

Isaiah 15, 16 & 17

- Continuing with the prophet's oracles against Israel's foes
 - Remember, all these nations were enemies of Israel and Judah
 - But they were also at times nations that unfaithful Israel turned to for strength or rescue or spiritual direction
- So now we move to Philistia

[Is. 14:28](#) In the year that King Ahaz died this oracle came:

[Is. 14:29](#) "Do not rejoice, O Philistia, all of you,
Because the rod that struck you is broken;
For from the serpent's root a viper will come out,
And its fruit will be a flying serpent.

[Is. 14:30](#) "Those who are most helpless will eat,
And the needy will lie down in security;
I will destroy your root with famine,
And it will kill off your survivors.

[Is. 14:31](#) "Wail, O gate; cry, O city;
Melt away, O Philistia, all of you;
For smoke comes from the north,
And there is no straggler in his ranks.

[Is. 14:32](#) "How then will one answer the messengers of the nation?
That the LORD has founded Zion,
And the afflicted of His people will seek refuge in it."

- Isaiah dates this prophecy to the year of Ahaz's death, 715-720 BC
 - Isaiah doesn't date his prophecies very often, so the date is clearly significant to understanding the prophecy
 - In this case, it explains the meaning of verse 29
 - Ahaz's death was a turning point for Philistia
 - They had benefited under Ahaz's rule because he was weak and ineffective
 - Philistia's territory expanded into Israel during this time
 - They rejoiced at Assyria's conquering of Israel and into Judah
 - The rod they are glad to see struck is the House of David

- But from this event their own destruction will come
- The serpent to viper to flying serpent is a description of how things go from bad to worse for Philistia
- God's judgment comes in in phases against this people
 - The first step in the progression is the serpent
 - Relatively harmless as Ahaz was

[2Chr. 28:18](#) The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the lowland and of the Negev of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, and Soco with its villages, Timnah with its villages, and Gimzo with its villages, and they settled there.
[2Chr. 28:19](#) For the LORD humbled Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had brought about a lack of restraint in Judah and was very unfaithful to the LORD.

- Philistia eventually comprised five major city states with five independent kings
 - Askelon, Ashdod, Gaza, Ekron, Gath
- But then a viper comes from Ahaz
 - Hezekiah

[2Kings 18:6](#) For he clung to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses.
[2Kings 18:7](#) And the LORD was with him; wherever he went he prospered. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.
[2Kings 18:8](#) He defeated the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.

- He beats them back
- The finally, the viper is a flying serpent
 - The ultimate destruction is the flying serpent, or dragon
 - Who is the dragon in scripture?
 - Satan (Rev 20:2)
 - Remembering that God uses one place name to characterize the the enemy and his work in the world - Babylon
 - Who is it that ultimately destroys the Philistine people?

- Babylon
- Finally, let's look at the extent of the destruction
 - In verse 30 and onward, Isaiah contrasts those of Israel, who the Philistines taunt, with that of the Philistines themselves
 - The Jews are helpless and needy, but they are safe
 - The Philistines will die of starvation and war
 - The enemy will come from the north without a straggler among them
 - Very powerful, swift like we've seen Babylon described already
- The contrast concludes with Isaiah saying that Israel will return
 - The obvious comparison goes unanswered
 - Meaning that Isaiah's failure to mention the Philistines' future implies that they have no future
 - Sure enough, the entire culture ceased to exist about the 5th century BC

[Is. 15:1](#) ¶ The oracle concerning Moab.

Surely in a night Ar of Moab is devastated and ruined;
Surely in a night Kir of Moab is devastated and ruined.

[Is. 15:2](#) They have gone up to the temple and to Dibon, even to the high places to weep.

Moab wails over Nebo and Medeba;
Everyone's head is bald and every beard is cut off.

[Is. 15:3](#) In their streets they have girded themselves with sackcloth;
On their housetops and in their squares
Everyone is wailing, dissolved in tears.

[Is. 15:4](#) Heshbon and Elealeh also cry out,
Their voice is heard all the way to Jahaz;
Therefore the armed men of Moab cry aloud;
His soul trembles within him.

[Is. 15:5](#) My heart cries out for Moab;
His fugitives are as far as Zoar and Eglath-shelishiyah,
For they go up the ascent of Luhith weeping;
Surely on the road to Horonaim they raise a cry of distress over their ruin.

[Is. 15:6](#) For the waters of Nimrim are desolate.
Surely the grass is withered, the tender grass died out,
There is no green thing.

[Is. 15:7](#) Therefore the abundance which they have acquired and stored up
They carry off over the brook of Arabim.

[Is. 15:8](#) For the cry of distress has gone around the territory of Moab,
Its wail goes as far as Eglaim and its wailing even to Beer-elim.

[Is. 15:9](#) For the waters of Dimon are full of blood;
Surely I will bring added woes upon Dimon,
A lion upon the fugitives of Moab and upon the remnant of the land.

- This oracle includes all of 15, which we read and goes into 16
 - Moab is present day western Jordan, opposite Israel across the Jordan river
 - It was founded by one of the incestuous sons of Lot's daughters
 - The people had long been enemies of Israel
 - There were also times when the two nations were relatively peaceful
 - They were a center of idol worship, and that influence spilled over into Israel
 - As we enter this third oracle, let's start to look for a larger pattern in these oracles
 - The first was Babylon demonstrating God's providence over the course of human history to bring the enemy to destruction
 - And God's people to glory
 - The second was the Philistia that demonstrated the temporary weakening over even disappearance of the Davidic throne didn't mean it's end
 - It will eventually return in glory
 - All those who oppose it will come to an end
 - Now we look at Moab...keep your eye out for another piece in this pattern
- This highlight some key points
 - In verse 1, Ar was the capital city and Kir their most fortified city
 - Both will fall in a night and quickly
 - In the following verses, we see several places named

- All are centers of idol worship
 - Nebo is the place Moses died
- Naturally, the citizens wail and weep over the destruction of these places
- In verses 6-8 the completeness of the destruction is evident
 - Rivers drying up
 - Land made desolate
 - The wealth of the nation carried off
- In verse 9, those who escape and run are confronted by lions
- Then we move into chapter 16, still looking at Moab

[Is. 16:1](#) ¶ Send the tribute lamb to the ruler of the land,
From Sela by way of the wilderness to the mountain of the daughter of Zion.

[Is. 16:2](#) Then, like fleeing birds or scattered nestlings,
The daughters of Moab will be at the fords of the Arnon.

[Is. 16:3](#) “Give us advice, make a decision;
Cast your shadow like night at high noon;
Hide the outcasts, do not betray the fugitive.

[Is. 16:4](#) “Let the outcasts of Moab stay with you;
Be a hiding place to them from the destroyer.”
For the extortioner has come to an end, destruction has ceased,
Oppressors have completely disappeared from the land.

[Is. 16:5](#) A throne will even be established in lovingkindness,
And a judge will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent of David;
Moreover, he will seek justice
And be prompt in righteousness.

- Up to this point, we have no timeline for this destruction
 - But now the tone changes dramatically
 - Isaiah says to Moab send a tribute lamb to the ruler of the land
 - Sela was a city in southern most Moab
 - The daughter of Zion is Mt Moriah
 - Send a tribute lamb from Moab to Jerusalem

- Sending a lamb was not literal, though the image of a lamb certainly catches our attention
 - The closest comparable phrase for us today might be to wave the white flag
 - Smoke the peace pipe
 - Make peace with Israel
- Seems like an interesting transition here
 - Isaiah hasn't offered Babylon or Philistia any hope for escape for God's judgment
 - But here he seems to open a door for Moab's redemption
- Isaiah sets up the framework for a salvation for Moab, but it depends on certain things
 - First, in verse 2-3, Moab is seen like scattering birds
 - Unsure of where to go
 - At the fjords of the Armon river, which leads to the Dead Sea
 - They are hesitant and unsure where to go, as they flee those who attack them
 - Isaiah records their confusion in verse 3, "give us advice, make a decision"
 - Then in verse 3 Isaiah switches to describing Judah's part
 - They are to act like a giant shadow for these fugitives, hiding them from their attackers
 - In verse 4, Isaiah instructs Israel to allow their fugitives to stay with them
 - Until the danger has passed for them
- When and how does this unnamed danger pass?
 - Well look at verse 5, a throne is established in lovingkindness
 - A faithful Judge sits in the tent of David
 - One who seeks justice and righteousness

- Who is that? Jesus, of course
- When does this happen? The Messianic Kingdom, of course
- What is Isaiah offering here?
 - Those who are the remnant of Moab may have opportunity to flee into Israel
 - And if they are willing to seek refuge with their earthly enemy
 - They are protected in the camp of Israel and will enjoy their protection
 - Ultimately, the Moabite remnant will share in the glory of the kingdom when Christ rules
- How is this fulfilled?
 - Well, we know at least one famous Moabite who fits this pattern
 - A woman who sought refuge in Israel and is counted in the genealogy of Christ Himself - Ruth
 - But Isaiah makes clear that this offer for protection is made for a small number of Moabites
 - Then Isaiah returns to the oracle with another about face

[Is. 16:6](#) We have heard of the pride of Moab, an excessive pride;
Even of his arrogance, pride, and fury;
His idle boasts are false.

[Is. 16:7](#) Therefore Moab will wail; everyone of Moab will wail.
You will moan for the raisin cakes of Kir-hareseth
As those who are utterly stricken.

[Is. 16:8](#) For the fields of Heshbon have withered, the vines of Sibmah as well;
The lords of the nations have trampled down its choice clusters
Which reached as far as Jazer and wandered to the deserts;
Its tendrils spread themselves out and passed over the sea.

[Is. 16:9](#) Therefore I will weep bitterly for Jazer, for the vine of Sibmah;
I will drench you with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh;
For the shouting over your summer fruits and your harvest has fallen away.

[Is. 16:10](#) Gladness and joy are taken away from the fruitful field;
In the vineyards also there will be no cries of joy or jubilant shouting,
No treader treads out wine in the presses,
For I have made the shouting to cease.

[Is. 16:11](#) Therefore my heart intones like a harp for Moab
And my inward feelings for Kir-hareseth.

[Is. 16:12](#) So it will come about when Moab presents himself,
When he wearies himself upon his high place
And comes to his sanctuary to pray,
That he will not prevail.

- Now the oracle turns back to describing the destruction of the nation as a whole
 - The Moabites are marked by their pride
 - Which is the ultimate undoing of every man
 - So their pride brings them down
 - The people will wail
 - Their prized vineyards will wither
 - Their vineyards were as famous in that day as Napa Valley today
 - In fact, there's some humor here in verses 9-10
 - Isaiah himself will weep over their destruction because he says he misses their fruit of the vine
 - He is sad over the loss of the wine, as we would be over the loss of Napa perhaps
 - The fortified city Kir (Kir-haraseth in verse 11) guarded that region
- But in the end, verse 12, the pagan prayers of Moab will go unanswered and they will perish, apart from a small remnant that will be allowed to remain
 - Now at this point we still don't know when this will occur, and therefore what destruction Isaiah is referencing
 - But then we get that information in verses 13 & 14

[Is. 16:13](#) This is the word which the LORD spoke earlier concerning Moab.

[Is. 16:14](#) But now the LORD speaks, saying, "Within three years, as a hired man would count them, the glory of Moab will be degraded along with all his great population, and his remnant will be very small and impotent."

- In verse 13, Isaiah clarifies that the earlier verses concerning Moab had been spoken earlier
 - When, we don't know
 - But now Isaiah says he received a second word from the Lord that gave a timetable
 - Within three years
 - "As a hired man counts"
 - This expression is probably easy to understand
 - When you are hired, you are an indentured servant
 - You spend your time counting down the days
 - Like when I was at the Academy
 - In other words, the three years will be precise, you can bet on it
 - By that time, the glory of Moab will be gone along with it's population
 - But a remnant will be permitted to remain
 - This remnant will eventually make it's way into the Messianic Kingdom
- Based on this tight timeline, we know that Isaiah was talking about the Assyrians, who invaded and wiped Moab off the map in 701 BC
- Remember the puzzle we discussed earlier?
 - With the motif being Israel's enemies, what have learned through the example of Moab?
 - Babylon was a message of how the enemy and his forces go down in flames, but Israel rises from the ashes
 - Philistines taught that the throne of David will rise again, even if it appears to have faded, and it will crush all opposition
 - Now in Moab, we see the Lord offer refuge for a small remnant of Israel's enemies, who will be sheltered in Israel's shadow and share in her kingdom
 - The Gentiles attached to the Jewish Messiah

- Next we come to Damascus and Samaria (which was northern Israel)

[Is. 17:1](#) The oracle concerning Damascus.

“Behold, Damascus is about to be removed from being a city
And will become a fallen ruin.

[Is. 17:2](#) “The cities of Aroer are forsaken;

They will be for flocks to lie down in,
And there will be no one to frighten them.

[Is. 17:3](#) “The fortified city will disappear from Ephraim,

And sovereignty from Damascus
And the remnant of Aram;
They will be like the glory of the sons of Israel,”
Declares the LORD of hosts.

- Isaiah starts with Damascus, which is the capital of Syria
 - Damascus will be destroyed, as the other cities mentioned before
 - But here we see a fallen ruin
 - And pasture ground remaining for animals
 - But the people will be gone
 - Likewise, Ephraim will see its fortified city disappear
 - Remembering that Northern Israel and Samaria had united against Judah
 - Isaiah then uses his trademark sarcasm to great effect in verse 3
 - He says that the glory of Damascus and Ephraim will be like the glory of the sons of Israel
 - Well the glory of Israel had departed because of their unfaithfulness
 - So there is no glory in Israel, hence none in Damascus or Ephraim either
- It's important to remember that Ephraim is still part of Jacob, Israel
 - They are apostate and are going to receive judgment, as Isaiah describes here
 - But in the end, God will return to these tribes just as He will for the tribes in Judah

- Therefore, Isaiah couples the prophecy of judgment with a promise of redemption for Ephraim

[Is. 17:4](#) Now in that day the glory of Jacob will fade,
And the fatness of his flesh will become lean.

[Is. 17:5](#) It will be even like the reaper gathering the standing grain,
As his arm harvests the ears,
Or it will be like one gleaning ears of grain
In the valley of Rephaim.

[Is. 17:6](#) Yet gleanings will be left in it like the shaking of an olive tree,
Two or three olives on the topmost bough,
Four or five on the branches of a fruitful tree,
Declares the LORD, the God of Israel.

- In that day, the day that this destruction will arrive (at the hands of the Assyrians)
 - The glory of Jacob (the northern tribes) will fade
 - He becomes a lean nation with only two tribes still intact
 - But Isaiah describes that time as one like a gathering of wheat
 - Even when all the grain has been gathered, there is always some left behind
 - Like a few forgotten olives at the top of a tree
 - Or a fruit untouched branches on a fruit tree
 - The Remnant, again
 - God promises that this destruction still provides a remnant of Israel that will continue on

[Is. 17:7](#) In that day man will have regard for his Maker
And his eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel.

[Is. 17:8](#) He will not have regard for the altars, the work of his hands,
Nor will he look to that which his fingers have made,
Even the Asherim and incense stands.

[Is. 17:9](#) In that day their strong cities will be like forsaken places in the forest,
Or like branches which they abandoned before the sons of Israel;
And the land will be a desolation.

[Is. 17:10](#) For you have forgotten the God of your salvation
 And have not remembered the rock of your refuge.
 Therefore you plant delightful plants
 And set them with vine slips of a strange god.

[Is. 17:11](#) In the day that you plant it you carefully fence it in,
 And in the morning you bring your seed to blossom;
 But the harvest will be a heap
 In a day of sickness and incurable pain.

- In that day again, the day of judgment
 - Men have regard for your Maker
 - For the Holy One of Israel
 - This may sound hopeful, but it's more sardonic
 - Simply because all their altars and false gods will have been destroyed, they are left with nothing else to worship except their Maker
 - He won't be able to look to the work of his hands and worship it because it's gone
 - The point is a loss of opportunity rather than a change of heart (v.8)
- In fact, look at the rest of the description
 - Their "strong" cities will be forsaken in the desert
 - Their land desolate
 - They have forgotten the God of their salvation
 - They serve and honor a strange god
 - But as much as they cultivate their vines for unholy purposes, their harvest will come to nothing but sickness and pain
- Now as the burden for Damascus and Ephraim comes to an end, Isaiah includes a curious scene
 -

[Is. 17:12](#) Alas, the uproar of many peoples
 Who roar like the roaring of the seas,
 And the rumbling of nations
 Who rush on like the rumbling of mighty waters!

[Is. 17:13](#) The nations rumble on like the rumbling of many waters,
 But He will rebuke them and they will flee far away,
 And be chased like chaff in the mountains before the wind,
 Or like whirling dust before a gale.

[Is. 17:14](#) At evening time, behold, there is terror!
 Before morning they are no more.
 Such will be the portion of those who plunder us
 And the lot of those who pillage us.

- This description describes judgment against Damascus and Northern Israel as it occurred
 - But the passage mentions many nations rumbling (or a loud crashing)
 - Like mighty waters, which is often a reference to a great army
 - At their advance, God rebukes them and they flee
 - Chased into the mountains like chaff in the wind or whirling dust
 - This leaves us wondering a little
 - It could reference the way God repelled the attack of Syria and Israel against Judah in advance of the Assyrian invasion
 - But where are the many nations?
 - Or it could refer to the antichrist's forces who invade in a similar way to threaten Jerusalem at the end of Tribulation
 - But then what does "fleeing" mean, since we know Christ destroys them such that there are no survivors
 - Could be a blending of both, or something I'm missing
- Finally, what's the puzzle piece here?
 - Just as God won't punish all Israel's enemies, in that He is making a provision for Gentiles (Moab)
 - Likewise, He is also will to judge sin among His own people Israel