

Isaiah 21-22

- A new oracle
 - About Babylon

[Is. 21:1](#) The oracle concerning the wilderness of the sea.

As windstorms in the Negev sweep on,
It comes from the wilderness, from a terrifying land.

[Is. 21:2](#) A harsh vision has been shown to me;

The treacherous one still deals treacherously, and the destroyer still destroys.
Go up, Elam, lay siege, Media;
I have made an end of all the groaning she has caused.

[Is. 21:3](#) For this reason my loins are full of anguish;

Pains have seized me like the pains of a woman in labor.
I am so bewildered I cannot hear, so terrified I cannot see.

[Is. 21:4](#) My mind reels, horror overwhelms me;

The twilight I longed for has been turned for me into trembling.

[Is. 21:5](#) They set the table, they spread out the cloth, they eat, they drink;

“Rise up, captains, oil the shields,”

[Is. 21:6](#) For thus the Lord says to me,

“Go, station the lookout, let him report what he sees.

[Is. 21:7](#) “When he sees riders, horsemen in pairs,

A train of donkeys, a train of camels,
Let him pay close attention, very close attention.”

[Is. 21:8](#) Then the lookout called,

“O Lord, I stand continually by day on the watchtower,
And I am stationed every night at my guard post.

[Is. 21:9](#) “Now behold, here comes a troop of riders, horsemen in pairs.”

And one said, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon;
And all the images of her gods are shattered on the ground.”

[Is. 21:10](#) O my threshed people, and my afflicted of the threshing floor!

What I have heard from the LORD of hosts,
The God of Israel, I make known to you.

- It begins describing the wilderness of the sea
 - Obscure reference we know means Babylon because of verse 9
 - And her destruction is compared to a sirocco desert wind
 - The vision of her future is a harsh one Isaiah says
 - Babylon is a picture of the enemy
 - And that interpretation fits this description too

- A treacherous one and a destroyer, is still that way
 - Meaning Satan is always the same and never changes
- So in response, God declares that Elam and Media will go up and lay siege
 - To make an end to the groaning that Babylon has caused
- About this point, you might be thinking like me in asking is this a description of God's judgment on Babylon in Isaiah's day or of the ultimate Babylon, the Harlot...the false religion of Satan?
 - Elam and the Medes formed the Medo Persian empire, which
 - So God declares that this nation is raised to
 - The answer is yes
 - First, look at the details from the perspective of the destruction of Babylon in Isaiah's day
- In verse 3- 4, Isaiah says he's reeling from the sight of what will come upon Babylon
 - It terrifies Isaiah to consider what's coming upon Babylon
 - But in contrast, the Babylonians will be oblivious and eating calming (v.5)
 - They will suddenly have to rise to oil their shields (defense against arrows)
 - Dan 5 gives us that story of the Babylonians eating when God reveals their coming judgment by Medo Persian
 - The Babylonians were taken by surprise and conquered in 539 BC
 - Then in vs.6-9, God reports what will happen through the eyes of a watchman
 - The watchman has to wait a while to see anything
 - Almost to the point of doubting anything will happen
 - Because there is a long period between Isaiah's promise and the reality of Babylon's fall

- But then he sees troops advancing in pairs, the standard way the Persian marched according to the Greek historian, Xenophon
 - Then Babylon falls
- This is historically accurate
 - And this short 10 verse section is merely an introduction to a much longer 6-chapter section in Isaiah 43-48 where he will discuss God's judgment against Babylon in even more detail
- For now consider it from the second prophetic perspective
 - In particular, note verse 9
 - Fallen, fallen is Babylon

[Rev. 18:1](#) ¶ After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory.

[Rev. 18:2](#) And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, " Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.

[Rev. 18:3](#) "For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality."

[Rev. 18:4](#) ¶ I heard another voice from heaven, saying, " Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues;

[Rev. 18:5](#) for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

[Rev. 18:6](#) " Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her.

- The reference seems to connect this time of future judgment against the false religion of Babylon
 - When both the city and its false god is judged (see v.9)
 - We'll wait for Isaiah of 43 for more discussion
 - For now, know this completes the oracle of Babylon's by providing the near-term prophecy for destruction at the hands of the Medo Persians
- And if you think this section is a bit to obscure, look at what comes next

[Is. 21:11](#) ¶ The oracle concerning Edom.

One keeps calling to me from Seir,
 "Watchman, how far gone is the night?
 Watchman, how far gone is the night?"

[Is. 21:12](#) The watchman says,

"Morning comes but also night.
 If you would inquire, inquire;
 Come back again."

- This oracle is about Edom, that's the easy part
 - Edom is a long-time enemy of Israel (present day southern Jordan and parts of the Arabian peninsula)
 - Founded by Esau's descendants, and it was always a people set against their distant brothers in Israel
 - Next to Babylon, Edom is the most despised nation in God's eyes
 - Isaiah says one is calling him from Seir, the main mountain in Edom
 - The words used here are especially important
 - The word for Edom is actual Idumea
 - The place that King Herod came from (not a Jew)
 - The word Idumea means a deep, utter silence
 - You see the same word used in Psa 31:17,

[Psa. 31:17](#) Let me not be put to shame, O LORD, for I call upon You;
 Let the wicked be put to shame, let them be silent in Sheol.

- It's the silence of eternal death
- So this is an oracle concerning Edom, but with the play on words it implies Edom will enter a deathly, eternal silence
- And in this oracle the watchman keeps asking how far gone is the night?
 - How much longer before it's light?
 - He asks it repeatedly, and the Hebrew changes slightly
 - In the second version, it indicates, "What part of the night is it? How long do we wait before the night passes?"

- Then suddenly, v.12 switches to Aramaic (all Hebrew prior to this), which was the language Jesus spoke when He walked the Earth
 - Morning comes, but it will still be night for Edom
 - In other words, when the world is brought out of darkness (i.e., night) and into light (i.e., morning), Edom doesn't get relief...it stays in night
 - Then Isaiah says to some in Edom at that time, if you would inquire or search, then do so
 - And then come back (or turn back), in the sense of conversion or turning to something new
 - Without other Scripture, we would be hopelessly lost in understanding these two verses
 - Some of our additional understanding will come from Isaiah 34 and 53
 - But we'll save those for later
 - For now, we can look at a few other places to understand this promise of eternal darkness for Edom and combined with a call in Aramaic for some to "return"

[Jer. 49:13](#) "For I have sworn by Myself," declares the LORD, "that **Bozrah** will become an object of horror, a reproach, a ruin and a curse; and all its cities will become perpetual ruins."

[Jer. 49:14](#) ¶ I have heard a message from the LORD,
And an envoy is sent among the nations, saying,
"Gather yourselves together and come against her,
And rise up for battle!"

[Jer. 49:15](#) "For behold, I have made you small among the nations,
Despised among men.

[Jer. 49:16](#) "As for the terror of you,
The arrogance of your heart has deceived you,
O you who live in the clefts of the rock,
Who occupy the height of the hill.
Though you make your nest as high as an eagle's,
I will bring you down from there," declares the LORD.

[Jer. 49:17](#) ¶ "Edom will become an object of horror; everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss at all its wounds.

[Jer. 49:18](#) "Like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah with its neighbors," says the LORD, "no one will live there, nor will a son of man reside in it.

[Jer. 49:19](#) “ Behold, one will come up like a lion from the thickets of the Jordan against a perennially watered pasture; for in an instant I will make him run away from it, and whoever is chosen I shall appoint over it. For who is like Me, and who will summon Me into court? And who then is the shepherd who can stand against Me?”

[Jer. 49:20](#) ¶ Therefore hear the plan of the LORD which He has planned against Edom, and His purposes which He has purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: surely they will drag them off, even the little ones of the flock; surely He will make their pasture desolate because of them.

[Jer. 49:21](#) The earth has quaked at the noise of their downfall. There is an outcry! The noise of it has been heard at the Red Sea.

- Historically, Edom saw their destruction as a nation at the hands of the Romans
 - But the destruction Jeremiah talks about seems much greater...it's to be a perpetual ruin
 - That hasn't happened yet
 - So the ultimate fulfillment of these verses for Edom awaits a future day
 - Plus the references to eternal darkness and the call to return back don't make sense in the case of the Roman conquering
 - Like all of Isaiah's prophecies, we're looking at both a near term fulfillment (Romans) and a future promise woven together
- To identify what the future fulfillment will be, I need to give you some additional background briefly
 - Using symbols, Rev 12 describes Israel (the woman) being persecuted by Satan (the dragon) and God responding by giving Israel a special refuge in the desert (*listen to our Revelation study to learn the details*)
 - And we're told that this remnant of Israel is protected in this refuge for 3.5 years until Christ's return
 - Micah describes this provision for the Jewish remnant this way:

[Mic. 2:12](#) ¶ “I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob,
I will surely gather the remnant of Israel.
I will put them together like sheep in the fold;
Like a flock in the midst of its pasture
They will be noisy with men.

[Mic. 2:13](#) "The breaker goes up before them;
They break out, pass through the gate and go out by it.
So their king goes on before them,
And the LORD at their head."

- In verse 12, the Hebrew is very important
 - God will put Israel together like sheep in a fold, protecting them during the second half of Tribulation
 - But the word for fold is a unique Hebrew word that only appears here in scripture
 - It's the Hebrew word botsrah
 - The usual word for fold is miklaah (Hab 3:17)
 - This word is botsrah, the same word in Jer 49:13
 - It also means fold, like a pen
 - But it clearly connects back to the place in Edom
- So God places the Jews fleeing the Antichrist in Botsrah, which is modern city of Petra
 - Where Raiders of the Lost Ark 3 was filmed
 - Part of Edom
- Then at the end of Tribulation as Christ returns to rescue the Jewish people from
- We see this if we skip ahead to Isa 63:

[Is. 63:1](#) ¶ Who is this who comes from Edom,
With garments of glowing colors from Bozrah,
This One who is majestic in His apparel,
Marching in the greatness of His strength?
"It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

[Is. 63:2](#) Why is Your apparel red,
And Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press?

[Is. 63:3](#) " I have trodden the wine trough alone,
And from the peoples there was no man with Me.
I also trod them in My anger
And trampled them in My wrath;
And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments,
And I stained all My raiment.

[Is. 63:4](#) "For the day of vengeance was in My heart,
And My year of redemption has come.

[Is. 63:5](#) "I looked, and there was no one to help,
And I was astonished and there was no one to uphold;
So My own arm brought salvation to Me,
And My wrath upheld Me.

[Is. 63:6](#) "I trod down the peoples in My anger
And made them drunk in My wrath,
And I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."

- Who is this Who comes from Edom and Bozrah having destroyed the people there in a day of vengeance?
 - Christ, who at His second coming rescues the Jews hiding in Botzrah Micah 2:13 while destroying the city and making it an eternal waste
 - This is why Isaiah can say in chapter 21 that when morning comes (Christ's return) it will still be night for Edom
 - Yet there is also a call in Aramaic for the Jews to come back, return with Christ to Mt Zion
 - So for Edom, the puzzle piece is that upon His return the Lord will prepare a place of rescue for Israel from within their enemy's land
 - And destroy them as an eternal testimony
- Finally, chapter 21 gives us another short description of a judgment against Arabia

[Is. 21:13](#) The oracle about Arabia.
In the thickets of Arabia you must spend the night,
O caravans of Dedanites.

[Is. 21:14](#) Bring water for the thirsty,
O inhabitants of the land of Tema,
Meet the fugitive with bread.

[Is. 21:15](#) For they have fled from the swords,
From the drawn sword, and from the bent bow
And from the press of battle.

[Is. 21:16](#) ¶ For thus the Lord said to me, "In a year, as a hired man would count it, all the splendor of Kedar will terminate;

[Is. 21:17](#) and the remainder of the number of bowmen, the mighty men of the sons of Kedar, will be few; for the LORD God of Israel has spoken."

- Arabia is a region consisting of multiple Arab tribes
 - Today those tribes have been unified into a single kingdom headed by the Saudi tribe, so we have Saudi Arabia
 - In these verses you see the region described in terms of the tribes of Isaiah's day
 - The Dedan and Tema and Kedar tribes
 - In the span of one year, Isaiah says, these tribes will experience war too
 - As Assyria pressed south and invading nation after nation, the refugees flooded in Arabia
 - Eventually the Assyrians invaded and conquered Arabia and these tribes too
 - There doesn't seem to be any distant prophetic significance to these verses, though this region is closely connected to Edom and may be caught up in Edom future destruction
- Chapter deals entirely with Jerusalem itself

[Is. 22:1](#) The oracle concerning the valley of vision.

What is the matter with you now, that you have all gone up to the housetops?

[Is. 22:2](#) You who were full of noise,

You boisterous town, you exultant city;
Your slain were not slain with the sword,
Nor did they die in battle.

[Is. 22:3](#) All your rulers have fled together,

And have been captured without the bow;
All of you who were found were taken captive together,
Though they had fled far away.

[Is. 22:4](#) Therefore I say, "Turn your eyes away from me,

Let me weep bitterly,
Do not try to comfort me concerning the destruction of the daughter of my people."

[Is. 22:5](#) For the Lord GOD of hosts has a day of panic, subjugation and confusion

In the valley of vision,
A breaking down of walls
And a crying to the mountain.

[Is. 22:6](#) Elam took up the quiver

With the chariots, infantry and horsemen;
And Kir uncovered the shield.

[Is. 22:7](#) Then your choicest valleys were full of chariots,
And the horsemen took up fixed positions at the gate.

[Is. 22:8](#) And He removed the defense of Judah.

In that day you depended on the weapons of the house of the forest,

[Is. 22:9](#) And you saw that the breaches

In the wall of the city of David were many;

And you collected the waters of the lower pool.

[Is. 22:10](#) Then you counted the houses of Jerusalem

And tore down houses to fortify the wall.

[Is. 22:11](#) And you made a reservoir between the two walls

For the waters of the old pool.

But you did not depend on Him who made it,

Nor did you take into consideration Him who planned it long ago.

[Is. 22:12](#) Therefore in that day the Lord GOD of hosts called you to weeping, to wailing,

To shaving the head and to wearing sackcloth.

[Is. 22:13](#) Instead, there is gaiety and gladness,

Killing of cattle and slaughtering of sheep,

Eating of meat and drinking of wine:

“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die.”

[Is. 22:14](#) But the LORD of hosts revealed Himself to me,

“Surely this iniquity shall not be forgiven you

Until you die,” says the Lord GOD of hosts.

- Isaiah speaks against Jerusalem, which is the valley of vision
 - It's the place in which Isaiah lives and receives his visions
 - And the mountains that surround Jerusalem give the impression that it is in a valley
 - Other details tell us this is Jerusalem (v.9 & 10)
 - The proud and confident population of Jerusalem are described in v. 2
 - But Isaiah says their sin won't be judged by the sword
 - They will starve to death
 - This comes from the siege of the city by Babylon almost 100 years after Isaiah wrote his book
 - Elam and Kir are the ancient names for the Mesopotamia, or Babylon
 - They attack the city and break through the walls
 - This is a day brought by the Lord as judgment for Israel's sins as a nation

- So it's a national judgment

[2Chr. 36:15](#) ¶ The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place;

[2Chr. 36:16](#) but they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy.

[2Chr. 36:17](#) Therefore He brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or infirm; He gave them all into his hand.

- Jeremiah's lamentations describe the mourning of Jerusalem during this terrible time

[Lam. 4:9](#) Better are those slain with the sword

Than those slain with hunger;

For they pine away, being stricken

For lack of the fruits of the field.

[Lam. 4:10](#) The hands of compassionate women

Boiled their own children;

They became food for them

Because of the destruction of the daughter of my people.

[Lam. 4:11](#) The LORD has accomplished His wrath,

He has poured out His fierce anger;

And He has kindled a fire in Zion

Which has consumed its foundations.

[Lam. 4:12](#) The kings of the earth did not believe,

Nor did any of the inhabitants of the world,

That the adversary and the enemy

Could enter the gates of Jerusalem.

- The latter verses I read in Isaiah 22 discuss the ways the people try to fortify the walls and avoid capture
- And then Isaiah moves our focus to an earlier time and upon two specific people
 - These are men who lived in Jerusalem during the siege of the Assyrians upon Jerusalem
 - He uses them as examples of faithfulness vs. unfaithfulness among the leaders of Israel

- Remember, the captivity that begins with Babylon starts a period of Jewish exile and punishment that last until today and will not conclude until Jesus' return
 - Dan 2 explains this period for us
 - And Luke 21:24 calls it the times of the Gentiles
- During this time, God uses Isaiah to explain how He will rely on human leaders to guide them
 - Ultimately they must look to God as their leader out of exile
 - These two men become examples of good and bad leaders during the future exile under the Babylonians

[Is. 22:15](#) Thus says the Lord GOD of hosts,
 "Come, go to this steward,
 To Shebna, who is in charge of the royal household,

[Is. 22:16](#) "What right do you have here,
 And whom do you have here,
 That you have hewn a tomb for yourself here,
 You who hew a tomb on the height,
 You who carve a resting place for yourself in the rock?

[Is. 22:17](#) "Behold, the LORD is about to hurl you headlong, O man.
 And He is about to grasp you firmly

[Is. 22:18](#) And roll you tightly like a ball,
 To be cast into a vast country;
 There you will die
 And there your splendid chariots will be,
 You shame of your master's house.'

[Is. 22:19](#) "I will depose you from your office,
 And I will pull you down from your station.

- Remember, we're looking now at contemporaries of Isaiah, which means this is before the Babylonian captivity
 - Shebna is the one responsible for the royal household of Judah
 - This was the position of power immediately below King
 - It was the chief of staff and more
 - The same kind of position that Joseph held under Pharaoh

- Shebna believes himself important
 - In fact, he's prepared a fancy tomb for himself in Jerusalem as his burial place
- But God will bring him down from his office
 - His offenses are not listed in the text, but knowing what we know about the state of Judah in the day of her judgment
 - Idol worshipping, etc.
 - It's logical to conclude that as a chief leader, Shebna played a major role in instigating the evil in Judah
- So God promises to judge Shebna by preventing him from ever using his fancy tomb
 - Shebna will die outside the city in exile
 - God takes him to a far away country and strips him of his power
 - The Assyrians apparently captured Shebna at some point during their siege and deport him to Assyria, never to return
 - Since the Assyrians never fully conquered the city of Jerusalem, most of the city avoided capture, as God had promised
 - But God allows Shebna to be taken as punishment for his poor stewardship of Judah
 - In place of Shebna, God will raise up a new leader:

[Is. 22:20](#) "Then it will come about in that day,

That I will summon My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah,

[Is. 22:21](#) And I will clothe him with your tunic

And tie your sash securely about him.

I will entrust him with your authority,

And he will become a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.

[Is. 22:22](#) "Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder,

When he opens no one will shut,

When he shuts no one will open.

[Is. 22:23](#) "I will drive him like a peg in a firm place,
And he will become a throne of glory to his father's house.

[Is. 22:24](#) "So they will hang on him all the glory of his father's house, offspring and issue, all the least of vessels, from bowls to all the jars.

[Is. 22:25](#) "In that day," declares the LORD of hosts, "the peg driven in a firm place will give way; it will even break off and fall, and the load hanging on it will be cut off, for the LORD has spoken."

- This transition takes place even before Shebna leaves the city, as evidenced by 2Kings 18
 - A delegation is sent to meet the army of Assyria as it surrounds Jerusalem

[2Kings 18:18](#) When they called to the king, Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, came out to them.

- Shebna has been reduced to a scribe and Eliakim is in charge
 - Some how later, Shebna was taken captive by the Assyrians
- The description of Eliakim as leader is interesting
 - He is a father to the people
 - The key to the house of David rests on his shoulders
 - And with this key, what he opens and shuts remains so
 - Sounds familiar doesn't it?
 - Describing Himself, Jesus says:

[Rev. 3:7](#) ¶ "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ¶ He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:

- Eliakim is also described as a throne of glory to his father's house
 - And all the glory of his father's house hangs on him
- Then curiously, this firm peg on which the father's glory rests is one day broken off and the load on it, the house of David, is cut off

- From all the imagery here, the comparison to Christ seems obvious
 - In other words, Eliakim is only a temporary solution to Israel's leadership problems
 - The real solution is found in another leader, Christ
 - Who fits all these descriptions perfectly
 - Including being cut off in a day, and Israel is cut off with Christ for a time
 - Remember Daniel's prediction of the Messiah:

[Dan. 9:24](#) ¶ "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.

[Dan. 9:25](#) "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

[Dan. 9:26](#) "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing...

- Finally, Zech makes a similar point concerning God's plan to replace Israel's faulty leadership with a true leader one day

[Zech. 10:3](#) "My anger is kindled against the shepherds,
And I will punish the male goats;
For the LORD of hosts has visited His flock, the house of Judah,
And will make them like His majestic horse in battle.

[Zech. 10:4](#) "From them will come the cornerstone,
From them the tent peg,
From them the bow of battle,
From them every ruler, all of them together.

[Zech. 10:5](#) "They will be as mighty men,
Treading down the enemy in the mire of the streets in battle;
And they will fight, for the LORD will be with them;
And the riders on horses will be put to shame.

[Zech. 10:6](#) "I will strengthen the house of Judah,
And I will save the house of Joseph,
And I will bring them back,
Because I have had compassion on them;
And they will be as though I had not rejected them,
For I am the LORD their God and I will answer them.