

The Burden of the Nations *Isaiah 13-27*

Isaiah's ministry now takes up the theme of God's judgments and dealings with the nations (gentiles) that surround Israel. Remember that while Isaiah was prophesying judgment on Israel and Judah there was also the promise of restoration, and the further result of the nations coming to Zion to be taught God's word and ways. The death and resurrection of Israel (remember now!!) finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the "son" called from Egypt and the Servant-King who rules not only Israel but all the nations. Because he (as Israel) is resurrected, the time came for the Gentile nations to be brought into submission to Israel and find salvation. This is the pattern fulfilled in Matthew 28, and especially in verses 18-20.

Yet, it is also true that God has a case to declare against the nations around Israel, and chapters 13-27 take up this theme. The following chiastic structure demonstrates the primary themes of this section

Fall of Babylon and the Restoration of Judah – 13:1- 14:32
Word to Israel's Neighbor, Moab – 15:1- 16:14
Word to Egypt and Ethiopia, Judah Restored – 17:1- 20:6
Fall of Babylon – 21:1-17
Word to Egypt and Shebna, Judah Restored – 22:1-25
Word to Israel's Neighbor, Tyre – 23:1-18
Fall of Babylon and the Restoration of Judah – 24:1- 27:13

It isn't difficult to see that the matter of Babylon's fall, coupled with Judah's ascension and restoration, is at the heart of this part of the prophecy. The section begins with, ends with, and is centered in the subject of Babylon's fall. Thus, it might be proposed that Babylon functions as a symbol of opposition to God and his people, as well. It is *the* enemy city that embodies all that is detestable. Note: 1 Peter 5:13; Revelation 14:8; 16:19; 17:1- 18:24.

- Everlasting desolation of Babylon: 13:9, 19-22 / 24:10; 25:2; 27:10
 - The Language of the Collapsing Universe: 13:10 / 24:23; 14:16 / 24:19-20
 - Labor Pains of Birth: 13:8 / 26:17
 - The Striking Enemy is Struck: 14:5-6 / 27:7
 - The Kings in Sheol: 14:9-19 / 24:21-22
 - The Remnant find Refuge in Zion: 14:32 / 27:12-13
- I. The Use of Judgment Language – The World Falls Apart – 13:1, 6, 9-13
- A. The place of Biblical Imagery: Genesis 1-3 as primary field of symbol-sign.
 - B. We understand many symbols, some even as sacramental, as means of grace: water, wine, third-day, first-day, light, darkness, trees, etc.
 - C. What about the stars, sun, and moon? Note their created purpose in Genesis 1 – made as signs for governance. That is why to this day suns, moons, and stars dominate national flags – they are symbolic of governments and power.
 - D. So, if God speaks concerning a nation that the sun and moon and stars will fall, what is he saying?
 - E. We need to recall that the universal heavens is one of God's covenant witnesses. That is why the heavens "speak" – Psalm 19. The sky is a scroll that can be "rolled up" when the story is over! Revelation 6:12-17.

II. The Earthly King of Babylon and the “Power behind the throne” – Isaiah 14

- A. The Self-exalting “son of Dawn” – v. 12
- B. The Five-fold “I will” of the King of Babylon – v. 13-14
- C. A “Day Star” and yet also a “man” (v.12, v.16)
 - Is this possibly Satan?
 - Yes, quite possibly. But it is also showing us the relationship between pagan thrones on earth and demonic “powers” in the heavenlies that inspire them.
 - Ephesians 6:10 ff; Daniel 9; 1 Corinthians 2:6; Colossians 2:13 ff.
- D. Note the reality of Sheol and the realm of the dead. The dead “live”! They recognize this king and mock him by their welcome.
 - David and his infant son – 2 Samuel 12:23

Next week: Q&A on chapters 1-27, but especially on chapters 1-12.