

Title: “The Certain Fall of Israel’s Enemies”

Series: Isaiah – Prophet of Punishment and Promise – Chapter 14, 15, 16

Open your Bibles to: Isaiah 14:24.

Illustration: The dictionary defines *doubt* as “to be uncertain about; consider questionable or unlikely; hesitate to believe” (<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/doubt?s=t>). While Isaiah certainly must have faced difficult times and at times doubt, the chapters we will look at today will again emphasize belief and certainty in Jehovah. In the times we live, we may feel apprehension, distrust, and uncertainty. When we study God’s Word, we again have our faith boosted and our doubts dispelled by the promises left before us.

Review: In the bulk of chapter 14 we found the prophecy concerning the fall of Babylon. This was a clear picture of haughtiness and pride being brought low to the grave. The Babylonian nation was filled with pride, luxury, strength, honor, and music and God brought them down to the level of worms. Oh how the mighty had fallen. Maggots were now the bedding and worms were a cover, a picture of bodies decomposing in the grave. “Pomp, glory, and pride can lead not to God, but only to worms” (Young 439). We must look at our own lives and see them for what they are. Do we align with the proud or the humble? Doom is assured for the proud. But, those who are humble, repent, and believe, can trust in God.

Truth/Chapter 14: God’s gracious promises bring hope for those who believe and hell to those who oppose Him.

Truth: The Lord’s promises flow through Zion, the place of His founding. All those nations who oppose God’s people will find their fate at the hand of Almighty Jehovah.

Let’s look today at the: **Title: Isaiah Chapter 14 “The Certain Fall of Israel’s Enemies”**

I. The certainty of Assyria’s fall (Isa. 14:24-27).

Explanation/v. 24: In verse 23 Isaiah had said that the Lord of hosts would lay Babylon to waste and leave it in the hands of the porcupines. Yahweh had spoken that God would sweep the city into destruction. In this new section, we see that the Lord speaks in an oath whereby He swears that what is about to happen will surely come to pass. And what is that?

Explanation/vs. 25: Assyria will be crushed. Whereas Isaiah has spoken of Babylon’s demise in the distant future, he now returns closer to the present to reassure the remnant that Assyria also would be destroyed. **The immediate danger was Assyria and Isaiah was reminding the nation that the Lord would keep His word. “The destiny of Assyria which is now discussed becomes a pledge of the future destiny of Babylon” (Young 448).** Just as Assyria’s doom had been prophesied, so now we see the confirmation that Babylon would also fall.

This prophecy was fulfilled in 701 BC when the Assyrian army under Sennacherib was stopped short of Jerusalem. From that point on the Assyrian army and nation began its downfall.

Application/vs. 26-27: God’s judgment hand will not be stopped. Babylon, Assyria, and even the whole earth are under His guidance. God’s purposes will not be nullified and His hand will not be shortened. When God’s hand is stretched out, who can stop it? God’s power will not be stayed and when the Lord of hosts declares His work, Isaiah verifies that task will be accomplished. Assyria had a plan to defeat Judah but in the end it would be God’s plans that would be carried out.

Many people will endeavor to foil God's plans, but all will fall to His hand. The tragedy of the day is that many people are fighting against God, all to no avail.

II. The downfall of Philistia (Isa. 14:28-32).

Explanation/Philistines: Who were the Philistines? They were of the tribe of Ham (Gen. 10:14) who lived on the coast of Canaan. The land they lived in was called Philistia from which the name Palestine is derived. For many years Israel and the Philistines fought. Samson and David and Goliath represent 2 of the stories between the 2 countries.

Explanation/vs. 28-29: Ahaz died in 715 BC. **Isaiah now cautions Philistia that while they may think they are safe from the rod that had struck them, their judgment was about to come.** Who was the rod that smote them? Possibly Ahaz (he died), TP of Assyria, TP's successor Shalmaneser, or Sargon. Most likely the rod that had struck them was Assyria, not Israel or Judah. So, who is the serpent, and who is the serpent's root? Different ideas exist as some believe it to be Jewish kings and ultimately fulfilled in Christ. Others see it as specific Assyrian kings. Still some see it as Assyria as the rod that was broken, Babylon as the adder, and a third power as an unknown nation that completes the Philistines destruction (Hailey 143). In this context this last point may be the best.

No matter what, **the moment the Philistines thought their enemy was dead was the moment things would spiral downward.** An enemy would rise up to defeat them. The temporary break from war would end and lead to their demise.

Explanation/vs. 30-31: Isaiah now contrasts Judah and Philistia. Those that are the poorest will eat. Those that are needy will rest in safety. **Who are the poor and needy? God's people, the Jews.** Meanwhile, **the root and remnant of the Philistines will die in a famine.** God's people in Judah though would prevail and survive for a time (until Babylon came). The comparison is clear. **One nation would have hope for this time; Assyria would not defeat them, while the other nation would be destroyed. Rejoice not over the saving of the nation for soon the gates of the city will be dissolved. The enemy will not stand for God will finish off the nation of Philistia.**

Explanation/vs 32: This prophecy is ultimately for Judah. The Lord will take care of them, and they will have no need to fear the current Assyrian empire.

Application: **Zion would remain. Other nations would be destroyed, but the nation of Judah would survive. Why? Because Zion was the Lord's work. In Zion the afflicted will find refuge because of its founder. The Philistines may have sent for help from Judah, so Isaiah told the people instead to trust in the Lord. He would be good to fulfill His will and plan.**

Truth: Isaiah then reassures the remnant that not only will the present danger of Assyria be defeated, a far greater foe, Babylon, will also be one day defeated (chapters 13-14). When Philistia shall see Assyria defeated, they may think it is time to rejoice. At that point, Philistia thinks it can now focus on defeating Judah, yet God clearly states that Judah is God's nation. A far greater nation will come and destroy Philistia, and she will be destroyed. **"The work of God is sure, and the refuge which He provides in Christ will stand firm when all enemies are done away" (Young 452-3).**

III. The destruction of Moab (Isa 15-16).

Explanation: Moab was east of the Dead Sea and was an enemy of Israel. The Moabites were descendants of Moab, a son of Lot and his eldest daughter. In Num. 31:15-17 we find that Moabite women had seduced the Jewish men (Num. 31). During the judges Moab oppressed Israel for 18 years (Jud. 3:12-14). “Saul fought Moab (1 Sam. 14:47) and David defeated Moab (2 Sam. 8:2, 12). Solomon was influenced by his wives to build an altar to Moab’s god Chemosh (1 Kings 11:7–8). Mesha, Moab’s king, had to pay tribute to Ahab, king of Israel (2 Kings 3:4). After Ahab died (in 853 b.c.) Mesha rebelled against Joram (also called Jehoram) but was defeated (2 Kings 3:5–27).¹ The Moabites worshipped Chemosh and Baal and offered their children as human sacrifices. They were enemies of Israel and when Israel asked to pass through their land, they refused (Judges 11:17). One of the most famous Moabites was Ruth.

Explanation/v. 1: Isaiah begins the *burden* against Moab describing the swift destruction that was to come to its cities. Both would be destroyed in one night. Moab had not been destroyed yet as of Isaiah’s prophecy, but the word of the Lord was as good as if it had happened. So, **what would happen during the judgment on Moab?**

Explanation/v. 2-4: First, the cities will be destroyed. The death and destruction brought a lament heard throughout the country. These locations contained the high places and houses of immoral idolatry. The people would go up to these places but no longer to worship but to cry out in despair. They would shave their heads and cut their beards off in a sign of complete humiliation. The weeping and howling would carry out into the streets as the whole country howls in utter abject mourning. Even the strong men as soldiers would be reduced to uncontrollable crying.

When the city’s population laments, this causes the soldiers to cry out as well. Those who were tasked with guarding the land trembled at the situation. Their souls are grieved and their courage wavers.

Explanation/v. 5: Second, the people would be forced to flee. Isaiah cries out in anguish for Moab! How Isaiah desired that this wouldn’t happen to them. Isaiah cries out similarly in 21:3-4; 22:4 as he feels the emotional distress that was about to unfold on these enemies and the Jews themselves.

Application: Isaiah cared deeply for sinners and was sensitive to the horrific acts of war. Isaiah’s life characterized what a true messenger of God really looks like. His heart agonized over the lost and the fact that their lives hung in the balance. My question is how do we view sinners? Are we caring and compassionate like Isaiah? Do we cry over the souls of lost people like Isaiah did?

As the Assyrians came to attack Moab, the refugees fled south into Edom at the southern end of the Dead Sea.

¹ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Isaiah](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1063). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Explanation/vs. 6-9: **Third, the country would be wasted.** The once fertile country would become desolate and barren. With the waters drying up, the grass would wither and nothing green would be left. What was left after the enemy plundered Moab was carried away by the refugees to Edom. They quickly grabbed their most precious possessions as they escaped the onslaught of the onrushing enemy. The land could no longer be inhabited as the destruction went forth. No wonder Isaiah lamented and cried out for Moab.

The Moabites wailing was heard throughout the land. Not only is the land full of an uproar and confusion, the waters are full of blood. What was once a source of life is now a river of death. But, this wasn't the end yet, for lions would come upon the nation. Lions was an obvious reference to the invading nations that would destroy Moab.

The destruction will not be total and complete for yet, in all of this, Isaiah says there will be a remnant.

Explanation/Chapter 16:1-2: The rulers of Moab now must recognize destruction is enveloping their nation, and Isaiah tells them to make one last attempt to save themselves. Deliverance will only be found through the nation of Israel so they send a lamb as tribute in order to try to get their enemy to help them. These once proud people now ran around like birds trying to find some safety from the onrushing judgment. Moab's last hope for rescue was in the House of David.

Application: **At this point Judah is the only savior for Moab.** How could Isaiah make this promise? Because he had already prophesied that Judah would be saved from the Assyrians. **Isaiah wholeheartedly trusted in God's Word so much that he now told the enemies that their only hope was in the nation of Judah.**

Explanation: The Moabite women were now like birds away from their protective nest. Wherever these women looked for help, none was to be found. Maybe they will find safety in the fords of Arnon at their border.

Explanation/vs. 3-5: Isaiah now speaks for the Moabite women as they plead for security and deliverance. Perhaps the prophet is giving the women the words to say to Judah. They are to beg Judah for help and a place of refuge. Despite the horrible treatment that Moab had shown to Israel in the past, they were left with no other choice but to ask and seek safety among the people of God. Will the Israelites be safe with the people of Moab coming to their land? Isaiah now commands I

Who are the spoilers? They could have been any of Moab's enemies and scholars are unsure of whom this refers to in this narrative. Eventually the oppressors are destroyed.

Explanation/v.5: **The Moabites now appeal to the future Messianic rule as the ultimate hope for their security. Compared to what they were facing in their homeland, they longed for the reign of true justice and righteousness.** Somehow the Moabites recognized their only true hope rested in the loving-kindness of the One who will sit on the throne of David and will rule in perfect righteousness and fair justice.

Application: What we have here, then, is not only a statement of consequence but a promise of hope through the formation of David's throne. "It is significant that the Moabites use terms which strongly reflect the Messianic expectations, nurtured by the faithful remnant in Israel and by Isaiah himself, centering around the Messianic king, who will sit upon the throne of David and exceed justice and righteousness" (Bukstaben 206).

Let us never forget how the throne of the Messiah is established: through mercy. Grace will build the throne and mercy will never depart from Him or from His throne. Isaiah looked from the beginning when the Davidic dynasty began as just a tent, but he clearly believed in the future throne that would come from it. Isa 9:6-7 speaks to the superiority of David's throne over any dynasty including the Moabites.

Explanation/vs. 6-10: Isaiah now cautions Judah to remember the pride of Moab. In the end the request was either denied or never happened at all. The reason? Pride. If Moab was to come to Judah, he must come with repentance and humility, but they refused. For that Moab cried. Those things she once delighted in will now be destroyed. The laments continue as the cities are destroyed (chapter 15), the plants no longer produce, and the grapes are ruined. The harvest will cease and food will be scarce.

Explanation/vs. 11: Once Isaiah recognizes the scope of destruction, his heart breaks out in sympathy over the Moabite's fall.

Explanation/v. 12: Lastly the Moabites will come to their idols to beg for help in time of need, but all their prayers will go unanswered.

Application: The Moabites had ignored the true help from God only to turn towards false gods.

Explanation/vs. 13-14: In the end Moab would be destroyed.

Conclusion

Something remarkable happens in these chapters: though Judah was weak, God placed His people above all nations. In the hands of God, Zion would be saved from the nations. This does not take away the captivity, death, and justice for God's people. God would punish His followers, but the hope that resides in the midst of God's hand was the theme for Isaiah's day. And the theme for our day is In Christ Alone.