



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Isaiah 19:1 – 23:18

“Isaiah and Foreign Nations, part II”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Let us begin with a word of prayer. Father, we thank Thee for the word of God, and we thank Thee Lord for the difficult sections as well as for the easy sections, for those that speak to us of our sin and for those that remind us of Thy grace. For those that prophesy the future and for those that speak primarily about the past for we know that it is the same God who has worked and who will work, who does work in our hearts today.

We pray Lord that through the teaching of the word, we may discern the purposes and plans which Thou hast for us individually and for the Church of Jesus Christ collectively. May Thy blessing be upon us tonight as we study in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] We pointed out that Isaiah's prophecy has been likened to another gospel. Remember Augustine said, “Methinks Isaiah writes not a prophecy, but a gospel.” And of course, he intended by that remark to stress a fact that there is a great deal of evangelical content in the prophecy of Isaiah. That is, there is a great deal of Christ in it even though it was written centuries before the coming of Jesus Christ.

In fact, Isaiah's name, “Jehovah is salvation,” is almost precisely the name that Jesus Christ had. For Isaiah and Joshua in Hebrew mean almost the same thing, the Lord

is salvation, or Jehovah is my salvation, or Jehovah saves. So, there is a similarity between our Lord and Isaiah and you can sense this in the book that Isaiah has been able to write by the spirit of God.

But there is a further likeness between Isaiah and Jesus Christ which is often overlooked and that is that both of these men -- if we may call our Lord a man for a moment, he was that -- both of them stressed the theme of judgment. Isaiah is the great prophet of the woes in the Old Testament, not the only one, but a great prophet of woe; a great prophet of prophetic burden. And it is our Lord who speaks most in the New Testament of woes.

The great chapter in Matthew the 23<sup>rd</sup>, in which our Lord pronounces the woes upon the Pharisees, is one of the highlights of his teaching, and it is a chapter of judgment. And so here in these chapters we have been reading about the burden of Damascus, the burden Moab, the burden of Babylon, the burden of Duma and other burdens. Now, this in our Lord’s teaching, this line or theme of judgment is something that pervades the Bible and we can see it right here in Isaiah’s teaching.

Now, remember in Isaiah’s time he served under the kings: Uzziah, a good king; Jotham, a good king; Ahaz, a bad king; and Hezekiah, a good king. Most believed he lived to the days of Manasseh, who was a very, very wicked king, but we do not have any evidence that he prophesied during the time that he lived in the reign of Manasseh.

Now, many of these prophecies that we are looking at in the great section on the prophecies on the nations have to do with the time of Hezekiah, which was the time of 716 B.C to 687 B.C. It was the time when Israel was being threatened by the Assyrian kingdom and finally, there was a time, I should say, when the northern kingdom had been taken captive by the Assyrian kingdom and that kingdom was threatening the other nations thereabout, Egypt, Arabia, Philistia and the others. So, if you will just remember that in the background of these chapters for the most part, Israel, the ten-tribe northern kingdom is now in captivity to Assyria, and Assyria is the great world power to the north

threatening the south country; threatening to overrun it all, and even down to Egypt, you will see the circumstances out of which Isaiah is writing.

Now, we have a great deal to cover tonight, and we want to try to cover all of these burdens at least briefly. So, let us first look at Roman I in our outline, the burden against Egypt and its symbol. Now, the burden is set forth for us in the 20th chapter and then the symbolic actions of the prophet Isaiah in chapter 20. The date of this prophecy is often given by students as 720 B.C.; that is, just after the ten-tribe northern kingdom has been taken captive by Assyria, and Egypt now is threatened by the Assyrian empire.

Now, it is necessary for us to understand these chapters to know that Egypt and Ethiopia practically formed one kingdom at this time. In fact, it has been called the Egypto-Ethiopian Empire. And that is why in chapter 18, we had the burden upon Ethiopia; chapter 19, the burden upon Egypt; and then chapter 20, we have a reference made to the judgment that God is going to pour out upon both Egypt and Ethiopia, because they really make up one kingdom.

Now, this 19th chapter, we are going to notice, it takes us over the past and on into the future. In fact, Franz Delitzsch, the great Hebrew commentator has said that the 19th chapter reminds us of the two wings of a bird. Because, in the first part of the chapter, we have Isaiah looking back into history and prophesying of the destruction that is going to come to Egypt, but in the latter part of the chapter, he looks on into the distant future even from our day, and prophesies of the ultimate restoration of Egypt. So, let us look at it in that way and we will look at the burden and particularly the first part of it in which Isaiah prophesies that swift judgment from Jehovah shall throw the nations and its idols into a frenetic fear.

Let me read a few verses beginning with the first verse. “The burden of Egypt. Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud,” that means that he is going to execute quick judgment, “and shall come into Egypt. And the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it.” You can see that this

coming of the Lord in judgment by means of the Assyrians is going to stir Egypt to its very depths. And as a matter of fact, he is going to produce such fear in the hearts of the Egyptians that Isaiah says their heart is going to melt in the midst of them.

“And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians,” there is to be a civil war, “and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbor, city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst of it; and I will destroy the counsel of it. And they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to the mediums, and to the wizards.” In other words, Assyria is going to cause such fear that they are going to go to their Gods but their Gods are the Jeane Dixons of the 8th century before Christ, the mediums and the wizards.

“And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord,” apparently, this is a reference to an Egyptian king; we are not sure of the precise one. Because Assyria did take Egypt, some have called him Psammetichus, others Pharaoh Necho, but I am not sure which one is referred to here. He is called “a cruel lord and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts. And the waters shall fail from the sea,” that is, the Nile River, which was called that because of its breadth, “and the river shall be wasted and dried up. And they shall turn the rivers far away, and the brooks of defense shall be emptied and dried up, the reeds and flags shall wither. The paper reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and everything sown by the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and be no more. The fishers also shall mourn, and all they that cast hook into the brooks shall lament; and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish.

“Moreover, they that work in fine flax and they that weave cotton cloth shall be confounded. And they shall be broken in the purposes thereof. For all that make sluices and ponds for fish. Surely the princes of Zoan”-- now, Zoan is one of the well-known cities of Egypt then, “the princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the wise counselors of Pharaoh has become stupid. How say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son

of ancient kings? Where are they?” And now, I think, we reached the climax of Isaiah’s words in the taunt. “Where are thy wise men?”

And I want to stop for just a moment there because there is a tremendous principle involved in this. And you know Apostle Paul uses this text in 1 Corinthians. Will you turn with me for a moment to 1 Corinthians chapter 1? I guess the apostle must have studied Isaiah chapter 19 and if you think that this chapter is difficult then remember that the Apostle Paul studied it before you because he quotes it. Verse 18 of 1 Corinthians chapter 1,

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the gentiles foolishness. But unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

“Where are thy wise men?” Isaiah addressed to the leaders of Egypt. Because you see, they had made the fatal mistake of appealing to human wisdom. Instead of turning to the true God who had, through the Israelites, been in their midst for many a century they had turned away from him to the wizards, and the charmers and the idols. And so I think that Isaiah’s lament reaches its climax in “where are thy wise men?”

And you know, if we make an application that the apostle Paul made of this, it is evident what we should make and it is this: The gospel of Jesus Christ addresses itself to the human intellect in much the same way. When man looks at the gospel, he says it is foolishness because, of course, he does not see his sins. He thinks his need is something entirely different but God sees that his need is remedy for sin. And, consequently, it is by means of the cross that God has provided salvation. The wise man says he needs a new philosophy of life.

But God says he needs redemption from his sin. And this difference is precisely the difference between the wise man and the stupid man in the sight of God. Men who are wise like to think that all they need is be educated but what they really need is to be born again. And so Isaiah’s lament, “Where are thy wise men?” is designed to throw into strong relief the fact that Egypt, by its trust in their wisdom, and in their false gods, is now fallen into the pit of destruction. And the apostle uses that to illustrate for us today the need of going to the truth of God and the gospel concerning our Lord Jesus Christ so that we may understand ourselves that we are sinners; that we are in the divine condemnation; that what we need is salvation and not education.

And so God still asks this question of the world: “Where is the wise? Where is the disputer of this age?” God had made foolish the wisdom of this world. Men will not see what they really are in the sight of God.

I have been reading a new book which I got called *The Suicide of the West* by James Burnham. In it there is a chapter on the philosophy of liberalism. It is an excellent chapter because it says what I have thought all along. And that is that the basic error of liberalism is its failure to understand what men are. And that is the basic error that we make. It is the basic error that we individually make if we do not turn to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. If we are right about what we are, then we will be more likely to turn to the cross of Jesus Christ. I want to say a little more about that in just a moment. But this is the climax, “where are thy wise men? And let them tell thee now, and let them

know what the Lord of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt. The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Memphis are deceived; they have also seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes. The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst of it and they have caused Egypt to err in every work of it, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit.” That is Egypt under the judgment of God. “Neither shall there be any work for Egypt, which the head or tail, branch or rush, may do.” Now, there is the lowest point of this prophecy against Egypt.

Beginning now in the 16th verse, we move over to the other wing of our bird because we are going to see that from now on to the end of the chapter, we move by steady stages to Egypt’s restoration and blessing, verse 16th. Oh, by the way, we should notice this expression, “in that day.” Now, I have pointed this out once before in our study of Isaiah but let us notice it. Notice the 16th verse, “In that day.” The 18th verse: “In that day.” The 19th verse, “In that day.” Verse 21: “And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day.” Verse 23, “In that day.” Verse 24, “In that day.” Five paragraphs, six times we have the expression, “in that day.”

Now, as I understand this prophecy from this point on, it seems to me, that Isaiah begins in the age immediately following the taking of Egypt by Assyria and leads us on into the Christian Era and then finally takes us on into the distant future as the last few verses of the chapter show us. And you can, if we have time, I am not an expert on Egyptian history, to tell you the truth, I know very little about it except that I did take ancient history in ancient times and I remember a little bit about it, and since I have done a little studying in Egyptian history, but at least I know this about it - that you can trace the Christian influence into Egypt.

And, of course, it largely was brought in by the Jews who went into Egypt and you remember that the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was made by the Jews, was made by Jews in Egypt and that translation of the Old Testament into Greek became the Bible that was commonly used by the apostles. And when they cite from the

Old Testament and the New Testament, more often than not, they cite the Greek translation, which was made in Egypt. So there is evidence of the spread of Judaism into Egypt after this event, and also there is evidence of the spread of Christianity at a very early time into Egypt. But you will see that this chapter goes far beyond that as we read along.

“In that day shall Egypt be like women: and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts, which he shaketh over it.” I wonder if Isaiah would have written that today, “shall be like women”? Would it have not been better to say, “In that day Egypt shall be like men” because, sad to say, in the 20th Century, the men are becoming the weaker sex, and the women are becoming the stronger sex. Now the Christian women do not like that, I know, do you? Answer yes, all of you. But nevertheless, we are seeing a tremendous transformation, I think, and it is part of our spiritual derangement too if I must just offer that as an opinion.

“And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt, every one that maketh mention of it shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts, which he hath determined against it. In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts; one shall be called, “the city of destruction.” There is a play on words here but it is unimportant; we will pass by it. “In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border of it to the Lord. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors.”

Now, notice – “and he shall send them a savior, and a great one and he shall deliver them.” Now, you might think from just reading that that this is not a reference to our Lord Jesus but some savior, perhaps a human being, who would give them physical deliverance but then notice the next verse. “And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it. And the Lord shall smite Egypt: he

shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be intreated by them, and shall heal them.” In other words, there is going to be a tremendous spiritual transformation in the land of Egypt. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrians shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians.”

And he continues with even more remarkable words. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the earth: Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, ‘Blessed be Egypt, my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.’ Why do you think God has such a glorious future for Egypt? I wonder if perhaps Egypt’s future is not related to the fact that in the plan of God, it has never been forgotten that it was in Egypt that the children of Israel were sheltered and preserved for so many years. Regardless of the reason, the facts of scripture remain. That Egypt has a glorious future and finally Assyria, Egypt and Israel shall enter into a tripartite covenant under God in which God’s purpose for Israel shall be fulfilled for she shall be a blessing in the midst of all the earth.

Now, I want to tell you, for me to think of Egypt as being a blessing as Egypt being blessed by God and called by God “my people” that is going to take a work of grace on God’s part. Now, you know 25 years ago, or 30 years ago, when the British had control of Egypt, I can remember when I used to read these prophecies here, not that long ago, I was reading them, but under that and during that time, and I read these prophecies and I wondered how such could come to pass because the very idea of Egypt being significant in the last days was at least farfetched in those days. It was an extremely weak nation and it still is. But it is located now right in the midst of some of the most intense of contemporary history.

And as far as the word of God is concerned, it is going to be, and it is going to be in that area that the great events of the future shall take place, and so the very fact that today Egypt is significant in world history is something but to look at them as a nation

that shall ultimately know the Lord. And so, the very fact that today Egypt is significant in world history is something. But to look at them as a nation that shall ultimately know the law. What a tremendous revelation of the grace of God. I wonder if Nasser is going to be saved. But, this is the word of God and you can see now how the prophecy has moved to Egypt’s destruction under the hand of Assyria hundred of years before the time of Christ and has now climbed up through the centuries to Egypt’s ultimate restoration and blessing.

Now, in the 20th chapter we have one of those things that made it very embarrassing to be a prophet. “In the year that Tartan,” that seems to be a name for a leader such as Caesar. “In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him and fought against Ashdod, and took it. At the same time spoke the Lord by Isaiah,” this is about 711 B.C. “...the son of Amoz, saying, Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins,, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.” Now, as a southerner, I know exactly what it is to walk barefoot, but I do not know what it is to walk around naked. [Laughter] And this the prophet had to do for three years.

But, I know what you are thinking, and it is what I thought, too. That seems immoral to have a man walk around naked. So, I did a little study of the Hebrew text and the meaning of these words, and I can assure you that to walk around naked and barefoot does not mean without a stitch of clothing on. It means, without everything, with everything off, but they equivalent of our underwear. He did have the undergarment left. And because the Orientals were so careful about the sight of skin as you know, it is very sensitive. For them to take off the outergarments was as if they were naked. And in the New Testament, you remember when Peter was fishing in the midst of the boat and it says he was a dove in naked. It means, in the Greek, there, too with just his underclothes on.

So, at any rate it was embarrassing for the prophet. I would not like to walk around in my underwear, would you? “And the Lord said, 'As my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years...’” Think of that, three years for Isaiah. It is cheap; you would not have to buy any clothes. [Laughter] “...for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia; so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as prisoners, and the Ethiopians as captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation, and Egypt their glory. And the inhabitant of this coastland shall say in that day, ‘Behold, such was our expectation, where we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria and how shall we escape?’”

You see, what happened then was what often happens when nations are in danger from others. What do they do? They call a prayer meeting and they pray to the Lord God of heaven. No, they do not do that. They make a treaty with some friend. And so we have NATO, and SEATO, and all of the other treaties that we have signed. Why? To protect ourselves against others. If this country were really a country under God, under the true God, why we should have to look upward and that is all, and He would care for us, but because we are not a nation on the God and because we act in our human wisdom, we look for help.

But you see, Israel was a theocratic nation. They were supposed to look to God. And when the Assyrian came down, Judah of course, instead of looking to God was looking to nations and Egypt was one of the nations that they thought they would appeal for help to because Egypt was antagonistic to Assyria too. And so Isaiah is called by God for three years to march around in the midst of the Judahites, unclothed in order that they might see as they asked him, “Why are you naked Isaiah? Well, this is what is going to happen to Egypt. The Assyrians are going to do it to them. You think that you can put your hope in Egypt. Well, look what Egypt will do for you. And so the prophet becomes

a messenger with a message by means of it is actions. Now, this is what you called visual aid teaching, and the prophet carried it out.

Now, let us move on to chapter 21. This is Romans 2, the burden against Babylon. Chapter 21 verses 1-10. The next four of our burdens have one note about them that makes them similar burdens. They each have the note of the vision about them. And I guess it is because we are leading up to Isaiah 10:24 in which we do have the visions of the Prophet Isaiah. But the next four form a tetralogy; that is, a collection of four burdens, which are related.

Babylon is always on the Bible, a great type of the city of the world as opposed to God. It is Babylon of course that is opposed to Jerusalem. It was in Babylon that first organized rebellion against God took place when the Tower of Babel was erected. And man sought to make a name for himself by reaching up to heaven. And it was Babylon, through the years, which has been the inveterate enemy of Jerusalem. And finally, in the Book of Revelation, it is Babylon reconstructed and rebuilt which is man’s final capital, the capital of the anti-Christ. It is the city of the world with all of the motives of rebellion against the true God. Implicit in its structure, in its life, in its disposition, in its inhabitants, in all that it does. It is great, it is magnificent; it is the thing that men admire, Babylon; but it is opposed to God.

Now, opposed to that is Jerusalem. And you will notice in the Book of Revelation, the climax of that book is reached when the great city Babylon is thrown down, and there arises about its ruins, the what? The New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem to take its place. So, whenever you read of Babylon in the Bible, you are reading of that which is antagonistic to God, organized rebellion against God. That is where that began.

Now, rebellion against God began on the Garden of Eden. Organized rebellion against God began in the city of Babylon. So, when you think about Babylon, think about organized rebellion to God. Now this, I think, is one of the most remarkable of all of the prophecies in Isaiah and has been overlooked largely, because it is just a few

verses, and it is only in a verse or two to here that we have the heart of the prophecy. And frankly, you read by then, you do not even notice it at sometime.

Let us begin with the first verse. The burden of the desert of the sea. Now, that is the name for Babylon because of the way it lay down there in the, near the Euphrates and of course it was marshy land, and the streams of the Euphrates were about. And as you looked at it, it looked like the low land kind of country that looked like a land that floated on water. That is why it is called “the desert of the sea.” “As whirlwinds in the Negeb pass through; so it cometh from the desert, from a terrible land. A grievous vision is declared unto me; the treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoilt. Go up, O Elam...” That of course is Persia. “...besiege, O Medea, all the sighing have I made to cease. Therefore, are my loins filled with pain. Pangs have taken hold upon me, like the pangs of a woman who travaileth. I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it. My heart panted, fearfulness uphold me. The night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me.” The prophecy that the prophet must expound affects him. “Prepare the table, watch in the watchtower, eat, drink. Arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield.”

Now, that is the prophecy that is so remarkable. Because you see, this text in the fifth verse is a reference to the overthrow of Babylon. Now, mind you this passage was written in the eighth century, near of the end of the eighth century. It would not be for about a hundred years, at least 150 years. In fact, a little more than that. Before it, until Babylon was overthrown by the Persians. But here is Isaiah writing about it 150 years plus before it came to pass.

And not only as he is writing about the overthrow of Babylon, but he is describing the circumstances under which it took place. He is telling us that there is a banquet. And many will tell us in the next few verses that he sees soldiers marching. And as he sees them, he sees them in silent marching, as if they are marching quietly so no one will see. And then, we hear the words, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen!” and Babylon is destroyed.

Now, if you know anything about ancient history, you know that Xenophon wrote of this and you know that Herodotus wrote of it. You remember how it happened.

Cyrus and the Persians took the city of Babylon. And according to ancient reports, the Euphrates, of course, went right down through the city and Cyrus constructed another channel and diverted the Euphrates' river and soldiers marched down under walls and took the city, while there was banquet going on and Xenophon refers to the banquet and so does Herodotus; and that is all prophesied here. You see, over a century before it took place.

When I was in Houston this weekend, on Saturday night, we had a home meeting in which anybody could ask any question. And fortunately, they asked all easy questions, but we had a good time and we had one young fellow there, he was about 6'4", and he had his wife with him, he is just about 22 years of age and he came up to me afterwards and he said, "My name is Ferguson. I am graduate of Auburn University." I said, "I am a fellow southerner," and he said, "I am a Christian and I am worker of a Campus Crusade for Christ."

In the midst of our conversation we began to talk about prophecy. He said, "You know, it was through prophecy that I was really shaken up." I said, "I think I may have been a Christian, but I heard how Lindsay spoke on prophecy," and he said, "You know when he finished talking on prophecy I said to myself, Boy I am scared to death and I better get in right relationship to this God who controls the prophetic word." I look at this great big fellow, look like he was football player or something, "scared to death" as he put it, because of the prophetic Scriptures. And here we have an evidence of it.

Now, let us go back for a few moments and think about Daniel chapter 5, because this is a reference to that chapter. You remember that Belshazzar, the king, had a feast. And he dedicated that feast to a thousand of his lords. And they all gathered that night on the palace. It must have been a wonderful night. You know, in Babylon, the days are hot and the nights are cool and the breeze comes up and the neotenic colored

atmosphere; the feast was to be held. And you can think of the great palace in which Belshazzar had this banquet, it must have been a rich and lavished place. The lords arrived, and the ladies arrived then they began to drink wine; and they began to get a little under the influence of it. And finally, Belshazzar at a point in the feast, called for the golden and silver vessels, which Nebuchadnezzar, his father, had taken from the temple, which was in Jerusalem. That is all right to have a good time but when you have a good time at the expense of the Lord of Host, should better be careful.

So, they brought the golden vessels and Belshazzar fill them with wine and he drunk them and I imagine that there were lots of rag ball shouts around the table like, “Where is the God of the Hebrews? Where is the God Hebrews?” as they drank wine out of the sacred vessels. And the God of Hebrews was a lot nearer than they thought. Because in the same hour, as Belshazzar looked over against the wall of the great palace, he was startled and shakened to see a hand, suddenly, on the wall and to see the hand began to write on the wall. The writing, he could not fathom.

He was so disturbed by it, his countenance was changed; he turned as white as a sheet; I think, that is what the Aramaic means at that point. His thoughts troubled him so that the joints of his loins were loosed; that is, the strength of his legs gave way and he said, “I need a chair to sit down,” because they recognized that this was something supernatural. “His knees smote one against and he cried for the astrologers and the Chaldeans, and wizards and the soothsayers and all of them trouped in and he said, “Now, if you can read the writing and show me the interpretation, I will give you a chance; you will be clothed in scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck.” That means a new Nero style garment, as far as I can tell, clothed with scarlet and a chain of gold about his neck and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.

And of course they looked at that writing on the wall and they looked at it sideways, some of them stood on their heads, some of them look these ways, some

looked that, some tried to read forwards and backwards and upwards and down and then they could not make anything out of it.

And about this time the queen came, where she had been, I do not know. Except that like most women she was late, and so she arrived late and she said, "Well, now listen, king, live forever. Let not thy thoughts trouble thee. I know a fellow. He can interpret this. His name is Daniel. He is an expert in dreams." And so Daniel came and Daniel spoke to the king and he said, "King, yes." He could do it. He could handle it all right but he wanted to give him a little lecture first. So he told him about Nebuchadnezzar and he said, now, in the 18th verse,

"O thou king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor. And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him. Whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. And when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly crown, and they took his glory from him: And he was driven from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the beasts; and his dwelling was with the wild asses. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till he knew that the Most High God ruled in the kingdom of men; and that he appointed over it whomsoever he will.

"And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this, but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of Heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine from them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." (That was quite a sermon.) "Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was

written. And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

Those are the words and this is the interpretation: "MENE, MENE, God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. You are through; thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting Belshazzar, you yourself individually. (You do not measure up. You are through." PERES; that is the form of UPHARSIN. U the article; pharsin, the singular. Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. In other words, it is all over.)

"Now, then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. In that night Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans was slain and Darius the Mede took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old."

Now, will you turn back to Isaiah chapter 21 verse 5, "Prepare the table, watch in the watchtower, eat, drink, arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield. For thus hath the Lord said unto me, 'Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth.'" And this is what he saw and noticed. And he saw a chariot with a couple of horsemen. Delitzsch renders this much clearer, I think: He saw a procession of cavalry. Other versions render it, "And he saw riders, a chariot of asses, and a chariot of camels; and he hearkened diligently with much heed." In other words, there was nothing said; it was all cloud. But he saw this long procession of men and he cried as a lion, "My Lord, I stand continually upon the watchtower in the daytime, and I am set at my post whole nights and behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen." In other words, all he saw was just this long procession of men. It was the Persian army on the way to Babylon while the feast was going on. And he answered and said, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the carved images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground."

You know, back in World War II, they said the Maginot Line is impossible to overthrow the Maginot Line. The Germans took it in a few hours. They said many years

ago, “The Titanic is an unsinkable boat,” it sank. The United States is so strong that no nation could take us. We could be taken before you could say that. Babylon the great, the greatest nation of its day, it has fallen, it has fallen while its men indulge themselves in a good time in the king’s palace taken by surprise. If they had just had someone on the watchtower, that is all they needed. They could have trapped the Persians, because you see there were gates from the river up into the streets. And all they would have to do would be just to let the Persian army come under the walls into the river bed, drop the gate again and keep the gates closed and they would just have fun killing them for the rest of the day and night; but instead, because the nation had departed from God, they are weak. Well, we must hasten.

The burden of Duma, roman 3. This is a prophecy of two verses, 21: 11 and 12. Duma is Edom. So, this is the burden of Duma. Now, this is the only gentle utterance in the whole of the Old Testament uttered with respect to Israel’s hereditary foe, Edom. Every where else in the Old Testament there is nothing but curse pronounced upon Edom. But here, we have the gentlest of all the utterances. The prophet is still on his watchtower and he hears a question, “Watchman what of the night, watchman what of the night.”

In the Hebrew, the second expression gives you the impression that he wants a favorable reply. It is dark, but he wants something favorable, and so the answer comes, “The morning cometh but then and also the night.” In other words, there is no hope for Edom. If you will inquire, inquire; if you want to ask about it, ask about it; return, come. The only hope for Edom is conversion. Edom has no glorious future at all. Her only hope is to return to the Lord. Now, that is a very quick burden and so we will to spend a few great moments on it.

Let us go on to the burden against Arabia. That is the remainder of this chapter 21:13-17, the burden against Arabia. This too is a very short prophecy and it is, I think, not nearly so important as the one in chapter 22, so let me just say a word about it and

we will pass on. Apparently, it describes the effects of the Assyrians as they come down from the north. Because they come down from the north through Arabia, it is necessary for the traitors who deal with the Arabians to flee off into the wilderness. And as the result of this, it is a prophecy of judgment upon Arabia. And so, that is the force of it, that there is going to come judgment to Arabia as expressed in this way.

Roman 5, the burden against Jerusalem, 22:1-14. Jerusalem is called the valley of the vision here, and this has caused some problems to interpreters because we have always thought of Jerusalem as being on a hill. However, if we think of Jerusalem in comparison with some of the mountains that lay off in the distant from them, then I think we can understand how they can be called the valley of vision. For example, in Psalm 125 verse 2, we read, “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even forever.” So, this particular prophecy then is a prophecy against Jerusalem. That is evident from other factors in the chapter. The storm of Assyria burst over Jerusalem, which is recklessly and hilariously and different to God.

That is the picture and let us read the verses beginning with verse 1. The burden of the valley of vision. “What aileth thee now, thou that art wholly gone up to the housetops? Thou that art full of shouting, a tumultuous city, a joyous city.” That means of course contended and defiant. They were just having one big wail of a time. “Thy slain men are not slain with the sword, nor dead in battle.” In other words when your time for takings comes, you are not going to be taken honorably. “All thy rulers are fled together. They are bound by the archers. All that are found in thee are bound together, who have fled from far. Therefore said I, look away from me. I will weep bitterly.”

Isaiah is disturbed over what he sees, “Labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people. For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord God of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains. And Elam bore the quiver with chariots of men and horsemen, and Kir uncovered the shield. And it shall come to pass, that thy choicest

valleys shall be full of chariots, and the horsemen shall set themselves in array at the gate. And he striped the covering of Judah, and thou didst look in that day to the armor of the house of the forest.” The Assyrians have come against them. And in their army, of course, are elements from Elam and from the areas of what we would call to the north.

Verse 9, “Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many; and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool. And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall,” as feverish preparations because of the invasion. “Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool, but ye have not looked unto its maker neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago,” prudence but without God. “And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth.” He called for repentance, in other words.

“And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine. Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we shall die.” There it is; that is where Paul got his expression in the New Testament, “Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die.” It comes from the prophet Isaiah who describes the attitude of the children of Israel as they are in danger of being taken by the Assyrians. In other words, the punishment of God, the discipline of God leads not to repentance but to rebellion against him.

Now, when the condition of a nation gets to that place, there is very little that God can do. I wonder if we have not reached something of that in the United States, if the same principles work in nations. It is a remarkable thing that in this country when we are in the greatest of danger, and we are in the greatest of danger now. Not because we are in danger apparently of an attack from Russia or from Red China, but we are in danger because of the moral decay of this nation; above all, for its spiritual corruption.

Today, of course, we do not believe that there is such a thing as right, and such a thing as wrong. We feel that these truths are relative truths. And if you preach long enough that there is no right and no wrong, people will act, ultimately, as if there is no

right and no wrong. And so, we now have such disturbances, as in our universities as groups of young people who say, you must, I think, this was the climax to me, I believe in civil rights, but this to me was the utter perversion of everything that is right about civil rights. "You must admit as many Negroes as you possibly can to the university regardless of whether they meet the qualifications or not." And it is sad, but we find that most Americans are somewhat frustrated; they do not really know what to do about this.

Now, this is evidence of a moral decay in this country. That would not have been allowed a hundred years ago. Things were different. You know why we are like this? Because of bad theology, that is why. This country has never been Christian, but there has been a strong influence from true theology. Today, we do not have it. For example, we do not believe that man is evil. We believe man's nature is changing. He has an indefinitely large potential for positive development.

Professor J.S. Shapiro who has written a book of liberalism has said this: "Man according to liberalism is born ignorant, not wicked." Well, if he is ignorant and not wicked, all he needs is education; he does not need conversion. And so we have become enslaved to rationalism, to this view of man. We are told that the only obstacles to development in society are ignorance and bad social institutions. And if we wise up, and if we have proper social institutions, then everything is going to be wonderful.

And furthermore we are the beneficiaries of a theological doctor, not historical optimism. That is, that everything ultimately is going to work out fine. That we are getting better and better all the time. That tomorrow is a brighter day than today. All we have to do is just wait for it. And that began with Francis Bacon and Descartes, and it is now espoused on down to the present time to the time of Hubert Humphrey.

Now, remember he was a professor of political science and that is why he thinks as he does. That is his philosophy. Let me put it even more to the point. You think I am meddling, I am not meddling. Do you know why? Because this is theology. This concerns man's ideas of God. Ideas have consequences, Professor Weaver told us, a

generation or so ago, and they really do. And if you think that man is good and that man’s history is optimistic apart from God, you are not a philosopher, you become a theologian. This is not politics, this is theology.

And when the economist and when the politicians speak about how we ourselves are able to solve all our problems, he has become a theologian. And so I must criticize his theology; it is rotten. Because the Bible states that men are sinners. And furthermore, that men apart from God are headed to inevitable judgment. And if we do not repent, we shall not be saved. And that is what is happening in this country. And when you read the newspapers, you think theologically, and you will understand what is going on.

Time is up. Let us close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the word of God. O Father enable us amid the darkening days in which we lived to show the light of the word of God. Help us to think right, Lord about men, what we are apart from Thee, and most of all, about Jesus Christ who loved us and gave himself for us, and who has made it possible through the sacrifice for sin for us to have life. May Thy blessings go with us, as we part.

For his sake. Amen.