key to the house of David on his shoulder. When he opens the door, no one can close it; when he closes the door, no one can open it. 22:23 I will fasten him like a peg into a solid place; he will bring honor and respect to his father’s family. 22:24 His father’s family will gain increasing prominence because of him, including the offspring and the offshoots. All the small containers, including the bowls and all the jars will hang from this peg.’

22:25 “At that time,” says the Lord who commands armies, “the peg fastened into a solid place will come loose. It will be cut off and fall, and the load hanging on it will be cut off.” Indeed, the Lord has spoken.

The Lord Will Judge Tyre

23:1 Here is a message about Tyre: Wail, you large ships, for the port is too devastated to enter! From the land of Cyprus this news is announced to them.

23:2 Lament, you residents of the coast, you merchants of Sidon who travel over the sea, whose agents sail over 23:3 the deep waters! Grain from the Shihor region, crops grown near the Nile she receives; she is the trade center of the nations.

23:4 Be ashamed, O Sidon, for the sea says this, O fortress of the sea: "I have not gone into labor or given birth; I have not raised young men or brought up young women."

23:5 When the news reaches Egypt, they will be shaken by what has happened to Tyre.

23:6 Travel to Tarshish! Wail, you residents of the coast!

23:7 Is this really your boisterous city whose origins are in the distant past, and whose feet led her to a distant land to reside?

23:8 Who planned this for royal Tyre, whose merchants are princes, whose traders are the dignitaries of the earth?

23:9 The Lord who commands armies planned it – to dishonor the pride that comes from all her beauty, to humiliate all the dignitaries of the earth.

23:10 Daughter Tarshish, travel back to your land, as one crosses the Nile; there is no longer any marketplace in Tyre.

23:11 The Lord stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook kingdoms; he gave the order to destroy Canaan's fortresses.

23:12 He said, "You will no longer celebrate, oppressed virgin daughter Sidon! Get up, travel to Cyprus, but you will find no relief there."

23:13 Look at the land of the Chaldeans, these people who have lost their identity! The Assyrians have made it a home for wild animals. They erected their siege towers, demolished its fortresses, and turned it into a heap of ruins.

23:14 Wail, you large ships, for your fortress is destroyed!

23:15 At that time Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, the typical life span of a king. At the end of seventy years Tyre will try to attract attention again, like the prostitute in the popular song:

23:16 "Take the harp, go through the city, forgotten prostitute! Play it well, play lots of songs, so you'll be noticed!"

23:17 At the end of seventy years the Lord will revive Tyre. She will start making money again by selling her services to all the earth's kingdoms. 23:18 Her profits and earnings will be set apart for the Lord. They will not be stored up or accumulated, for her profits will be given to those who live in the Lord's presence and will be used to purchase large quantities of food and beautiful clothes.

The Lord Will Judge the Earth

24:1 Look, the Lord is ready to devastate the earth and leave it in ruins; he will mar its surface and scatter its inhabitants.

24:2 Everyone will suffer – the priest as well as the people, the master as well as the servant, the elegant lady as well as the female attendant, the seller as well as the buyer, the borrower as well as the lender, the creditor as well as the debtor.

24:3 The earth will be completely devastated and thoroughly ransacked. For the Lord has decreed this judgment.

24:4 The earth dries up and withers, the world shrivels up and withers; the prominent people of the earth fade away.

24:5 The earth is defiled by its inhabitants, for they have violated laws, disregarded the regulation, and broken the permanent treaty.

24:6 So a treaty curse devours the earth; its inhabitants pay for their guilt. This is why the inhabitants of the earth disappear, and are reduced to just a handful of people.

24:7 The new wine dries up, the vines shrivel up, all those who like to celebrate groan.

24:8 The happy sound of the tambourines stops, the revelry of those who celebrate comes to a halt, the happy sound of the harp ceases.

24:9 They no longer sing and drink wine; the beer tastes bitter to those who drink it.

24:10 The ruined town is shattered; all of the houses are shut up tight.

24:11 They howl in the streets because of what happened to the wine; all joy turns to sorrow; celebrations disappear from the earth.

24:12 The city is left in ruins; the gate is reduced to rubble.

24:13 This is what will happen throughout the earth, among the nations. It will be like when they beat an olive tree, and just a few olives are left at the end of the harvest.

24:14 They lift their voices and shout joyfully; they praise the majesty of the Lord in the west.

24:15 So in the east extol the Lord, along the seacoasts extol the fame of the Lord God of Israel.

24:16 From the ends of the earth we hear songs – the Just One is majestic. But I say, “I’m wasting away! I’m wasting away! I’m doomed! Deceivers deceive, deceivers thoroughly deceive!”

24:17 Terror, pit, and snare are ready to overtake you inhabitants of the earth!

24:18 The one who runs away from the sound of the terror will fall into the pit; the one who climbs out of the pit, will be trapped by the snare. For the floodgates of the heavens are opened up and the foundations of the earth shake.

24:19 The earth is broken in pieces, the earth is ripped to shreds, the earth shakes violently.

24:20 The earth will stagger around like a drunk; it will sway back and forth like a hut in a windstorm. Its sin will weigh it down, and it will fall and never get up again.

The Lord Will Become King

24:21 At that time the Lord will punish the heavenly forces in the heavens and the earthly kings on the earth.

24:22 They will be imprisoned in a pit, locked up in a prison, and after staying there for a long time, they will be punished.

24:23 The full moon will be covered up, the bright sun will be darkened; for the Lord who commands armies will rule on Mount Zion in Jerusalem in the presence of his assembly, in majestic splendor.

25:1 O Lord, you are my God!

I will exalt you in praise, I will extol your fame. For you have done extraordinary things, and executed plans made long ago exactly as you decreed.

25:2 Indeed, you have made the city into a heap of rubble, the fortified town into a heap of ruins; the fortress of foreigners is no longer a city, it will never be rebuilt.

25:3 So a strong nation will extol you; the towns of powerful nations will fear you.

25:4 For you are a protector for the poor, a protector for the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm, a shade from the heat. Though the breath of tyrants is like a winter rainstorm,

25:5 like heat in a dry land, you humble the boasting foreigners. Just as the shadow of a cloud causes the heat to subside, so he causes the song of tyrants to cease.

25:6 The Lord who commands armies will hold a banquet for all the nations on this mountain. At this banquet there will be plenty of meat and aged wine – tender meat and choicest wine.

25:7 On this mountain he will swallow up the shroud that is over all the peoples, the woven covering that is over all the nations;

25:8 he will swallow up death permanently. The sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from every face, and remove his people's disgrace from all the earth. Indeed, the Lord has announced it!

25:9 At that time they will say, "Look, here is our God! We waited for him and he delivered us. Here is the Lord! We waited for him. Let's rejoice and celebrate his deliverance!"

25:10 For the Lord's power will make this mountain secure. Moab will be trampled down where it stands, as a heap of straw is trampled down in a manure pile.

25:11 Moab will spread out its hands in the middle of it, just as a swimmer spreads his hands to swim; the Lord will bring down Moab's pride as it spreads its hands.

25:12 The fortified city (along with the very tops of your walls) he will knock down, he will bring it down, he will throw it down to the dusty ground.

Judah Will Celebrate

26:1 At that time this song will be sung in the land of Judah: "We have a strong city! The Lord's deliverance, like walls and a rampart, makes it secure.

26:2 Open the gates so a righteous nation can enter – one that remains trustworthy.

26:3 You keep completely safe the people who maintain their faith, for they trust in you.

26:4 Trust in the Lord from this time forward, even in Yah, the Lord, an enduring protector!

26:5 Indeed, the Lord knocks down those who live in a high place, he brings down an elevated town; he brings it down to the ground, he throws it down to the dust.

26:6 It is trampled underfoot by the feet of the oppressed, by the soles of the poor."

God's People Anticipate Vindication

26:7 The way of the righteous is level, the path of the righteous that you make is straight.

26:8 Yes, as your judgments unfold, O Lord, we wait for you. We desire your fame and reputation to grow.

26:9 I look for you during the night, my spirit within me seeks you at dawn, for when your judgments come upon the earth, those who live in the world learn about justice.

26:10 If the wicked are shown mercy, they do not learn about justice. Even in a land where right is rewarded, they act unjustly; they do not see the Lord's majesty revealed.

26:11 O Lord, you are ready to act, but they don't even notice. They will see and be put to shame by your angry judgment against humankind, yes, fire will consume your enemies.

26:12 O Lord, you make us secure, for even all we have accomplished, you have done for us.

26:13 O Lord, our God, masters other than you have ruled us, but we praise your name alone.

26:14 The dead do not come back to life, the spirits of the dead do not rise. That is because you came in judgment and destroyed them, you wiped out all memory of them.

26:15 You have made the nation larger, O Lord, you have made the nation larger and revealed your splendor, you have extended all the borders of the land.

26:16 O Lord, in distress they looked for you; they uttered incantations because of your discipline.

26:17 As when a pregnant woman gets ready to deliver and strains and cries out because of her labor pains, so were we because of you, O Lord.

26:18 We were pregnant, we strained, we gave birth, as it were, to wind. We cannot produce deliverance on the earth; people to populate the world are not born.

26:19 Your dead will come back to life; your corpses will rise up. Wake up and shout joyfully, you who live in the ground! For you will grow like plants drenched with the morning dew, and the earth will bring forth its dead spirits.

26:20 Go, my people! Enter your inner rooms! Close your doors behind you! Hide for a little while, until his angry judgment is over!

26:21 For look, the Lord is coming out of the place where he lives, to punish the sin of those who live on the earth. The earth will display the blood shed on it; it will no longer cover up its slain.

27:1 At that time the Lord will punish with his destructive, great, and powerful sword Leviathan the fast-moving serpent, Leviathan the squirming serpent; he will kill the sea monster.

27:2 When that time comes, sing about a delightful vineyard!

27:3 I, the Lord, protect it; I water it regularly. I guard it night and day, so no one can harm it.

27:4 I am not angry. I wish I could confront some thorns and briars! Then I would march against them for battle; I would set them all on fire,

27:5 unless they became my subjects and made peace with me; let them make peace with me.

27:6 The time is coming when Jacob will take root; Israel will blossom and grow branches. The produce will fill the surface of the world.

27:7 Has the Lord struck down Israel like he did their oppressors? Has Israel been killed like their enemies?

27:8 When you summon her for divorce, you prosecute her; he drives her away with his strong wind in the day of the east wind.

27:9 So in this way Jacob's sin will be forgiven, and this is how they will show they are finished sinning: They will make all the stones of the altars like crushed limestone, and the Asherah poles and the incense altars will no longer stand.

27:10 For the fortified city is left alone; it is a deserted settlement and abandoned like the desert. Calves graze there; they lie down there and eat its branches bare.

27:11 When its branches get brittle, they break; women come and use them for kindling. For these people lack understanding, therefore the one who made them has no compassion on them; the one who formed them has no mercy on them.

27:12 At that time the Lord will shake the tree, from the Euphrates River to the Stream of Egypt. Then you will be gathered up one by one, O Israelites. 27:13 At that time a large trumpet will be blown, and the ones lost in the land of Assyria will come, as well as the refugees in the land of Egypt. They will worship the Lord on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.

PRAYER

Lord, You declared Your sovereign intent to punish the Israelite rebels and also the pagans who far-overstepped their reasonable purpose in punishing Israel; not only bragging that they and their false pagan gods accomplished their empire-building alone, but also blaspheming You. From these chapters of Your

judgment may I remember that every choice has a consequence, sometimes not immediately obvious, and sometimes terrible. You will judge those who are Your enemies and bring deliverance to those who belong to You. May I pray “Come soon Lord!”

SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Isaiah recorded the detailed proclamation of the Lord God’s judgment of the nations, Israel and her enemies alike, and for each it was to be terrible.

The detailed nature of the actions of the pagan nations whom the Lord God allowed to serve as His bludgeon against Israel is representative of their free will and of their heart-condition apart from Him. He neither desired nor did He cause them to choose to murder babies nor rape women but because Israel had insisted upon driving Him away He chose to stand by and allow the hellish-consequences of a fallen world without His presence to be their experience.

As he addressed each Isaiah presented the Lord God’s charges against each nation and then His judgment against them.

As He deemed appropriate the Lord God led Isaiah to share a message of hope for some of the nations, e.g. Tyre, though their renewal was in the context of service to Him rather than themselves.

Isaiah continued the last days of the end times prophesy of the Lord God, describing the imprisonment of the enemies of the Lord God from both the spiritual and physical world where they would be held in the darkness they have chosen, eventually to be released – but into a world that is equally dark – while those with the Lord God would bask in the light of His presence.

He then launched into praise “O Lord, you are my God! I will exalt you in praise, I will extol your fame. For you have done extraordinary things, and executed plans made long ago exactly as you decreed ... [He] ... will swallow up death permanently. The sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from every face, and remove his people’s disgrace from all the earth. Indeed, the Lord has announced it! At that time they will say, “Look, here is our God! We waited for him and he delivered us. Here is the Lord! We waited for him. Let’s rejoice and celebrate his deliverance!”

Isaiah declared the character of the Lord God “The way of the righteous is level, the path of the righteous that you make is straight.”

He shared some wisdom “If the wicked are shown mercy, they do not learn about justice. Even in a land where right is rewarded, they act unjustly; they do not see the Lord’s majesty revealed.”

He noted the propensity of the rebels to turn to witchcraft “O Lord, in distress they looked for you; they uttered incantations because of your discipline.”

Isaiah explained the powerlessness of Israel to alter the condition of things in this fallen world and to cause deliverance through human action “As when a pregnant woman gets ready to deliver and strains and cries out because of her labor pains, so were we because of you, O Lord. We were pregnant, we strained, we gave birth, as it were, to wind. We cannot produce deliverance on the earth; people to populate the world are not born.”

He then explained that it will be the Lord God Who will deliver the world by populating the world with His people “Your dead will come back to life; your corpses will rise up. Wake up and shout joyfully, you who live in the ground! For you will grow like plants drenched with the morning dew, and the earth will bring forth its dead spirits.

Isaiah’s report of the Lord God’s prophesy continued with the symbolic imagery of “Leviathan”, a mythological creature known from ancient texts to represent chaos, especially the often unpredictable and devastating power of the sea. In this case the Lord God was to bring peace, illustrated by the “vineyard” that He would “water”, and the peace He would offer to those who had been His enemies.

Isaiah observed that while the Lord God destroyed the enemies of Israel He functionally-divorced Israel.

He explained what the Lord God expected of those who wished to reconcile “They will make all the stones of the altars like crushed limestone, and the Asherah poles and the incense altars will no longer stand.” Then He will gather-up those Who are His from wherever they were dispersed.

INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

CONSIDER

The magnitude of the devastation was to be massive, yet the process may remind one of the Great White Throne Judgment wherein which each individual will be called to account, charges laid against them, and Judgment (or freedom via Christ) meted out. Those who push away the light of truth of the Lord God will get what they demand – an existence without the Lord – and it will be darker than anything they could imagine. The Lord God used imagery with which His ‘audience’ would be familiar. In the ancient times of Isaiah’s ministry the mythological stories of Leviathan, and others, would have been useful for illustration.

DISCUSS

Why might the Lord God have chosen to treat Tyre as He did? Why would the Lord God have bothered to preserve and seek to restore the chronically-rebellious Israelites? Might “Israel” in this context have been as symbolic as “Leviathan”?

REFLECT

The heart-attitude that brought the nations into conflict with the Lord God is much the same as that which plagues people even today; arrogance, lust, spiritual rebellion, and violence. After the long history of disaster, why would people still turn to witchcraft?

SHARE

When have you experienced or observed a process of justice where charges were brought, considered, and then a decision and consequences rendered? When have you experienced or observed “If the wicked are shown mercy, they do not learn about justice. Even in a land where right is rewarded, they act unjustly; they do not see the Lord’s majesty revealed.”

FAITH IN ACTION

PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you something that the Lord God holds against you as unreconcilable with the “fruits of the Spirit” and therefore not appropriate to a Biblical Christian, a place in your life where He desires to make “The way of the righteous is level, the path of the righteous that you make is straight.”

ACT

Today I will confess and repent, ask and accept forgiveness from the Lord, and make the necessary changes to assure that I will not drift backwards into that sin. As appropriate, which is very likely, I will ask at least one fellow believer to pray in-agreement with me and at least one to be an accountability-partner. I will prayerfully submit my life to the leadership of the Holy Spirit so that the Lord God may make “The way of the righteous is level, the path of the righteous that you make is straight.”

Be Specific _____

Thursday ([2 Kings 18:1-8](#), [2 Chronicles 29-31](#), [Psalm 48](#))

2 Kings

Hezekiah Becomes King of Judah

18:1 In the third year of the reign of Israel’s King Hoshea son of Elah, Ahaz’s son Hezekiah became king over Judah. 18:2 He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother was Abi, the daughter of [Zechariah. 18:3](#) He did what the Lord approved, just as his ancestor David had done. 18:4 He eliminated the high places, smashed the sacred pillars to bits, and cut down the Asherah pole. He also demolished the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been offering incense to it; it was called Nehushtan. 18:5 He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; in this regard there was none like him among the kings of Judah either before or after. 18:6 He was loyal to the Lord and did not abandon him. He obeyed the commandments which the Lord had

given to Moses. 18:7 The Lord was with him; he succeeded in all his endeavors. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and refused to submit to him. 18:8 He defeated the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from the watchtower to the city fortress.

2 Chronicles

Hezekiah Consecrates the Temple

29:1 Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother was Abijah, the daughter of [Zechariah](#). 29:2 He did what the Lord approved, just as his ancestor David had done.

29:3 In the first month of the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the Lord's temple and repaired them. 29:4 He brought in the priests and Levites and assembled them in the square on the east side. 29:5 He said to them: "Listen to me, you Levites! Now consecrate yourselves, so you can consecrate the temple of the Lord God of your ancestors! Remove from the sanctuary what is ceremonially unclean! 29:6 For our fathers were unfaithful; they did what is evil in the sight of the Lord our God and abandoned him! They turned away from the Lord's dwelling place and rejected him. 29:7 They closed the doors of the temple porch and put out the lamps; they did not offer incense or burnt sacrifices in the sanctuary of the God of Israel. 29:8 The Lord was angry at Judah and Jerusalem and made them an appalling object of horror at which people hiss out their scorn, as you can see with your own eyes. 29:9 Look, our fathers died violently and our sons, daughters, and wives were carried off because of this. 29:10 Now I intend to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, so that he may relent from his raging anger. 29:11 My sons, do not be negligent now, for the Lord has chosen you to serve in his presence and offer sacrifices."

29:12 The following Levites prepared to carry out the king's orders:

From the Kohathites: Mahath son of Amasai and Joel son of Azariah;

from the Merarites: Kish son of Abdi and Azariah son of Jehallelel;

from the Gershonites: Joah son of Zimmah and Eden son of Joah;

29:13 from the descendants of Elizaphan: Shimri and Jeiel;

from the descendants of Asaph: Zechariah and Mattaniah;

29:14 from the descendants of Heman: Jehiel and Shimei;

from the descendants of Jeduthun: Shemaiah and Uzziel.

29:15 They assembled their brothers and consecrated themselves. Then they went in to purify the Lord's temple, just as the king had ordered, in accordance with the word of the Lord. 29:16 The priests then

entered the Lord's temple to purify it; they brought out to the courtyard of the Lord's temple every ceremonially unclean thing they discovered inside. The Levites took them out to the Kidron Valley. 29:17 On the first day of the first month they began consecrating; by the eighth day of the month they reached the porch of the Lord's temple. For eight more days they consecrated the Lord's temple. On the sixteenth day of the first month they were finished. 29:18 They went to King Hezekiah and said: "We have purified the entire temple of the Lord, including the altar of burnt sacrifice and all its equipment, and the table for the Bread of the Presence and all its equipment. 29:19 We have prepared and consecrated all the items that King Ahaz removed during his reign when he acted unfaithfully. They are in front of the altar of the Lord."

29:20 Early the next morning King Hezekiah assembled the city officials and went up to the Lord's temple. 29:21 They brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven goats as a sin offering for the kingdom, the sanctuary, and Judah. The king told the priests, the descendants of Aaron, to offer burnt sacrifices on the altar of the Lord. 29:22 They slaughtered the bulls, and the priests took the blood and splashed it on the altar. Then they slaughtered the rams and splashed the blood on the altar; next they slaughtered the lambs and splashed the blood on the altar. 29:23 Finally they brought the goats for the sin offering before the king and the assembly, and they placed their hands on them. 29:24 Then the priests slaughtered them. They offered their blood as a sin offering on the altar to make atonement for all Israel, because the king had decreed that the burnt sacrifice and sin offering were for all Israel.

29:25 King Hezekiah stationed the Levites in the Lord's temple with cymbals and stringed instruments, just as David, Gad the king's prophet, and Nathan the prophet had ordered. (The Lord had actually given these orders through his prophets.) 29:26 The Levites had David's musical instruments and the priests had trumpets. 29:27 Hezekiah ordered the burnt sacrifice to be offered on the altar. As they began to offer the sacrifice, they also began to sing to the Lord, accompanied by the trumpets and the musical instruments of King David of Israel. 29:28 The entire assembly worshiped, as the singers sang and the trumpeters played. They continued until the burnt sacrifice was completed.

29:29 When the sacrifices were completed, the king and all who were with him bowed down and worshiped. 29:30 King Hezekiah and the officials told the Levites to praise the Lord, using the psalms of David and Asaph the prophet. So they joyfully offered praise and bowed down and worshiped. 29:31 Hezekiah said, "Now you have consecrated yourselves to the Lord. Come and bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the Lord's temple." So the assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings, and whoever desired to do so brought burnt sacrifices.

29:32 The assembly brought a total of 70 bulls, 100 rams, and 200 lambs as burnt sacrifices to the Lord, 29:33 and 600 bulls and 3,000 sheep were consecrated. 29:34 But there were not enough priests to skin all the animals, so their brothers, the Levites, helped them until the work was finished and the priests could consecrate themselves. (The Levites had been more conscientious about consecrating themselves than the priests.) 29:35 There was a large number of burnt sacrifices, as well as fat from the peace

offerings and drink offerings that accompanied the burnt sacrifices. So the service of the Lord's temple was reinstated. 29:36 Hezekiah and all the people were happy about what God had done for them, for it had been done quickly.

Hezekiah Observes the Passover

30:1 Hezekiah sent messages throughout Israel and Judah; he even wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, summoning them to come to the Lord's temple in Jerusalem and observe a Passover celebration for the Lord God of Israel. 30:2 The king, his officials, and the entire assembly in Jerusalem decided to observe the Passover in the second month. 30:3 They were unable to observe it at the regular time because not enough priests had consecrated themselves and the people had not assembled in Jerusalem. 30:4 The proposal seemed appropriate to the king and the entire assembly. 30:5 So they sent an edict throughout Israel from Beer Sheba to Dan, summoning the people to come and observe a Passover for the Lord God of Israel in Jerusalem, for they had not observed it on a nationwide scale as prescribed in the law. 30:6 Messengers delivered the letters from the king and his officials throughout Israel and Judah.

This royal edict read: "O Israelites, return to the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, so he may return to you who have been spared from the kings of Assyria. 30:7 Don't be like your fathers and brothers who were unfaithful to the Lord God of their ancestors, provoking him to destroy them, as you can see. 30:8 Now, don't be stubborn like your fathers! Submit to the Lord and come to his sanctuary which he has permanently consecrated. Serve the Lord your God so that he might relent from his raging anger. 30:9 For if you return to the Lord, your brothers and sons will be shown mercy by their captors and return to this land. The Lord your God is merciful and compassionate; he will not reject you if you return to him."

30:10 The messengers journeyed from city to city through the land of Ephraim and Manasseh as far as Zebulun, but people mocked and ridiculed them. 30:11 But some men from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. 30:12 In Judah God moved the people to unite and carry out the edict the king and the officers had issued at the Lord's command. 30:13 A huge crowd assembled in Jerusalem to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month. 30:14 They removed the altars in Jerusalem; they also removed all the incense altars and threw them into the Kidron Valley.

30:15 They slaughtered the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the second month. The priests and Levites were ashamed, so they consecrated themselves and brought burnt sacrifices to the Lord's temple. 30:16 They stood at their posts according to the regulations outlined in the law of Moses, the man of God. The priests were splashing the blood as the Levites handed it to them. 30:17 Because many in the assembly had not consecrated themselves, the Levites slaughtered the Passover lambs of all who were ceremonially unclean and could not consecrate their sacrifice to the Lord. 30:18 The majority of the many people from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun were ceremonially unclean, yet they ate the

Passover in violation of what is prescribed in the law. For Hezekiah prayed for them, saying: "May the Lord, who is good, forgive 30:19 everyone who has determined to follow God, the Lord God of his ancestors, even if he is not ceremonially clean according to the standards of the temple." 30:20 The Lord responded favorably to Hezekiah and forgave the people.

30:21 The Israelites who were in Jerusalem observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great joy. The Levites and priests were praising the Lord every day with all their might. 30:22 Hezekiah expressed his appreciation to all the Levites, who demonstrated great skill in serving the Lord. They feasted for the seven days of the festival, and were making peace offerings and giving thanks to the Lord God of their ancestors.

30:23 The entire assembly then decided to celebrate for seven more days; so they joyfully celebrated for seven more days. 30:24 King Hezekiah of Judah supplied 1,000 bulls and 7,000 sheep for the assembly, while the officials supplied them with 1,000 bulls and 10,000 sheep. Many priests consecrated themselves. 30:25 The celebration included the entire assembly of Judah, the priests, the Levites, the entire assembly of those who came from Israel, the resident foreigners who came from the land of Israel, and the residents of Judah. 30:26 There was a great celebration in Jerusalem, unlike anything that had occurred in Jerusalem since the time of King Solomon son of David of Israel. 30:27 The priests and Levites got up and pronounced blessings on the people. The Lord responded favorably to them as their prayers reached his holy dwelling place in heaven.

31:1 When all this was over, the Israelites who were in the cities of Judah went out and smashed the sacred pillars, cut down the Asherah poles, and demolished all the high places and altars throughout Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh. Then all the Israelites returned to their own homes in their cities.

The People Contribute to the Temple

31:2 Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and Levites to do their assigned tasks – to offer burnt sacrifices and present offerings and to serve, give thanks, and offer praise in the gates of the Lord's sanctuary.

31:3 The king contributed some of what he owned for burnt sacrifices, including the morning and evening burnt sacrifices and the burnt sacrifices made on Sabbaths, new moon festivals, and at other appointed times prescribed in the law of the Lord. 31:4 He ordered the people living in Jerusalem to contribute the portion prescribed for the priests and Levites so they might be obedient to the law of the Lord. 31:5 When the edict was issued, the Israelites freely contributed the initial portion of their grain, wine, olive oil, honey, and all the produce of their fields. They brought a tenth of everything, which added up to a huge amount. 31:6 The Israelites and people of Judah who lived in the cities of Judah also contributed a tenth of their cattle and sheep, as well as a tenth of the holy items consecrated to the Lord their God. They brought them and placed them in many heaps. 31:7 In the third month they began piling

their contributions in heaps and finished in the seventh month. 31:8 When Hezekiah and the officials came and saw the heaps, they praised the Lord and pronounced blessings on his people Israel.

31:9 When Hezekiah asked the priests and Levites about the heaps, 31:10 Azariah, the head priest from the family of Zadok, said to him, "Since the contributions began arriving in the Lord's temple, we have had plenty to eat and have a large quantity left over. For the Lord has blessed his people, and this large amount remains." 31:11 Hezekiah ordered that storerooms be prepared in the Lord's temple. When this was done, 31:12 they brought in the contributions, tithes, and consecrated items that had been offered. Konaniah, a Levite, was in charge of all this, assisted by his brother Shimei. 31:13 Jehiel, Azaziah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismakiah, Mahath, and Benaiah worked under the supervision of Konaniah and his brother Shimei, as directed by King Hezekiah and Azariah, the supervisor of God's temple.

31:14 Kore son of Imnah, a Levite and the guard on the east side, was in charge of the voluntary offerings made to God and disbursed the contributions made to the Lord and the consecrated items. 31:15 In the cities of the priests, Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah faithfully assisted him in making disbursements to their fellow priests according to their divisions, regardless of age. 31:16 They made disbursements to all the males three years old and up who were listed in the genealogical records – to all who would enter the Lord's temple to serve on a daily basis and fulfill their duties as assigned to their divisions. 31:17 They made disbursements to the priests listed in the genealogical records by their families, and to the Levites twenty years old and up, according to their duties as assigned to their divisions, 31:18 and to all the infants, wives, sons, and daughters of the entire assembly listed in the genealogical records, for they faithfully consecrated themselves. 31:19 As for the descendants of Aaron, the priests who lived in the outskirts of all their cities, men were assigned to disburse portions to every male among the priests and to every Levite listed in the genealogical records.

31:20 This is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah. He did what the Lord his God considered good and right and faithful. 31:21 He wholeheartedly and successfully reinstated service in God's temple and obedience to the law, in order to follow his God.

[Psalm 48](#)

48:1 A song, a psalm by the Korahites.

The Lord is great and certainly worthy of praise in the city of our God, his holy hill.

48:2 It is lofty and pleasing to look at, a source of joy to the whole earth.

Mount Zion resembles the peaks of Zaphon; it is the city of the great king.

48:3 God is in its fortresses; he reveals himself as its defender.

48:4 For look, the kings assemble; they advance together.

48:5 As soon as they see, they are shocked; they are terrified, they quickly retreat.

48:6 Look at them shake uncontrollably, like a woman writhing in childbirth.

48:7 With an east wind you shatter the large ships.

48:8 We heard about God's mighty deeds, now we have seen them, in the city of the Lord, the invincible Warrior, in the city of our God.

God makes it permanently secure. (Selah)

48:9 We reflect on your loyal love, O God, within your temple.

48:10 The praise you receive as far away as the ends of the earth is worthy of your reputation, O God.

You execute justice!

48:11 Mount Zion rejoices; the towns of Judah are happy, because of your acts of judgment.

48:12 Walk around Zion! Encircle it!

Count its towers!

48:13 Consider its defenses!

Walk through its fortresses, so you can tell the next generation about it!

48:14 For God, our God, is our defender forever!

He guides us!

PRAYER

Lord, it was always obvious what every king before him should have done, but only Hezekiah was obedient and teachable enough to do the right thing before You. May I look to Hezekiah as my role model – to do the right thing rather than the convenient or the ordinary.

SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Hezekiah was king of Judah for twenty-nine years. He was the only king, before or after, who fully-obeyed the Lord God. He not only led the people to obey by doing so himself, he removed the high places, he

removed the Asherah pole, and he removed the bronze serpent which Moses had made and they had been misusing as a tool of false worship.

Hezekiah cleansed the temple and offered great national worship. He removed many of the altars to false gods and celebrated Passover – but later than scheduled as not enough Levites were ceremonially clean to lead. He also asked, and received the Lord God’s forgiveness for many who chose to celebrate, even though they were ceremonially unclean – God mercifully allow it as their hearts were inclined toward Him.

The forty-eighth Psalm recited the power and justice and praiseworthy glory of the Lord God.

INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

CONSIDER

Hezekiah was the greatest and most-true king of God’s children because he fully obeyed.

DISCUSS

Why could Hezekiah do the right thing but not the others before, and after, him?

REFLECT

The Lord God demonstrated great flexibility and mercy in forgiving those celebrated the Passover despite their technical lack of “ceremonial cleanliness” - because He knew their hearts and that was more important than the details of the regulations.

SHARE

When have you observed a leader doing the right thing, often the hard thing, because he was desperate to be faithful to the Lord?

FAITH IN ACTION

PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you a place where the Lord desires you to be extraordinary in your faithful walk.

ACT

I will do whatever it takes to pursue the path set before me by the Lord.

Be Specific _____

Friday ([Hosea 1–14](#))

Superscription

1:1 This is the word of the Lord which was revealed to Hosea son of Beeri during the time when Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah ruled Judah, and during the time when Jeroboam son of Joash ruled Israel.

Symbols of Sin and Judgment: The Prostitute and Her Children

1:2 When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, he said to him, “Go marry a prostitute who will bear illegitimate children conceived through prostitution, because the nation continually commits spiritual prostitution by turning away from the Lord.” 1:3 So Hosea married Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim. Then she conceived and gave birth to a son for him. 1:4 Then the Lord said to Hosea, “Name him ‘Jezreel,’ because in a little while I will punish the dynasty of Jehu on account of the bloodshed in the valley of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel. 1:5 At that time, I will destroy the military power of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.”

1:6 She conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the Lord said to him, “Name her ‘No Pity’ (Lo-Ruhamah) because I will no longer have pity on the nation of Israel. For I will certainly not forgive their guilt. 1:7 But I will have pity on the nation of Judah. I will deliver them by the Lord their God; I will not deliver them by the warrior’s bow, by sword, by military victory, by chariot horses, or by chariots.”

1:8 When she had weaned ‘No Pity’ (Lo-Ruhamah) she conceived again and gave birth to another son. 1:9 Then the Lord said: “Name him ‘Not My People’ (Lo-Ammi), because you are not my people and I am not your God.”

The Restoration of Israel

1:10 However, in the future the number of the people of Israel will be like the sand of the sea which can be neither measured nor numbered. Although it was said to them, “You are not my people,” it will be said to them, “You are children of the living God!” 1:11 Then the people of Judah and the people of Israel will be gathered together. They will appoint for themselves one leader, and will flourish in the land. Certainly, the day of Jezreel will be great!

2:1 Then you will call your brother, “My People” (Ammi)! You will call your sister, “Pity” (Ruhamah)!
Idolatrous Israel Will Be Punished Like a Prostitute

2:2 Plead earnestly with your mother (for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband), so that she might put an end to her adulterous lifestyle, and turn away from her sexually immoral behavior.

2:3 Otherwise, I will strip her naked, and expose her like she was when she was born. I will turn her land into a wilderness and make her country a parched land, so that I might kill her with thirst.

2:4 I will have no pity on her children, because they are children conceived in adultery.

2:5 For their mother has committed adultery; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, "I will seek out my lovers; they are the ones who give me my bread and my water, my wool, my flax, my olive oil, and my wine.

The Lord's Discipline Will Bring Israel Back

2:6 Therefore, I will soon fence her in with thorns; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way.

2:7 Then she will pursue her lovers, but she will not catch them; she will seek them, but she will not find them. Then she will say, "I will go back to my husband, because I was better off then than I am now."

Agricultural Fertility Withdrawn from Israel

2:8 Yet until now she has refused to acknowledge that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine, and the olive oil; and that it was I who lavished on her the silver and gold – which they used in worshiping Baal!

2:9 Therefore, I will take back my grain during the harvest time and my new wine when it ripens; I will take away my wool and my flax which I had provided in order to clothe her.

2:10 Soon I will expose her lewd nakedness in front of her lovers, and no one will be able to rescue her from me!

2:11 I will put an end to all her celebration: her annual religious festivals, monthly new moon celebrations, and weekly Sabbath festivities – all her appointed festivals.

2:12 I will destroy her vines and fig trees, about which she said, "These are my wages for prostitution that my lovers gave to me!" I will turn her cultivated vines and fig trees into an uncultivated thicket, so that wild animals will devour them.

2:13 "I will punish her for the festival days when she burned incense to the Baal idols; she adorned herself with earrings and jewelry, and went after her lovers, but she forgot me!" says the Lord.

Future Repentance and Restoration of Israel

2:14 However, in the future I will allure her; I will lead her back into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her.

2:15 From there I will give back her vineyards to her, and turn the “Valley of Trouble” into an “Opportunity for Hope.” There she will sing as she did when she was young, when she came up from the land of Egypt.

2:16 “At that time,” declares the Lord, “you will call, ‘My husband’; you will never again call me, ‘My master.’”

2:17 For I will remove the names of the Baal idols from your lips, so that you will never again utter their names!”

New Covenant Relationship with Repentant Israel

2:18 “At that time I will make a covenant for them with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creatures that crawl on the ground. I will abolish the warrior’s bow and sword – that is, every weapon of warfare – from the land, and I will allow them to live securely.”

2:19 I will commit myself to you forever; I will commit myself to you in righteousness and justice, in steadfast love and tender compassion.

2:20 I will commit myself to you in faithfulness; then you will acknowledge the Lord.”

Agricultural Fertility Restored to the Repentant Nation

2:21 “At that time, I will willingly respond,” declares the Lord. “I will respond to the sky, and the sky will respond to the ground;

2:22 then the ground will respond to the grain, the new wine, and the olive oil; and they will respond to ‘God Plants’ (Jezreel)!”

2:23 Then I will plant her as my own in the land. I will have pity on ‘No Pity’ (Lo-Ruhamah). I will say to ‘Not My People’ (Lo-Ammi), ‘You are my people!’ And he will say, ‘You are my God!’”

An Illustration of God’s Love for Idolatrous Israel

3:1 The Lord said to me, “Go, show love to your wife again, even though she loves another man and continually commits adultery. Likewise, the Lord loves the Israelites although they turn to other gods and love to offer raisin cakes to idols.” 3:2 So I paid fifteen shekels of silver and about seven bushels of barley to purchase her. 3:3 Then I told her, “You must live with me many days; you must not commit adultery or have sexual intercourse with another man, and I also will wait for you.” 3:4 For the Israelites must live many days without a king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred fertility pillar, without ephod or idols. 3:5 Afterward, the Israelites will turn and seek the Lord their God and their Davidic king. Then they will submit to the Lord in fear and receive his blessings in the future.

The Lord's Covenant Lawsuit against the Nation Israel

4:1 Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites! For the Lord has a covenant lawsuit against the people of Israel. For there is neither faithfulness nor loyalty in the land, nor do they acknowledge God.

4:2 There is only cursing, lying, murder, stealing, and adultery. They resort to violence and bloodshed.

4:3 Therefore the land will mourn, and all its inhabitants will perish. The wild animals, the birds of the sky, and even the fish in the sea will perish.

The Lord's Dispute against the Sinful Priesthood

4:4 Do not let anyone accuse or contend against anyone else: for my case is against you priests!

4:5 You stumble day and night, and the false prophets stumble with you; You have destroyed your own people!

4:6 You have destroyed my people by failing to acknowledge me! Because you refuse to acknowledge me, I will reject you as my priests. Because you reject the law of your God, I will reject your descendants.

4:7 The more the priests increased in numbers, the more they rebelled against me. They have turned their glorious calling into a shameful disgrace!

4:8 They feed on the sin offerings of my people; their appetites long for their iniquity!

4:9 I will deal with the people and priests together: I will punish them both for their ways, and I will repay them for their deeds.

4:10 They will eat, but not be satisfied; they will engage in prostitution, but not increase in numbers; because they have abandoned the Lord by pursuing other gods.

Judgment of Pagan Idolatry and Cultic Prostitution

4:11 Old and new wine take away the understanding of my people.

4:12 They consult their wooden idols, and their diviner's staff answers with an oracle. The wind of prostitution blows them astray; they commit spiritual adultery against their God.

4:13 They sacrifice on the mountaintops, and burn offerings on the hills; they sacrifice under oak, poplar, and terebinth, because their shade is so pleasant. As a result, your daughters have become cult prostitutes, and your daughters-in-law commit adultery!

4:14 I will not punish your daughters when they commit prostitution, nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery. For the men consort with harlots, they sacrifice with temple prostitutes. It is true: "A people that lacks understanding will come to ruin!"

Warning to Judah: Do Not Join in Israel's Apostasy!

4:15 Although you, O Israel, commit adultery, do not let Judah become guilty! Do not journey to Gilgal! Do not go up to Beth Aven! Do not swear, "As surely as the Lord lives!"

4:16 Israel has rebelled like a stubborn heifer! Soon the Lord will put them out to pasture like a lamb in a broad field!

4:17 Ephraim has attached himself to idols; Do not go near him!

The Shameful Sinners Will Be Brought to Shame

4:18 They consume their alcohol, then engage in cult prostitution; they dearly love their shameful behavior.

4:19 A whirlwind has wrapped them in its wings; they will be brought to shame because of their idolatrous worship.

Announcement of Sin and Judgment

5:1 Hear this, you priests! Pay attention, you Israelites! Listen closely, O king! For judgment is about to overtake you! For you were like a trap to Mizpah, like a net spread out to catch Tabor.

5:2 Those who revolt are knee-deep in slaughter, but I will discipline them all.

5:3 I know Ephraim all too well; the evil of Israel is not hidden from me. For you have engaged in prostitution, O Ephraim; Israel has defiled itself.

5:4 Their wicked deeds do not allow them to return to their God; because a spirit of idolatry controls their heart, and they do not acknowledge the Lord.

5:5 The arrogance of Israel testifies against it; Israel and Ephraim will be overthrown because of their iniquity. Even Judah will be brought down with them.

The Futility of Sacrificial Ritual without Moral Obedience

5:6 Although they bring their flocks and herds to seek the favor of the Lord, They will not find him – he has withdrawn himself from them!

5:7 They have committed treason against the Lord, because they bore illegitimate children. Soon the new moon festival will devour them and their fields.

The Prophet's Declaration of Judgment

5:8 Blow the ram's horn in Gibeah! Sound the trumpet in Ramah! Sound the alarm in Beth Aven! Tremble in fear, O Benjamin!

5:9 Ephraim will be ruined in the day of judgment! What I am declaring to the tribes of Israel will certainly take place!

The Oppressors of the Helpless Will Be Oppressed

5:10 The princes of Judah are like those who move boundary markers. I will pour out my rage on them like a torrential flood!

5:11 Ephraim will be oppressed, crushed under judgment, because he was determined to pursue worthless idols.

The Curse of the Incurable Wound

5:12 I will be like a moth to Ephraim, like wood rot to the house of Judah.

5:13 When Ephraim saw his sickness and Judah saw his wound, then Ephraim turned to Assyria, and begged its great king for help. But he will not be able to heal you! He cannot cure your wound!

The Lion Will Carry Israel Off Into Exile

5:14 I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a young lion to the house of Judah. I myself will tear them to pieces, then I will carry them off, and no one will be able to rescue them!

5:15 Then I will return again to my lair until they have suffered their punishment. Then they will seek me; in their distress they will earnestly seek me.

Superficial Repentance Breeds False Assurance of God's Forgiveness

6:1 "Come on! Let's return to the Lord! He himself has torn us to pieces, but he will heal us! He has injured us, but he will bandage our wounds!

6:2 He will restore us in a very short time; he will heal us in a little while, so that we may live in his presence.

6:3 So let us acknowledge him! Let us seek to acknowledge the Lord! He will come to our rescue as certainly as the appearance of the dawn, as certainly as the winter rain comes, as certainly as the spring rain that waters the land.”

Transitory Faithfulness and Imminent Judgment

6:4 What am I going to do with you, O Ephraim? What am I going to do with you, O Judah? For your faithfulness is as fleeting as the morning mist; it disappears as quickly as dawn’s dew!

6:5 Therefore, I will certainly cut you into pieces at the hands of the prophets; I will certainly kill you in fulfillment of my oracles of judgment; for my judgment will come forth like the light of the dawn.

6:6 For I delight in faithfulness, not simply in sacrifice; I delight in acknowledging God, not simply in whole burnt offerings.

Indictments Against the Cities of Israel and Judah

6:7 At Adam they broke the covenant; Oh how they were unfaithful to me!

6:8 Gilead is a city full of evildoers; its streets are stained with bloody footprints!

6:9 The company of priests is like a gang of robbers, lying in ambush to pounce on a victim. They commit murder on the road to Shechem; they have done heinous crimes!

6:10 I have seen a disgusting thing in the temple of Israel: there Ephraim practices temple prostitution and Judah defiles itself.

6:11 I have appointed a time to reap judgment for you also, O Judah! If Israel Would Repent of Sin, God Would Relent of Judgment Whenever I want to restore the fortunes of my people,

7:1 whenever I want to heal Israel, the sin of Ephraim is revealed, and the evil deeds of Samaria are exposed. For they do what is wrong; thieves break into houses, and gangs rob people out in the streets.

7:2 They do not realize that I remember all of their wicked deeds. Their evil deeds have now surrounded them; their sinful deeds are always before me.

Political Intrigue and Conspiracy in the Palace

7:3 The royal advisers delight the king with their evil schemes, the princes make him glad with their lies.

7:4 They are all like bakers, they are like a smoldering oven; they are like a baker who does not stoke the fire until the kneaded dough is ready for baking.

7:5 At the celebration of their king, his princes become inflamed with wine; they conspire with evildoers.

7:6 They approach him, all the while plotting against him. Their hearts are like an oven; their anger smolders all night long, but in the morning it bursts into a flaming fire.

7:7 All of them are blazing like an oven; they devour their rulers. All of their kings fall – and none of them call on me!

Israel Lacks Discernment and Refuses to Repent

7:8 Ephraim has mixed itself like flour among the nations; Ephraim is like a ruined cake of bread that is scorched on one side.

7:9 Foreigners are consuming what his strenuous labor produced, but he does not recognize it! His head is filled with gray hair, but he does not realize it!

7:10 The arrogance of Israel testifies against him, yet they refuse to return to the Lord their God! In spite of all this they refuse to seek him!

Israel Turns to Assyria and Egypt for Help

7:11 Ephraim has been like a dove, easily deceived and lacking discernment. They called to Egypt for help; they turned to Assyria for protection.

7:12 I will throw my bird net over them while they are flying, I will bring them down like birds in the sky; I will discipline them when I hear them flocking together.

Israel Has Turned Away from the Lord

7:13 Woe to them! For they have fled from me! Destruction to them! For they have rebelled against me! I want to deliver them, but they have lied to me.

7:14 They do not pray to me, but howl in distress on their beds; They slash themselves for grain and new wine, but turn away from me.

7:15 Although I trained and strengthened them, they plot evil against me!

7:16 They turn to Baal; they are like an unreliable bow. Their leaders will fall by the sword because their prayers to Baal have made me angry. So people will disdain them in the land of Egypt.

God Will Raise Up the Assyrians to Attack Israel

8:1 Sound the alarm! An eagle looms over the temple of the Lord! For they have broken their covenant with me, and have rebelled against my law.

8:2 Israel cries out to me, "My God, we acknowledge you!"

8:3 But Israel has rejected what is morally good; so an enemy will pursue him.

The Political and Cultic Sin of Israel

8:4 They enthroned kings without my consent! They appointed princes without my approval! They made idols out of their silver and gold, but they will be destroyed!

8:5 O Samaria, he has rejected your calf idol! My anger burns against them! They will not survive much longer without being punished, even though they are Israelites!

8:6 That idol was made by a workman – it is not God! The calf idol of Samaria will be broken to bits.

The Fertility Cultists Will Become Infertile

8:7 They sow the wind, and so they will reap the whirlwind! The stalk does not have any standing grain; it will not produce any flour. Even if it were to yield grain, foreigners would swallow it all up.

8:8 Israel will be swallowed up among the nations; they will be like a worthless piece of pottery.

The Willful Donkey and the Wanton Harlot

8:9 They have gone up to Assyria, like a wild donkey that wanders off. Ephraim has hired prostitutes as lovers.

8:10 Even though they have hired lovers among the nations, I will soon gather them together for judgment. Then they will begin to waste away under the oppression of a mighty king.

Sacrifices Ineffective without Moral Obedience

8:11 Although Ephraim has built many altars for sin offerings, these have become altars for sinning!

8:12 I spelled out my law for him in great detail, but they regard it as something totally unknown to them!

8:13 They offer up sacrificial gifts to me, and eat the meat, but the Lord does not accept their sacrifices. Soon he will remember their wrongdoing, he will punish their sins, and they will return to Egypt.

8:14 Israel has forgotten his Maker and built royal palaces, and Judah has built many fortified cities. But I will send fire on their cities; it will consume their royal citadels.

Fertility Cult Festivals Have Intoxicated Israel

9:1 O Israel, do not rejoice jubilantly like the nations, for you are unfaithful to your God. You love to receive a prostitute's wages on all the floors where you thresh your grain.

9:2 Threshing floors and wine vats will not feed the people, and new wine only deceives them.

Assyrian Exile Will Reverse the Egyptian Exodus

9:3 They will not remain in the Lord's land. Ephraim will return to Egypt; they will eat ritually unclean food in Assyria.

9:4 They will not pour out drink offerings of wine to the Lord; they will not please him with their sacrifices. Their sacrifices will be like bread eaten while in mourning; all those who eat them will make themselves ritually unclean. For their bread will be only to satisfy their appetite; it will not come into the temple of the Lord.

9:5 So what will you do on the festival day, on the festival days of the Lord?

No Escape for the Israelites This Time!

9:6 Look! Even if they flee from the destruction, Egypt will take hold of them, and Memphis will bury them. The weeds will inherit the silver they treasure – thorn bushes will occupy their homes.

9:7 The time of judgment is about to arrive! The time of retribution is imminent! Let Israel know!

Israel Rejects Hosea's Prophetic Exhortations

The prophet is considered a fool – the inspired man is viewed as a madman – because of the multitude of your sins and your intense animosity.

9:8 The prophet is a watchman over Ephraim on behalf of God, yet traps are laid for him along all of his paths; animosity rages against him in the land of his God.

The Best of Times, the Worst of Times

9:9 They have sunk deep into corruption as in the days of Gibeah. He will remember their wrongdoing. He will repay them for their sins.

9:10 When I found Israel, it was like finding grapes in the wilderness. I viewed your ancestors like an early fig on a fig tree in its first season. Then they came to Baal-Peor and they dedicated themselves to shame – they became as detestable as what they loved.

The Fertility Worshipers Will Become Infertile

9:11 Ephraim will be like a bird; what they value will fly away. They will not bear children – they will not enjoy pregnancy – they will not even conceive!

9:12 Even if they raise their children, I will take away every last one of them. Woe to them! For I will turn away from them.

9:13 Just as lion cubs are born predators, so Ephraim will bear his sons for slaughter.

9:14 Give them, O Lord – what will you give them? Give them wombs that miscarry, and breasts that cannot nurse!

9:15 Because of all their evil in Gilgal, I hate them there. On account of their evil deeds, I will drive them out of my land. I will no longer love them; all their rulers are rebels.

9:16 Ephraim will be struck down – their root will be dried up; they will not yield any fruit. Even if they do bear children, I will kill their precious offspring.

9:17 My God will reject them, for they have not obeyed him; so they will be fugitives among the nations.

Israel is Guilty of Fertility Cult Worship

10:1 Israel was a fertile vine that yielded fruit. As his fruit multiplied, he multiplied altars to Baal. As his land prospered, they adorned the fertility pillars.

10:2 Their heart is slipping; soon they will be punished for their guilt. The Lord will break their altars; he will completely destroy their fertility pillars.

The Lord Will Punish Israel by Removing Its Kings

10:3 Very soon they will say, “We have no king since we did not fear the Lord. But what can a king do for us anyway?”

10:4 They utter empty words, taking false oaths and making empty agreements. Therefore legal disputes sprout up like poisonous weeds in the furrows of a plowed field.

The Calf Idol and Idolaters of Samaria Will Be Exiled

10:5 The inhabitants of Samaria will lament over the calf idol of Beth Aven. Its people will mourn over it; its idolatrous priests will wail over it, because its splendor will be taken from them into exile.

10:6 Even the calf idol will be carried to Assyria, as tribute for the great king. Ephraim will be disgraced; Israel will be put to shame because of its wooden idol.

10:7 Samaria and its king will be carried off like a twig on the surface of the waters.

10:8 The high places of the “House of Wickedness” will be destroyed; it is the place where Israel sins. Thorns and thistles will grow up over its altars. Then they will say to the mountains, “Cover us!” and to the hills, “Fall on us!”

Failure to Learn from the Sin and Judgment of Gibeah

10:9 O Israel, you have sinned since the time of Gibeah, and there you have remained. Did not war overtake the evildoers in Gibeah?

10:10 When I please, I will discipline them; I will gather nations together to attack them, to bind them in chains for their two sins.

Fertility Imagery: Plowing, Sowing, and Reaping

10:11 Ephraim was a well-trained heifer who loved to thresh grain; I myself put a fine yoke on her neck. I will harness Ephraim. Let Judah plow! Let Jacob break up the unplowed ground for himself!

10:12 Sow righteousness for yourselves, reap unfailing love. Break up the unplowed ground for yourselves, for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers deliverance on you.

10:13 But you have plowed wickedness; you have reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of deception. Because you have depended on your chariots; you have relied on your many warriors.

Bethel Will Be Destroyed Like Beth Arbel

10:14 The roar of battle will rise against your people; all your fortresses will be devastated, just as Shalman devastated Beth Arbel on the day of battle, when mothers were dashed to the ground with their children.

10:15 So will it happen to you, O Bethel, because of your great wickedness! When that day dawns, the king of Israel will be destroyed.

Reversal of the Exodus: Return to Egypt and Exile in Assyria

11:1 When Israel was a young man, I loved him like a son, and I summoned my son out of Egypt.

11:2 But the more I summoned them, the farther they departed from me. They sacrificed to the Baal idols and burned incense to images.

11:3 Yet it was I who led Ephraim, I took them by the arm; but they did not acknowledge that I had healed them.

11:4 I led them with leather cords, with leather ropes; I lifted the yoke from their neck, and gently fed them.

11:5 They will return to Egypt! Assyria will rule over them because they refuse to repent!

11:6 A sword will flash in their cities, it will destroy the bars of their city gates, and will devour them in their fortresses.

11:7 My people are obsessed with turning away from me; they call to Baal, but he will never exalt them!

The Divine Dilemma: Judgment or Mercy?

11:8 How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim? I have had a change of heart! All my tender compassions are aroused!

11:9 I cannot carry out my fierce anger! I cannot totally destroy Ephraim! Because I am God, and not man – the Holy One among you – I will not come in wrath!

God Will Restore the Exiles to Israel

11:10 He will roar like a lion, and they will follow the Lord; when he roars, his children will come trembling from the west.

11:11 They will return in fear and trembling like birds from Egypt, like doves from Assyria, and I will settle them in their homes," declares the Lord.

God's Lawsuit against Israel: Breach of Covenant

11:12 Ephraim has surrounded me with lies; the house of Israel has surrounded me with deceit. But Judah still roams about with God; he remains faithful to the Holy One.

12:1 Ephraim continually feeds on the wind; he chases the east wind all day; he multiplies lies and violence. They make treaties with Assyria, and send olive oil as tribute to Egypt.

12:2 The Lord also has a covenant lawsuit against Judah; he will punish Jacob according to his ways and repay him according to his deeds.

Israel Must Return to the God of Jacob

12:3 In the womb he attacked his brother; in his manly vigor he struggled with God.

12:4 He struggled with an angel and prevailed; he wept and begged for his favor. He found God at Bethel, and there he spoke with him!

12:5 As for the Lord God Almighty, the Lord is the name by which he is remembered!

12:6 But you must return to your God, by maintaining love and justice, and by waiting for your God to return to you.

The Lord Refutes Israel's False Claim of Innocence

12:7 The businessmen love to cheat; they use dishonest scales.

12:8 Ephraim boasts, "I am very rich! I have become wealthy! In all that I have done to gain my wealth, no one can accuse me of any offense that is actually sinful."

12:9 "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt; I will make you live in tents again as in the days of old.

12:10 I spoke to the prophets; I myself revealed many visions; I spoke in parables through the prophets."

12:11 Is there idolatry in Gilead? Certainly its inhabitants will come to nothing! Do they sacrifice bulls in Gilgal? Surely their altars will be like stones heaped up on a plowed field!

Jacob in Aram, Israel in Egypt, and Ephraim in Trouble

12:12 Jacob fled to the country of Aram, then Israel worked to acquire a wife; he tended sheep to pay for her.

12:13 The Lord brought Israel out of Egypt by a prophet, and due to a prophet Israel was preserved alive.

12:14 But Ephraim bitterly provoked him to anger; so he will hold him accountable for the blood he has shed, his Lord will repay him for the contempt he has shown.

Baal Worshipers and Calf Worshipers to be Destroyed

13:1 When Ephraim spoke, there was terror; he was exalted in Israel, but he became guilty by worshiping Baal and died.

13:2 Even now they persist in sin! They make metal images for themselves, idols that they skillfully fashion from their own silver; all of them are nothing but the work of craftsmen! There is a saying about them: "Those who sacrifice to the calf idol are calf kissers!"

13:3 Therefore they will disappear like the morning mist, like early morning dew that evaporates, like chaff that is blown away from a threshing floor, like smoke that disappears through an open window.

Well-Fed Israel Will Be Fed to Wild Animals

13:4 But I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt. Therefore, you must not acknowledge any God but me; except me there is no Savior.

13:5 I cared for you in the wilderness, in the dry desert where no water was.

13:6 When they were fed, they became satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; as a result, they forgot me!

13:7 So I will pounce on them like a lion; like a leopard I will lurk by the path.

13:8 I will attack them like a bear robbed of her cubs – I will rip open their chests. I will devour them there like a lion – like a wild animal would tear them apart.

Israel's King Unable to Deliver the Nation

13:9 I will destroy you, O Israel! Who is there to help you?

13:10 Where then is your king, that he may save you in all your cities? Where are your rulers for whom you asked, saying, "Give me a king and princes"?

13:11 I granted you a king in my anger, and I will take him away in my wrath!

Israel's Punishment Will Not Be Withheld Much Longer

13:12 The punishment of Ephraim has been decreed; his punishment is being stored up for the future.

13:13 The labor pains of a woman will overtake him, but the baby will lack wisdom; when the time arrives, he will not come out of the womb!

The Lord Will Not Relent from the Threatened Judgment

13:14 Will I deliver them from the power of Sheol? No, I will not! Will I redeem them from death? No, I will not! O Death, bring on your plagues! O Sheol, bring on your destruction! My eyes will not show any compassion!

The Capital of the Northern Empire Will Be Destroyed

13:15 Even though he flourishes like a reed plant, a scorching east wind will come, a wind from the Lord rising up from the desert. As a result, his spring will dry up; his well will become dry. That wind will spoil all his delightful foods in the containers in his storehouse.

13:16 Samaria will be held guilty, because she rebelled against her God. They will fall by the sword, their infants will be dashed to the ground – their pregnant women will be ripped open.

Prophetic Call to Genuine Repentance

14:1 Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for your sin has been your downfall!

14:2 Return to the Lord and repent! Say to him: “Completely forgive our iniquity; accept our penitential prayer, that we may offer the praise of our lips as sacrificial bulls.

14:3 Assyria cannot save us; we will not ride warhorses. We will never again say, ‘Our gods’ to what our own hands have made. For only you will show compassion to Orphan Israel!”

Divine Promise to Relent from Judgment and to Restore Blessings

14:4 “I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger will turn away from them.

14:5 I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily, he will send down his roots like a cedar of Lebanon.

14:6 His young shoots will grow; his splendor will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon.

14:7 People will reside again in his shade; they will plant and harvest grain in abundance. They will blossom like a vine, and his fame will be like the wine from Lebanon.

14:8 O Ephraim, I do not want to have anything to do with idols anymore! I will answer him and care for him. I am like a luxuriant cypress tree; your fruitfulness comes from me!

Concluding Exhortation

14:9 Who is wise? Let him discern these things! Who is discerning? Let him understand them! For the ways of the Lord are right; the godly walk in them, but in them the rebellious stumble.

PRAYER

Lord, Your mercy is great, You love the unlovable fallen-humankind – yet You do not tolerate rebellion – and so we must return to You in Your time and in Your way. There is only one path to reconciliation and restoration with You. May I live and teach Your truth, rejecting the lies of the world, and be Your instrument of evangelism and discipleship as long as You may find me useful. You were incredibly patient with Israel and Judah, but their unrepentant rebellion could not continue forever. May I not make it necessary for You to discipline me. You have always kept Your part of the covenants You made, humankind has been unfaithful to theirs. You have consistently provided for, encouraged, taught, implored, and facilitated the path of genuine repentance to reconciliation and restoration. May I accept Your Words of divine wisdom and remember that “... the ways of the Lord are right; the godly walk in them, but in them the rebellious stumble.”

SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Hosea recorded his experiences across the kingships of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah over Judah, “... and during the time when Jeroboam son of Joash ruled Israel.”

The Lord God instructed Hosea to marry the prostitute Gomer, warning him that she would be unfaithful, including having children with the partners of her adultery.

Just as other prophets had been instructed to bear humiliation and trouble, in order to serve as illustrations of His teaching to His people, so was Hosea. He named his children according to the lesson the Lord planned, and he did not divorce his wife even as she sold herself into sexual slavery.

The lessons to follow included:

“The Lord’s Discipline Will Bring Israel Back”

Hosea was told that a time would come when Gomer would return to him just as Israel would turn back to the Lord God (the rhetorical “husband” of Israel) “Then she will say, “I will go back to my husband, because I was better off then than I am now.”“

“Agricultural Fertility Withdrawn from Israel”

Just as Gomer forgot the value of her husband, Hosea, so Israel had forgotten the Lord. So, just as Gomer surrendered herself to the false-affections and unpredictable provision of her adulterous partners the Lord God withdrew provision from Israel because they had turned away to false gods.

“Future Repentance and Restoration of Israel”

At the perfect time the Lord God would speak to His people and they would repent and be restored.

“New Covenant Relationship with Repentant Israel”

The new relationship would be as husband and wife rather than as servant and master. The peace of pre-Fall Eden, between the rest of Creation and humankind, would be restored.

“Agricultural Fertility Restored to the Repentant Nation

The land would again become productive and the rejected people restored to His family.

Then finally:

“An Illustration of God’s Love for Idolatrous Israel”

Hosea again served the Lord God as His living-illustration “The Lord said to me, “Go, show love to your wife again, even though she loves another man and continually commits adultery. Likewise, the Lord loves the Israelites although they turn to other gods and love to offer raisin cakes to idols.” So I paid fifteen shekels of silver and about seven bushels of barley to purchase her. Then I told her, “You must live with me many days; you must not commit adultery or have sexual intercourse with another man, and I also will wait for you.” For the Israelites must live many days without a king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred fertility pillar, without ephod or idols. Afterward, the Israelites will turn and seek the Lord their God and their Davidic king. Then they will submit to the Lord in fear and receive his blessings in the future.”

Hosea delivered a prophesy to Israel for her unrepentant and chronic rebellion “... the land will mourn, and all its inhabitants will perish. The wild animals, the birds of the sky, and even the fish in the sea will perish.”

He continued a terrible prophesy against the apostate prophets, the disobedient kings, those who consorted with cultic prostitutes, those who worshiped false idols, those who abused and neglected the poor, and those who turned to foreign nations instead of to the Lord God.

Hosea warned Judah to not follow in the rebellious footsteps of Israel.

He concluded with a prophesy of a reverse-Exodus; Israel would return to bondage in Egypt and also to exile in Assyria.

Hosea told of the Lord God's appearance of a dilemma, reconciling His grace with the law. While the law dictated that He destroy them all, as had been the case way back in the Garden of Eden, His grace sought a path to reconciliation and restoration.

Because Jacob/Israel had striven with an angel and cried out to the Lord God a covenant had been made on behalf of humankind (Jacob/Israel's descendants and others who had been adopted-into that covenant family) with the Lord which He would not break.

The covenant required punishment of the people but not the wrath of God – that was reserved for those people, things, and institutions that were outside of the covenant.

Hosea's prophesy reminded the people that the Lord God had given them a human king in anger, due to their unrepentant demandingness for "a king like the nations around us", and now in His righteous wrath He intended to remove the role of king from them.

He shared the Lord's call for genuine repentance and told of the Lord's promise to bless and to restore them.

Hosea concluded with a word of wisdom from the Lord "Who is wise? Let him discern these things! Who is discerning? Let him understand them! For the ways of the Lord are right; the godly walk in them, but in them the rebellious stumble."

INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

CONSIDER

Hosea surrendered his life in a remarkable way, marrying a woman that no faithful Israelite would have even wanted to allow near to him, and bearing the shame of her adultery. When Lord God cleanses the sinful place that the lands of Israel had become He really cleansed it "... all its inhabitants will perish. The wild animals, the birds of the sky, and even the fish in the sea will perish." The pattern of humankind from Adam and Eve on has been rebellion against the Lord God, yet He has been equally persistent in seeking the restoration of relationship; that is Love.

DISCUSS

Why would the illustration of the adulterous wife, the illustration of the stripping-naked of rhetorical Israel, the loss of fertility (land and people), and promise of an Exodus-like reconciliation and restoration have been necessary to get the peoples' attention? Watching what had happened to Gibbea and then Israel why would Judah even need to be warned? What might be the value-added of removing the role of human king from the people?

REFLECT

All of what was prophesied was conditional – the people had to listen to the Lord God “... speak tenderly” and respond with repentant hearts. The reverse-Exodus had to be heartbreaking, for God and man. Genuine repentance was the consistent expectation of the Lord God throughout history.

SHARE

When have you been trapped in a relationship with an unfaithful friend or co-worker or other person who made promises but then selfishly broke them? When have you discovered something wrong in your own walk with the Lord as you observed someone else struggling? When have you experienced or observed the making of a celebrity, political, or religious person a type of king who stood between people and the Lord God?

FAITH IN ACTION

PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you a time in your life where you have been unfaithful to Him, and how He reached down to “... speak tenderly” to you, and because you responded with a repentant heart He forgave and reconciled with you, to reveal to you a place in your walk where you need to make a change so that you do not risk discipline from Him, and to reveal to you a person who has or who is like a king in your life – one whose approval, opinion, and/or words have (or do) are sometimes more powerful than those of the Lord God.

ACT

Today I will give praise and thanks to the Lord God for His love and mercy! I will confess and repent, seek and receive the Lord God’s forgiveness, and place Him first in all things rather than try to live apart from Him in some things. I will confess and repent, seek and receive the Lord God’s forgiveness, and place Him first – removing any mere human from anything that bears the slightest resemblance of a “throne” in my life.

Be Specific _____

Saturday ([Isaiah 28–39](#), [Psalm 76](#))

Isaiah

The Lord Will Judge Samaria

28:1 The splendid crown of Ephraim’s drunkards is doomed, the withering flower, its beautiful splendor, situated at the head of a rich valley, the crown of those overcome with wine.

28:2 Look, the sovereign master sends a strong, powerful one. With the force of a hailstorm or a destructive windstorm, with the might of a driving, torrential rainstorm, he will knock that crown to the ground with his hand.

28:3 The splendid crown of Ephraim's drunkards will be trampled underfoot.

28:4 The withering flower, its beautiful splendor, situated at the head of a rich valley, will be like an early fig before harvest – as soon as someone notices it, he grabs it and swallows it.

28:5 At that time the Lord who commands armies will become a beautiful crown and a splendid diadem for the remnant of his people.

28:6 He will give discernment to the one who makes judicial decisions, and strength to those who defend the city from attackers.

28:7 Even these men stagger because of wine, they stumble around because of beer – priests and prophets stagger because of beer, they are confused because of wine, they stumble around because of beer; they stagger while seeing prophetic visions, they totter while making legal decisions.

28:8 Indeed, all the tables are covered with vomit; no place is untouched.

28:9 Who is the Lord trying to teach? To whom is he explaining a message? Those just weaned from milk! Those just taken from their mother's breast!

28:10 Indeed, they will hear meaningless gibberish, senseless babbling, a syllable here, a syllable there.

28:11 For with mocking lips and a foreign tongue he will speak to these people.

28:12 In the past he said to them, "This is where security can be found. Provide security for the one who is exhausted! This is where rest can be found." But they refused to listen.

28:13 So the Lord's word to them will sound like meaningless gibberish, senseless babbling, a syllable here, a syllable there. As a result, they will fall on their backsides when they try to walk, and be injured, ensnared, and captured.

The Lord Will Judge Jerusalem

28:14 Therefore, listen to the Lord's word, you who mock, you rulers of these people who reside in Jerusalem!

28:15 For you say, “We have made a treaty with death, with Sheol we have made an agreement. When the overwhelming judgment sweeps by it will not reach us. For we have made a lie our refuge, we have hidden ourselves in a deceitful word.”

28:16 Therefore, this is what the sovereign master, the Lord, says: “Look, I am laying a stone in Zion, an approved stone, set in place as a precious cornerstone for the foundation. The one who maintains his faith will not panic.

28:17 I will make justice the measuring line, fairness the plumb line; hail will sweep away the unreliable refuge, the floodwaters will overwhelm the hiding place.

28:18 Your treaty with death will be dissolved; your agreement with Sheol will not last. When the overwhelming judgment sweeps by, you will be overrun by it.

28:19 Whenever it sweeps by, it will overtake you; indeed, every morning it will sweep by, it will come through during the day and the night.” When this announcement is understood, it will cause nothing but terror.

28:20 For the bed is too short to stretch out on, and the blanket is too narrow to wrap around oneself.

28:21 For the Lord will rise up, as he did at Mount Perazim, he will rouse himself, as he did in the Valley of Gibeon, to accomplish his work, his peculiar work, to perform his task, his strange task.

28:22 So now, do not mock, or your chains will become heavier! For I have heard a message about decreed destruction, from the sovereign master, the Lord who commands armies, against the entire land.

28:23 Pay attention and listen to my message! Be attentive and listen to what I have to say!

28:24 Does a farmer just keep on plowing at planting time? Does he keep breaking up and harrowing his ground?

28:25 Once he has leveled its surface, does he not scatter the seed of the caraway plant, sow the seed of the cumin plant, and plant the wheat, barley, and grain in their designated places?

28:26 His God instructs him; he teaches him the principles of agriculture.

28:27 Certainly caraway seed is not threshed with a sledge, nor is the wheel of a cart rolled over cumin seed. Certainly caraway seed is beaten with a stick, and cumin seed with a flail.

28:28 Grain is crushed, though one certainly does not thresh it forever. The wheel of one’s wagon rolls over it, but his horses do not crush it.

28:29 This also comes from the Lord who commands armies, who gives supernatural guidance and imparts great wisdom.

Ariel is Besieged

29:1 Ariel is as good as dead – Ariel, the town David besieged! Keep observing your annual rituals, celebrate your festivals on schedule.

29:2 I will threaten Ariel, and she will mourn intensely and become like an altar hearth before me.

29:3 I will lay siege to you on all sides; I will besiege you with troops; I will raise siege works against you.

29:4 You will fall; while lying on the ground you will speak; from the dust where you lie, your words will be heard. Your voice will sound like a spirit speaking from the underworld; from the dust you will chirp as if muttering an incantation.

29:5 But the horde of invaders will be like fine dust, the horde of tyrants like chaff that is blown away. It will happen suddenly, in a flash.

29:6 Judgment will come from the Lord who commands armies, accompanied by thunder, earthquake, and a loud noise, by a strong gale, a windstorm, and a consuming flame of fire.

29:7 It will be like a dream, a night vision. There will be a horde from all the nations that fight against Ariel, those who attack her and her stronghold and besiege her.

29:8 It will be like a hungry man dreaming that he is eating, only to awaken and find that his stomach is empty. It will be like a thirsty man dreaming that he is drinking, only to awaken and find that he is still weak and his thirst unquenched. So it will be for the horde from all the nations that fight against Mount Zion.

God's People are Spiritually Insensitive

29:9 You will be shocked and amazed! You are totally blind! They are drunk, but not because of wine; they stagger, but not because of beer.

29:10 For the Lord has poured out on you a strong urge to sleep deeply. He has shut your eyes (the prophets), and covered your heads (the seers).

29:11 To you this entire prophetic revelation is like words in a sealed scroll. When they hand it to one who can read and say, "Read this," he responds, "I can't, because it is sealed." 29:12 Or when they hand the scroll to one who can't read and say, "Read this," he says, "I can't read."

29:13 The sovereign master says, “These people say they are loyal to me; they say wonderful things about me, but they are not really loyal to me. Their worship consists of nothing but man-made ritual.

29:14 Therefore I will again do an amazing thing for these people – an absolutely extraordinary deed. Wise men will have nothing to say, the sages will have no explanations.”

29:15 Those who try to hide their plans from the Lord are as good as dead, who do their work in secret and boast, “Who sees us? Who knows what we’re doing?”

29:16 Your thinking is perverse! Should the potter be regarded as clay? Should the thing made say about its maker, “He didn’t make me”? Or should the pottery say about the potter, “He doesn’t understand”?

Changes are Coming

29:17 In just a very short time Lebanon will turn into an orchard, and the orchard will be considered a forest.

29:18 At that time the deaf will be able to hear words read from a scroll, and the eyes of the blind will be able to see through deep darkness.

29:19 The downtrodden will again rejoice in the Lord; the poor among humankind will take delight in the Holy One of Israel.

29:20 For tyrants will disappear, those who taunt will vanish, and all those who love to do wrong will be eliminated –

29:21 those who bear false testimony against a person, who entrap the one who arbitrates at the city gate and deprive the innocent of justice by making false charges.

29:22 So this is what the Lord, the one who delivered Abraham, says to the family of Jacob: “Jacob will no longer be ashamed; their faces will no longer show their embarrassment.

29:23 For when they see their children, whom I will produce among them, they will honor my name. They will honor the Holy One of Jacob; they will respect the God of Israel.

29:24 Those who stray morally will gain understanding; those who complain will acquire insight.

Egypt Will Prove Unreliable

30:1 “The rebellious children are as good as dead,” says the Lord,

“those who make plans without consulting me,

who form alliances without consulting my Spirit,

and thereby compound their sin.

30:2 They travel down to Egypt

without seeking my will,

seeking Pharaoh's protection, and looking for safety in Egypt's protective shade.

30:3 But Pharaoh's protection will bring you nothing but shame,

and the safety of Egypt's protective shade nothing but humiliation.

30:4 Though his officials are in Zoan

and his messengers arrive at Hanes,

30:5 all will be put to shame

because of a nation that cannot help them,

who cannot give them aid or help,

but only shame and disgrace."

30:6 This is a message about the animals in the Negev:

Through a land of distress and danger,

inhabited by lionesses and roaring lions,

by snakes and darting adders,

they transport their wealth on the backs of donkeys,

their riches on the humps of camels,

to a nation that cannot help them.

30:7 Egypt is totally incapable of helping.

For this reason I call her

'Proud one who is silenced.'"

30:8 Now go, write it down on a tablet in their presence,

inscribe it on a scroll,

so that it might be preserved for a future time

as an enduring witness.

30:9 For these are rebellious people –

they are lying children,

children unwilling to obey the Lord's law.

30:10 They say to the visionaries, "See no more visions!"

and to the seers, "Don't relate messages to us about what is right!

Tell us nice things,

relate deceptive messages.

30:11 Turn aside from the way,

stray off the path.

Remove from our presence the Holy One of Israel."

30:12 For this reason this is what the Holy One of Israel says:

"You have rejected this message;

you trust instead in your ability to oppress and trick,

and rely on that kind of behavior.

30:13 So this sin will become your downfall.

You will be like a high wall

that bulges and cracks and is ready to collapse;

it crumbles suddenly, in a flash.

30:14 It shatters in pieces like a clay jar,

so shattered to bits that none of it can be salvaged.

Among its fragments one cannot find a shard large enough

to scoop a hot coal from a fire

or to skim off water from a cistern.”

30:15 For this is what the master, the Lord, the Holy One of Israel says:

“If you repented and patiently waited for me, you would be delivered;

if you calmly trusted in me you would find strength,

but you are unwilling.

30:16 You say, ‘No, we will flee on horses,’

so you will indeed flee.

You say, ‘We will ride on fast horses,’

so your pursuers will be fast.

30:17 One thousand will scurry at the battle cry of one enemy soldier;

at the battle cry of five enemy soldiers you will all run away,

until the remaining few are as isolated

as a flagpole on a mountaintop

or a signal flag on a hill.”

The Lord Will Not Abandon His People

30:18 For this reason the Lord is ready to show you mercy;

he sits on his throne, ready to have compassion on you.

Indeed, the Lord is a just God;

all who wait for him in faith will be blessed.

30:19 For people will live in Zion;

in Jerusalem you will weep no more.

When he hears your cry of despair, he will indeed show you mercy;

when he hears it, he will respond to you.

30:20 The sovereign master will give you distress to eat

and suffering to drink;

but your teachers will no longer be hidden;

your eyes will see them.

30:21 You will hear a word spoken behind you, saying,

“This is the correct way, walk in it,”

whether you are heading to the right or the left.

30:22 You will desecrate your silver-plated idols

and your gold-plated images.

You will throw them away as if they were a menstrual rag,

saying to them, “Get out!”

30:23 He will water the seed you plant in the ground,

and the ground will produce crops in abundance.

At that time your cattle will graze in wide pastures.

30:24 The oxen and donkeys used in plowing

will eat seasoned feed winnowed with a shovel and pitchfork.

30:25 On every high mountain

and every high hill

there will be streams flowing with water,

at the time of great slaughter when the fortified towers collapse.

30:26 The light of the full moon will be like the sun's glare

and the sun's glare will be seven times brighter,

like the light of seven days,

when the Lord binds up his people's fractured bones

and heals their severe wound.

30:27 Look, the name of the Lord comes from a distant place

in raging anger and awesome splendor.

He speaks angrily

and his word is like destructive fire.

30:28 His battle cry overwhelms like a flooding river

that reaches one's neck.

He shakes the nations in a sieve that isolates the chaff;

he puts a bit into the mouth of the nations and leads them to destruction.

30:29 You will sing

as you do in the evening when you are celebrating a festival.

You will be happy like one who plays a flute

as he goes to the mountain of the Lord, the Rock who shelters Israel.

30:30 The Lord will give a mighty shout

and intervene in power,

with furious anger and flaming, destructive fire,

with a driving rainstorm and hailstones.

30:31 Indeed, the Lord's shout will shatter Assyria;

he will beat them with a club.

30:32 Every blow from his punishing cudgel,

with which the Lord will beat them,

will be accompanied by music from the tambourine and harp,

and he will attack them with his weapons.

30:33 For the burial place is already prepared;

it has been made deep and wide for the king.

The firewood is piled high on it.

The Lord's breath, like a stream flowing with brimstone,

will ignite it.

Egypt Will Disappoint

31:1 Those who go down to Egypt for help are as good as dead,

those who rely on war horses,

and trust in Egypt's many chariots

and in their many, many horsemen.

But they do not rely on the Holy One of Israel

and do not seek help from the Lord.

31:2 Yet he too is wise and he will bring disaster;

he does not retract his decree.

He will attack the wicked nation,
and the nation that helps those who commit sin.

31:3 The Egyptians are mere humans, not God;
their horses are made of flesh, not spirit.

The Lord will strike with his hand;
the one who helps will stumble
and the one being helped will fall.

Together they will perish.

The Lord Will Defend Zion

31:4 Indeed, this is what the Lord says to me:

“The Lord will be like a growling lion,
like a young lion growling over its prey.

Though a whole group of shepherds gathers against it,
it is not afraid of their shouts
or intimidated by their yelling.

In this same way the Lord who commands armies will descend
to do battle on Mount Zion and on its hill.

31:5 Just as birds hover over a nest,
so the Lord who commands armies will protect Jerusalem.

He will protect and deliver it;
as he passes over he will rescue it.

31:6 You Israelites! Return to the one against whom you have so blatantly rebelled!

31:7 For at that time everyone will get rid of the silver and gold idols your hands sinfully made.

31:8 Assyria will fall by a sword, but not one human-made;

a sword not made by humankind will destroy them.

They will run away from this sword

and their young men will be forced to do hard labor.

31:9 They will surrender their stronghold because of fear;

their officers will be afraid of the Lord's battle flag."

This is what the Lord says –

the one whose fire is in Zion,

whose firepot is in Jerusalem.

Justice and Wisdom Will Prevail

32:1 Look, a king will promote fairness; officials will promote justice.

32:2 Each of them will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from a rainstorm; like streams of water in a dry region and like the shade of a large cliff in a parched land.

32:3 Eyes will no longer be blind and ears will be attentive.

32:4 The mind that acts rashly will possess discernment and the tongue that stutters will speak with ease and clarity.

32:5 A fool will no longer be called honorable; a deceiver will no longer be called principled.

32:6 For a fool speaks disgraceful things; his mind plans out sinful deeds. He commits godless deeds and says misleading things about the Lord; he gives the hungry nothing to satisfy their appetite and gives the thirsty nothing to drink.

32:7 A deceiver's methods are evil; he dreams up evil plans to ruin the poor with lies, even when the needy are in the right.

32:8 An honorable man makes honorable plans; his honorable character gives him security.

The Lord Will Give True Security

32:9 You complacent women, get up and listen to me! You carefree daughters, pay attention to what I say!

32:10 In a year's time you carefree ones will shake with fear, for the grape harvest will fail, and the fruit harvest will not arrive.

32:11 Tremble, you complacent ones! Shake with fear, you carefree ones! Strip off your clothes and expose yourselves – put sackcloth on your waist!

32:12 Mourn over the field, over the delightful fields and the fruitful vine!

32:13 Mourn over the land of my people, which is overgrown with thorns and briars, and over all the once-happy houses in the city filled with revelry.

32:14 For the fortress is neglected; the once-crowded city is abandoned. Hill and watchtower are permanently uninhabited. Wild donkeys love to go there, and flocks graze there.

32:15 This desolation will continue until new life is poured out on us from heaven. Then the desert will become an orchard and the orchard will be considered a forest.

32:16 Justice will settle down in the desert and fairness will live in the orchard.

32:17 Fairness will produce peace and result in lasting security.

32:18 My people will live in peaceful settlements, in secure homes, and in safe, quiet places.

32:19 Even if the forest is destroyed and the city is annihilated,

32:20 you will be blessed, you who plant seed by all the banks of the streams, you who let your ox and donkey graze.

The Lord Will Restore Zion

33:1 The destroyer is as good as dead, you who have not been destroyed! The deceitful one is as good as dead, the one whom others have not deceived! When you are through destroying, you will be destroyed; when you finish deceiving, others will deceive you!

33:2 Lord, be merciful to us! We wait for you. Give us strength each morning! Deliver us when distress comes.

33:3 The nations run away when they hear a loud noise; the nations scatter when you spring into action!

33:4 Your plunder disappears as if locusts were eating it; they swarm over it like locusts!

33:5 The Lord is exalted, indeed, he lives in heaven; he fills Zion with justice and fairness.

33:6 He is your constant source of stability; he abundantly provides safety and great wisdom; he gives all this to those who fear him.

33:7 Look, ambassadors cry out in the streets; messengers sent to make peace weep bitterly.

33:8 Highways are empty, there are no travelers. Treaties are broken, witnesses are despised, human life is treated with disrespect.

33:9 The land dries up and withers away; the forest of Lebanon shrivels up and decays. Sharon is like the desert; Bashan and Carmel are parched.

33:10 "Now I will rise up," says the Lord. "Now I will exalt myself; now I will magnify myself.

33:11 You conceive straw, you give birth to chaff; your breath is a fire that destroys you.

33:12 The nations will be burned to ashes; like thorn bushes that have been cut down, they will be set on fire.

33:13 You who are far away, listen to what I have done! You who are close by, recognize my strength!"

33:14 Sinners are afraid in Zion; panic grips the godless. They say, "Who among us can coexist with destructive fire? Who among us can coexist with unquenchable fire?"

33:15 The one who lives uprightly and speaks honestly; the one who refuses to profit from oppressive measures and rejects a bribe; the one who does not plot violent crimes and does not seek to harm others

33:16 This is the person who will live in a secure place; he will find safety in the rocky, mountain strongholds; he will have food and a constant supply of water.

33:17 You will see a king in his splendor; you will see a wide land.

33:18 Your mind will recall the terror you experienced, and you will ask yourselves, "Where is the scribe? Where is the one who weighs the money? Where is the one who counts the towers?"

33:19 You will no longer see a defiant people whose language you do not comprehend, whose derisive speech you do not understand.

33:20 Look at Zion, the city where we hold religious festivals! You will see Jerusalem, a peaceful settlement, a tent that stays put; its stakes will never be pulled up; none of its ropes will snap in two.

33:21 Instead the Lord will rule there as our mighty king. Rivers and wide streams will flow through it; no war galley will enter; no large ships will sail through.

33:22 For the Lord, our ruler, the Lord, our commander, the Lord, our king – he will deliver us.

33:23 Though at this time your ropes are slack, the mast is not secured, and the sail is not unfurled, at that time you will divide up a great quantity of loot; even the lame will drag off plunder.

33:24 No resident of Zion will say, "I am ill"; the people who live there will have their sin forgiven.

The Lord Will Judge Edom

34:1 Come near, you nations, and listen! Pay attention, you people! The earth and everything it contains must listen, the world and everything that lives in it.

34:2 For the Lord is angry at all the nations and furious with all their armies. He will annihilate them and slaughter them.

34:3 Their slain will be left unburied, their corpses will stink; the hills will soak up their blood.

34:4 All the stars in the sky will fade away, the sky will roll up like a scroll; all its stars will wither, like a leaf withers and falls from a vine or a fig withers and falls from a tree.

34:5 He says, "Indeed, my sword has slaughtered heavenly powers. Look, it now descends on Edom, on the people I will annihilate in judgment."

34:6 The Lord's sword is dripping with blood, it is covered with fat; it drips with the blood of young rams and goats and is covered with the fat of rams' kidneys. For the Lord is holding a sacrifice in Bozrah, a bloody slaughter in the land of Edom.

34:7 Wild oxen will be slaughtered along with them, as well as strong bulls. Their land is drenched with blood, their soil is covered with fat.

34:8 For the Lord has planned a day of revenge, a time when he will repay Edom for her hostility toward Zion.

34:9 Edom's streams will be turned into pitch and her soil into brimstone; her land will become burning pitch.

34:10 Night and day it will burn; its smoke will ascend continually. Generation after generation it will be a wasteland and no one will ever pass through it again.

34:11 Owls and wild animals will live there, all kinds of wild birds will settle in it. The Lord will stretch out over her the measuring line of ruin and the plumb line of destruction.

34:12 Her nobles will have nothing left to call a kingdom and all her officials will disappear.

34:13 Her fortresses will be overgrown with thorns; thickets and weeds will grow in her fortified cities. Jackals will settle there; ostriches will live there.

34:14 Wild animals and wild dogs will congregate there; wild goats will bleat to one another. Yes, nocturnal animals will rest there and make for themselves a nest.

34:15 Owls will make nests and lay eggs there; they will hatch them and protect them. Yes, hawks will gather there, each with its mate.

34:16 Carefully read the scroll of the Lord! Not one of these creatures will be missing, none will lack a mate. For the Lord has issued the decree, and his own spirit gathers them.

34:17 He assigns them their allotment; he measures out their assigned place. They will live there permanently; they will settle in it through successive generations.

The Land and Its People Are Transformed

35:1 Let the desert and dry region be happy; let the wilderness rejoice and bloom like a lily!

35:2 Let it richly bloom; let it rejoice and shout with delight! It is given the grandeur of Lebanon, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the grandeur of the Lord, the splendor of our God.

35:3 Strengthen the hands that have gone limp, steady the knees that shake!

35:4 Tell those who panic, "Be strong! Do not fear! Look, your God comes to avenge! With divine retribution he comes to deliver you."

35:5 Then blind eyes will open, deaf ears will hear.

35:6 Then the lame will leap like a deer, the mute tongue will shout for joy; for water will flow in the desert, streams in the wilderness.

35:7 The dry soil will become a pool of water, the parched ground springs of water. Where jackals once lived and sprawled out, grass, reeds, and papyrus will grow.

35:8 A thoroughfare will be there – it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it; it is reserved for those authorized to use it – fools will not stray into it.

35:9 No lions will be there, no ferocious wild animals will be on it – they will not be found there. Those delivered from bondage will travel on it,

35:10 those whom the Lord has ransomed will return that way. They will enter Zion with a happy shout. Unending joy will crown them, happiness and joy will overwhelm them; grief and suffering will disappear.

Sennacherib Invades Judah

36:1 In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, King Sennacherib of Assyria marched up against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. 36:2 The king of Assyria sent his chief adviser from Lachish to King Hezekiah in Jerusalem, along with a large army. The chief adviser stood at the conduit of the upper pool which is located on the road to the field where they wash and dry cloth. 36:3 Eliakim son of Hilkiyah, the palace supervisor, accompanied by Shebna the scribe and Joah son of Asaph, the secretary, went out to meet him.

36:4 The chief adviser said to them, "Tell Hezekiah: 'This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: 'What is your source of confidence? 36:5 Your claim to have a strategy and military strength is just empty talk. In whom are you trusting, that you would dare to rebel against me? 36:6 Look, you must be trusting in Egypt, that splintered reed staff. If someone leans on it for support, it punctures his hand and wounds him. That is what Pharaoh king of Egypt does to all who trust in him! 36:7 Perhaps you will tell me, 'We are trusting in the Lord our God.' But Hezekiah is the one who eliminated his high places and altars and then told the people of Judah and Jerusalem, 'You must worship at this altar.' 36:8 Now make a deal with my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses, provided you can find enough riders for them. 36:9 Certainly you will not refuse one of my master's minor officials and trust in Egypt for chariots and horsemen. 36:10 Furthermore it was by the command of the Lord that I marched up against this land to destroy it. The Lord told me, 'March up against this land and destroy it!'"

36:11 Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to the chief adviser, "Speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it. Don't speak with us in the Judahite dialect in the hearing of the people who are on the wall." 36:12 But the chief adviser said, "My master did not send me to speak these words only to your master and to you. His message is also for the men who sit on the wall, for they will eat their own excrement and drink their own urine along with you!"

36:13 The chief adviser then stood there and called out loudly in the Judahite dialect, "Listen to the message of the great king, the king of Assyria. 36:14 This is what the king says: 'Don't let Hezekiah mislead you, for he is not able to rescue you! 36:15 Don't let Hezekiah talk you into trusting in the Lord by saying, "The Lord will certainly rescue us; this city will not be handed over to the king of Assyria." 36:16 Don't listen to Hezekiah!' For this is what the king of Assyria says, 'Send me a token of your submission and surrender to me. Then each of you may eat from his own vine and fig tree and drink water from his own cistern, 36:17 until I come and take you to a land just like your own – a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards. 36:18 Hezekiah is misleading you when he says, "The Lord will rescue us." Has any of the gods of the nations rescued his land from the power of the king of Assyria? 36:19 Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Indeed, did any gods rescue Samaria from my power? 36:20 Who among all the gods of these lands have rescued their lands from my power? So how can the Lord rescue Jerusalem from my power?" 36:21 They were silent and did not respond, for the king had ordered, "Don't respond to him."

36:22 Eliakim son of Hilkiyah, the palace supervisor, accompanied by Shebna the scribe and Joah son of Asaph, the secretary, went to Hezekiah with their clothes torn in grief and reported to him what the chief adviser had said.

37:1 When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and went to the Lord's temple. 37:2 Eliakim the palace supervisor, Shebna the scribe, and the leading priests, clothed in sackcloth, sent this message to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz: 37:3 "This is what Hezekiah says: 'This is a day of distress, insults, and humiliation, as when a baby is ready to leave the birth canal, but the mother lacks the strength to push it through. 37:4 Perhaps the Lord your God will hear all these things the chief adviser has spoken on behalf of his master, the king of Assyria, who sent him to taunt the living God. When the Lord your God hears, perhaps he will punish him for the things he has said. So pray for this remnant that remains.'"

37:5 When King Hezekiah's servants came to Isaiah, 37:6 Isaiah said to them, "Tell your master this: 'This is what the Lord says: "Don't be afraid because of the things you have heard – these insults the king of Assyria's servants have hurled against me. 37:7 Look, I will take control of his mind; he will receive a report and return to his own land. I will cut him down with a sword in his own land.'"

37:8 When the chief adviser heard the king of Assyria had departed from Lachish, he left and went to Libnah, where the king was campaigning. 37:9 The king heard that King Tirhakah of Ethiopia was marching out to fight him. He again sent messengers to Hezekiah, ordering them: 37:10 "Tell King Hezekiah of Judah this: 'Don't let your God in whom you trust mislead you when he says, "Jerusalem will not be handed over to the king of Assyria." 37:11 Certainly you have heard how the kings of Assyria have annihilated all lands. Do you really think you will be rescued? 37:12 Were the nations whom my predecessors destroyed – the nations of Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden in Telassar –

rescued by their gods? 37:13 Where are the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, and the kings of Lair, Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah?”

37:14 Hezekiah took the letter from the messengers and read it. Then Hezekiah went up to the Lord's temple and spread it out before the Lord. 37:15 Hezekiah prayed before the Lord: 37:16 “O Lord who commands armies, O God of Israel, who is enthroned on the cherubim! You alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You made the sky and the earth. 37:17 Pay attention, Lord, and hear! Open your eyes, Lord, and observe! Listen to this entire message Sennacherib sent and how he taunts the living God! 37:18 It is true, Lord, that the kings of Assyria have destroyed all the nations and their lands. 37:19 They have burned the gods of the nations, for they are not really gods, but only the product of human hands manufactured from wood and stone. That is why the Assyrians could destroy them. 37:20 Now, O Lord our God, rescue us from his power, so all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are the Lord.”

37:21 Isaiah son of Amoz sent this message to Hezekiah: “This is what the Lord God of Israel says: ‘Because you prayed to me concerning King Sennacherib of Assyria, 37:22 this is what the Lord says about him:

“The virgin daughter Zion despises you – she makes fun of you; daughter Jerusalem shakes her head after you.

37:23 Whom have you taunted and hurled insults at? At whom have you shouted and looked so arrogantly? At the Holy One of Israel!

37:24 Through your messengers you taunted the sovereign master, ‘With my many chariots I climbed up the high mountains, the slopes of Lebanon. I cut down its tall cedars and its best evergreens. I invaded its most remote regions, its thickest woods.

37:25 I dug wells and drank water. With the soles of my feet I dried up all the rivers of Egypt.’

37:26 Certainly you must have heard! Long ago I worked it out, in ancient times I planned it, and now I am bringing it to pass. The plan is this: Fortified cities will crash into heaps of ruins.

37:27 Their residents are powerless; they are terrified and ashamed. They are as short-lived as plants in the field or green vegetation. They are as short-lived as grass on the rooftops when it is scorched by the east wind.

37:28 I know where you live and everything you do and how you rage against me.

37:29 Because you rage against me and the uproar you create has reached my ears, I will put my hook in your nose, and my bridle between your lips, and I will lead you back the way you came.”

37:30 “This will be your reminder that I have spoken the truth: This year you will eat what grows wild, and next year what grows on its own. But the year after that you will plant seed and harvest crops; you will plant vines and consume their produce. 37:31 Those who remain in Judah will take root in the ground and bear fruit.

37:32 “For a remnant will leave Jerusalem; survivors will come out of Mount Zion. The intense devotion of the Lord who commands armies will accomplish this. 37:33 So this is what the Lord says about the king of Assyria: ‘He will not enter this city, nor will he shoot an arrow here. He will not attack it with his shielded warriors, nor will he build siege works against it.

37:34 He will go back the way he came – he will not enter this city,’ says the Lord.

37:35 I will shield this city and rescue it for the sake of my reputation and because of my promise to David my servant.””

37:36 The Lord’s messenger went out and killed 185,000 troops in the Assyrian camp. When they got up early the next morning, there were all the corpses! 37:37 So King Sennacherib of Assyria broke camp and went on his way. He went home and stayed in Nineveh. 37:38 One day, as he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword. They ran away to the land of Ararat; his son Esarhaddon replaced him as king.

The Lord Hears Hezekiah’s Prayer

38:1 In those days Hezekiah was stricken with a terminal illness. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz visited him and told him, “This is what the Lord says, ‘Give instructions to your household, for you are about to die; you will not get well.’” 38:2 Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, 38:3 “Please, Lord. Remember how I have served you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion, and how I have carried out your will.” Then Hezekiah wept bitterly.

38:4 The Lord told Isaiah, 38:5 “Go and tell Hezekiah: ‘This is what the Lord God of your ancestor David says: “I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Look, I will add fifteen years to your life, 38:6 and rescue you and this city from the king of Assyria. I will shield this city.”’” 38:7 Isaiah replied, “This is your sign from the Lord confirming that the Lord will do what he has said: 38:8 Look, I will make the shadow go back ten steps on the stairs of Ahaz.” And then the shadow went back ten steps.

Hezekiah’s Song of Thanks

38:9 This is the prayer of King Hezekiah of Judah when he was sick and then recovered from his illness:

38:10 “I thought, ‘In the middle of my life I must walk through the gates of Sheol, I am deprived of the rest of my years.’”

38:11 "I thought, 'I will no longer see the Lord in the land of the living, I will no longer look on humankind with the inhabitants of the world.

38:12 My dwelling place is removed and taken away from me like a shepherd's tent. I rolled up my life like a weaver rolls cloth; from the loom he cuts me off. You turn day into night and end my life.

38:13 I cry out until morning; like a lion he shatters all my bones; you turn day into night and end my life.

38:14 Like a swallow or a thrush I chirp, I coo like a dove; my eyes grow tired from looking up to the sky. O sovereign master, I am oppressed; help me!

38:15 What can I say? He has decreed and acted. I will walk slowly all my years because I am overcome with grief.

38:16 O sovereign master, your decrees can give men life; may years of life be restored to me. Restore my health and preserve my life.'

38:17 "Look, the grief I experienced was for my benefit. You delivered me from the pit of oblivion. For you removed all my sins from your sight.

38:18 Indeed Sheol does not give you thanks; death does not praise you. Those who descend into the pit do not anticipate your faithfulness.

38:19 The living person, the living person, he gives you thanks, as I do today.

A father tells his sons about your faithfulness.

38:20 The Lord is about to deliver me, and we will celebrate with music for the rest of our lives in the Lord's temple."

38:21 Isaiah ordered, "Let them take a fig cake and apply it to the ulcerated sore and he will get well."

38:22 Hezekiah said, "What is the confirming sign that I will go up to the Lord's temple?"

Messengers from Babylon Visit Hezekiah

39:1 At that time Merodach-Baladan son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a gift to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been ill and had recovered. 39:2 Hezekiah welcomed them and showed them his storehouse with its silver, gold, spices, and high-quality olive oil, as well as his whole armory and everything in his treasuries. Hezekiah showed them everything in his palace and in his whole kingdom. 39:3 Isaiah the prophet visited King Hezekiah and asked him, "What did these men say? Where do they come from?" Hezekiah replied, "They come from the distant land of Babylon." 39:4 Isaiah asked, "What have they seen in your palace?" Hezekiah replied, "They have seen everything in my palace. I

showed them everything in my treasuries.” 39:5 Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Listen to the word of the Lord who commands armies: 39:6 ‘Look, a time is coming when everything in your palace and the things your ancestors have accumulated to this day will be carried away to Babylon; nothing will be left,’ says the Lord. 39:7 ‘Some of your very own descendants whom you father will be taken away and will be made eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.’” 39:8 Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The Lord’s word which you have announced is appropriate.” Then he thought, “For there will be peace and stability during my lifetime.”

Psalms

[Psalm 76](#)

76:1 For the music director; to be accompanied by stringed instruments; a psalm of Asaph, a song.

God has revealed himself in Judah; in Israel his reputation is great.

76:2 He lives in Salem; he dwells in Zion.

76:3 There he shattered the arrows, the shield, the sword, and the rest of the weapons of war. (Selah)

76:4 You shine brightly and reveal your majesty, as you descend from the hills where you killed your prey.

76:5 The bravehearted were plundered; they “fell asleep.” All the warriors were helpless.

76:6 At the sound of your battle cry, O God of Jacob, both rider and horse “fell asleep.”

76:7 You are awesome! Yes, you!

Who can withstand your intense anger?

76:8 From heaven you announced what their punishment would be. The earth was afraid and silent

76:9 when God arose to execute judgment, and to deliver all the oppressed of the earth. (Selah)

76:10 Certainly your angry judgment upon men will bring you praise; you reveal your anger in full measure.

76:11 Make vows to the Lord your God and repay them!

Let all those who surround him bring tribute to the awesome one!

76:12 He humbles princes; the kings of the earth regard him as awesome.

PRAYER

Lord, even though You ended the earthly kingdom of Israel, You still loved them and remained at the line of reconciliation. May I never forget that You love all who have surrendered to the Lordship of Christ and that You will welcome us home should we go astray for a time. Hope in You is grounded in Jesus the Christ, our Messiah. May I always look to Jesus as the fulfillment of Your promise and then cling to Him as my only hope. You have always been clear that choices have consequences; whether the choices of Adam and Eve, or the choices of the billions of rebels who have followed them. May I take care to hold my choices up to the scrutiny of Your preferences so that they may be blessed by the Holy Spirit's perfect wisdom-driven discernment. May I remember that You have decided that those who are in Your eternal family will be preserved - despite the efforts of the enemy - and that I need not fear anything the world can do. When You return to restore Your Creation You will remove all who have refused to surrender to You and will bless those who have. May I be certain of my eternally-right standing in relationship with You. You decide who will be the instrument of Your discipline, and if they over-step Your boundaries You will punish them, You will not be mocked. May I trust You for perfect justice and when You discipline me I will be certain of lovingly-perfect proportion to the need. Sometimes we squander Your gifts, yet in the big picture your grace and justice are always in perfect balance. May I be intentional in using Your gifts for Your intended purposes.

SCRIPTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

Isaiah's report of the Lord God's prophesy continued with the symbolic imagery of "Leviathan", a mythological creature known from ancient texts to represent chaos, especially the often unpredictable and devastating power of the sea. In this case the Lord God was to bring peace, illustrated by the "vineyard" that He would "water", and the peace He would offer to those who had been His enemies.

Isaiah observed that while the Lord God destroyed the enemies of Israel He functionally-divorced Israel.

In the final verses of Chapter Twenty-Nine Isaiah brought the prophesy of the healing and enlightening ministry of Jesus the Christ - the Messiah - Whose ministry would bring a new covenant, the sending of the indwelling Holy Spirit upon His children, and would bring an end to the power of the slavery and eternal destruction of sin.

He pronounced the Lord God's judgment upon the religious and political leaders who rejected Him and His law and instead turned to the pagan Egypt for help - that no help would come from them - and that they would find themselves condemned for this final act of rebellion.

Isaiah reported the promise of the Lord's active presence and guiding hand, through the indwelling Holy Spirit to come, in the lives of His children "You will hear a word spoken behind you, saying,

"This is the correct way, walk in it,"

whether you are heading to the right or the left.”

He also encouraged them to know that the Lord God would obliterate their enemies [ultimately, the Enemy, Satan – who would be vanquished].

He encouraged the remnant of Israel to return to Him.

Isaiah delivered the Lord God’s prophesy to the foreign rulers of Jerusalem that their arrogant assertion that their deal with the devil would protect them will be nullified by Him and that they would be swept from power and even from life itself.

He delivered a prophesy of hope, the hope of the coming Messiah, to believers “... the Lord, says: “Look, I am laying a stone in Zion, an approved stone, set in place as a precious cornerstone for the foundation. The one who maintains his faith will not panic.”

He also used agriculture illustrations in which plowing, planting, harvesting, and threshing are synonyms for the Lord God’s planned-process to redeem His people.

The synonym “Ariel” was used [according to the NET Translator’s Notes] to describe Israel/Jerusalem as Isaiah described the conquering a devastation of Jerusalem and the surrounding area. The people were described as “blind” to the Lord and their worship belittled because it “... consists of nothing but man-made ritual.”

He announced that He would do something that the sages and the wise men could not explain and that it would cause them to cease from doubting Him.

Isaiah continued “Look, a king will promote fairness; officials will promote justice.” He elaborated as to the way that people of integrity would be set free from the affects of the Fall and deceit and foolishness (and those who practiced them) would be no more.

He then jumped back from the future to the present, warning the complacent people to be aware that calamity was about to fall upon them.

Isaiah returned to the future to assure them that those who belonged to the Lord God would know peace and security. Isaiah prophesied the end of the era of deceivers and destroyers as he and his people cried out to the Lord for protection and strength as they endured severe oppression.

In contrast He proclaimed “The Lord is exalted, indeed, he lives in heaven; he fills Zion with justice and fairness. He is your constant source of stability; he abundantly provides safety and great wisdom; he gives all this to those who fear him ... For the Lord, our ruler, the Lord, our commander, the Lord, our king – he will deliver us.”

Isaiah offered with a prophesy of the destruction of Edom, a symbolic representation of the nations who have opposed Israel [which in a pure sense includes the physical nations of Judah and Israel since they have been in rebellion against His preferential-state of Israel for most of their existence] “Come near, you nations, and listen! Pay attention, you people! The earth and everything it contains must listen, the world and everything that lives in it. For the Lord is angry at all the nations and furious with all their armies. He will annihilate them and slaughter them.”

Isaiah delivered the prophesy of the Lord God’s restoration of both the land and the people to what is described alike a pre-Fall Edenic condition.

Although the Lord allowed the enemies of Israel to over-run and displace them, it was because their predisposition to invade and conquer was useful to Him, not because He was at all fond of them – indeed He despised their pagan and vile ways – and now Isaiah prophesied their destruction as the Lord God redeemed those who belonged to him.

He described “A thoroughfare ... it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it; it is reserved for those authorized to use it – fools will not stray into it ... Those delivered from bondage will travel on it, those whom the Lord has ransomed will return that way. They will enter Zion with a happy shout. Unending joy will crown them, happiness and joy will overwhelm them; grief and suffering will disappear.” Fools who reject the Lord God’s wisdom, and therefore the Messiah, will not be allowed there – only those who have received the indwelling Holy Spirit Who enables them to walk rightly.

The Assyrians came against King Hezekiah with a challenge to surrender. They doubted the source of their confidence since they had no meaningful army and had destroyed all of the other (pagan) altars and focused only on the altar of the Lord God – which the Assyrians viewed as the same as the rest. The Assyrians also claimed that God had told them to come against Jerusalem.

The Chief Advisor to the Assyrian king challenged Hezekiah to the people as a mis-leader who did not understand that no other nation’s ‘gods’ had saved them from Assyria and that surely Egypt would be unable to save them either.

He offered to reward them for surrendering with local peace and provision – until he returned to take them to another place – which he assured them was just as nice. He challenged them to reject the Lord God and king Hezekiah but according to Hezekiah’s instructions the people remained silent.

Hezekiah’s representatives returned to him with a report of what had happened and together they cried out to the Lord God through Isaiah. The Lord’s reply was to not fear the Assyrian king for his insults to God would result in his own death – after he was tricked into returning home by a false story of an attack from the king of Ethiopia.

The Lord declared “‘He will not enter this city, nor will he shoot an arrow here. He will not attack it with his shielded warriors, nor will he build siege works against it. He will go back the way he came – he will not enter this city,’ says the Lord. I will shield this city and rescue it for the sake of my reputation and because of my promise to David my servant.””

The Lord sent out an angel to kill 185,000 troops in the Assyrian camp as they slept and so in the morning they discovered their dead and fled Jerusalem. When the king returned home his sons murdered him.

Hezekiah was mortally ill and Isaiah told him to prepare for death. He cried-out to the Lord, asking for more time, appealing for ‘credit’ for his faithfulness as king.

The Lord God told Isaiah to tell Hezekiah that He heard his cries and would grant him an additional 15 years of life, that He would protect the city from attackers, and that He would affirm His promise by causing the shadow on the step to reverse itself ten steps.

Hezekiah recited his angst at an early death and then his exuberant praise and thanks to the Lord for granting him another 15 years and protection from enemies.

Hezekiah then welcomed the visit of the king of Babylon, who had sent a message and gift when he recovered, and pridefully showed-off all of his treasuries and other fine things and palaces. Isaiah prophesied the Lord God’s judgment, withheld due to Hezekiah’s prior faithfulness, that after he died the kingdom would fall – even some of his immediate descendants would be carried-off and made eunuchs in the service of Babylon.

Hezekiah acknowledged that the Lord’s judgment was fair and then, again self-focused, noted with satisfaction that he would not experience or see the judgment in his lifetime.

Asaph’s Psalm, numbered seventy-six, was a praise song that recited some of the deeds of the Lord God on behalf of Israel.

INTERACT WITH THE TEXT

CONSIDER

The Lord God used imagery with which His ‘audience’ would be familiar. In the ancient times of Isaiah’s ministry the mythological stories of Leviathan, and others, would have been useful for illustration. There was no hope in the law, only in the promised Messiah. Any covenant or deal in which the Lord God was not a participant is not binding upon Him. The term “fairness” in the Bible is not the emotional and selfish concept of mere humans but the perfectly just and righteous concept of the Lord God. The Lord God’s anger is perfectly just and His revenge perfectly righteous – unlike that of man. The Lord God has not forgotten His original plan, sabotaged by the foolish Adam and Eve, and He intends to restore things to their righteously-rightful condition. The Lord God had sent the Assyrians, but when they mocked Him

they made themselves the object of His wrath. Hezekiah was blessed by the Lord God for his faithfulness, because he asked, yet he was careless with the gift – and due to his position – brought immediate tragedy to those who followed.

DISCUSS

Why would the Lord God have bothered to preserve and seek to restore the chronically-rebellious Israelites? Or could “Israel” in this context have been as symbolic as “Leviathan”? Why would the people be indulging in “worship” that was, in the eyes of God, “... nothing but man-made ritual.”? How much like the modern nation of Israel, surrounded by enemies, must have been ancient Israel? Why did the people trust Hezekiah? Why would Hezekiah think it was wise to show a foreign king all of the riches of Israel?

REFLECT

The arrogant leaders of Ephraim should have known better than to thumb their noses at the Lord God. The coming Messiah would be so extraordinary that the “sages” and “wise men” would be speechless. Way back in the time of Isaiah the role of the Holy Spirit was prophesied. When the Messiah returns He will no longer tolerate the sin that He bore for us on the Cross. How many times had Israel rejected the Lord God and still He desired to preserve a thread of their existence – for the sake of His promises to their more-faithful forefathers. Imagine walking that “Way of Holiness” with so many others – freed of sin – blessed with the presence of the Lord God. The Assyrians could not discern the difference between the false gods and the one true Lord God – and they paid for their foolishness with lives and lost power. Hezekiah was astoundingly self-focused when informed of the terrible consequences coming to his immediate descendants. He seems to have been puffed-up from God’s blessings that he lost a sense of love for others.

SHARE

When have you experienced or observed a situation where a wrong choice was likely to lead to trouble but was pursued anyhow? When have you experienced or observed empty worship that was “... nothing but man-made ritual.”? When have you experienced or observed individuals or leaders turning for help to sources that are certain to fail them? When have you experienced or observed complacency in the face of obvious danger? When have you felt surrounded by those who disapproved of you, yet sensed a big-picture comfort and safety because of your relationship with the Lord God? When have you transitioned from ‘dry time’ in your relationship with the Lord into a rich one? When have you observed what appeared to be an individual or group with overwhelming power become mired in their own arrogance and pride and fall? When have you experienced or observed someone turning a blessing into a curse?

FAITH IN ACTION

PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you a place where you have feared the future but where He has for you an assurance of peace and security, a place in your life where you are more-anxious than you should be, a small sample of the pure joy that will be yours when you walk the “Way of Holiness”, a place in your life where you fear a false enemy, one that mocks the Lord, more than you trust the Lord God, and a place where you have been faithful, for which He has already, or is about to bless you.

ACT

Today I will prayerfully welcome the Holy Spirit into a more powerful place in my life – to listen and watch for His working – and to respond “Yes Lord” when He chastises or encourages, directs or redirects. I will praise the Lord for the certainty I have of an eternity of peace and security with Him. I will give Him thanks and rest in His assurance of loving-care. I will praise the Lord God for His love and will prayerfully partner with the Holy Spirit to be more teachable and more surrendered to His leadership of my life. I will confess and repent of my fear of a false enemy, seek and receive His forgiveness, and trust the Lord God completely. (My fear may be about a lack of money, and absence of approval of worldly peers, potential threats to my physical appearance from age, or may be a fear of unemployment, theoretical health problems, violence in the world, etc.). I will prayerfully seek the counsel of the Holy Spirit as to how I might turn His gift into a blessing for others and how I might continue, and grow, my walk of faithfulness before Him.

Be Specific _____

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Note 1: These Studies often rely upon the guidance of the NET Translators from their associated notes. Careful attention has been given to cite that source where it has been quoted directly or closely paraphrased. Feedback is encouraged where credit has not been sufficiently assigned.

Note 2: When NET text is quoted in commentary and discussion all pronouns referring to God are capitalized, though they are lower-case in the original NET text.

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