

A Trek Through Isaiah 17 - 21:1-17

Bruce Pike

December 3, 2023

	One-world Government	Davidic Monarchy	Collective Security and Self-sufficiency	The People of God	Triumphant End
2	21:1-10 Oracle of the wilderness of the sea	21:11-12 Oracle of silence	21:13-17 Oracle of Arabia	22:1-25 Oracle of the valley of vision	23:1-18 Oracle of Tyre

- Starting the second series of oracles.
- Much darker than the first set, but with glimmers of hope: a vision of horror, a voice calling in darkness, refugees in the desert, the unforgivable sin, merchandising turned to Yahweh's glory.

Oracle of the Wilderness of the Sea: The Babylonian Principle 21:1-10

- The oracle of the wilderness of the sea is the first in the second series. It describes the fall of Babylon and thus shows that the Babylonian principle of imperial rule is futile for obtaining true security.
- In the oracle we see
 - An oppressing superpower
 - A deliverer promising relief.
 - God's people in the midst, tempted to look to the deliverer but needing to trust in Yahweh.
- Interpretations
 - Some commentators see the oracle as referring to the fall of Babylon to Persia in 539 BC. Then it is a message of hope for Judah, that Babylon will be destroyed.
 - This lesson follows Motyer, who sees the oracle as referring to Sennacherib's attack on Babylon in 689 BC. Then it is a warning to Judah against dependence on an ally destined for destruction.
- Structure
 - A1 v1-2a ...a stern vision
 - B1 v2b ...Babylonian boasting
 - C v3-5 the prophet's anguish
 - B2 v6-9 ...Babylon has fallen
 - A2 v10 ...what I have heard from Yahweh of hosts

[A1] A stern vision 21:1-2a

Isaiah 21:1–2a (LSB)

1The oracle concerning the wilderness of the sea. As whirlwinds in the Negev sweep on, It comes from the wilderness, from a fearsome land.

2A harsh vision has been declared to me...

- V1
 - the wilderness of the sea.
 - An enigmatic title.
 - May refer to the land around the Persian Gulf, where Merodach-Baladan was from.
 - whirlwinds...sweep.
 - Picture of violent desert storms sweeping over the land bringing destruction
 - It comes
 - What comes? Left unspecified.
 - from a fearsome land
 - Because of what comes from there
- V2
 - a harsh vision
 - Hard to bear. Because Judah will see false hopes destroyed.
 - Contrast 1 Sam 1:15 But Hannah answered and said, "No, my lord, I am a woman oppressed in spirit..."
 - Hannah before Eli, burdened by childlessness and ridicule by Penninah, Elkanah's other wife.
 - She chose to go to Yahweh, and gained hope.
 - Judah will continue to turn away, and see only darkness.

[B1] Appeal to join the revolt 21:2b

Isaiah 21:2b (LSB)

2...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.

- Here we listen in on the Babylonian envoys as they appeal to Judah to join the revolt against Assyria.
- The treacherous one still deals treacherously, and the destroyer still destroys.
 - Referring to Assyria, the ruling power
 - The Babylonian envoys assert that Assyria will never change; something must be done.
- Go up, O Elam; lay siege, Media
 - Together Elam & Media would be a significant ally against Assyria.
 - The envoys boast that Babylon can say the word, and they will join the revolt.
- I have made an end of all the groaning she has caused
 - Merodach-Baladan of Babylon saw himself as the deliverer from Assyrian oppression.

[C] The prophet's anguish 21:3-5

Isaiah 21:3-5 (LSB)

3For 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.

4My heart reels; horror terrorizes me; The twilight I longed for has been turned for me into trembling.

5They set the table, they spread out the cloth, they eat, they drink; "Rise up, commanders, oil the shields,"

- Contrasting effects
- V3-4 The prophet is seized with anguish, and overwhelmed with horror at the coming catastrophe.
 - My loins are full of anguish
 - Intense physical pain. As a woman in labor.
 - I cannot hear...I cannot see
 - Senses overwhelmed.
 - My heart reels
 - Intense emotional pain.
 - the twilight I longed for
 - May refer to nightmares. No relief even in sleep.
 - May refer to the "twilight" of Assyrian oppression. This would be a reason for the prophet's dismay. Assyria was declining, but by becoming involved, Judah would feel the Assyrian reprisals.
- V5 Judah busily prepares for the revolt
 - they set the table...
 - feasting together
 - Rise up, commanders...
 - preparing equipment for war.

[B2] Babylon is fallen 21:6-9

Isaiah 21:6–9 (LSB)

6For thus the Lord says to me, “Go, station the lookout, let him declare what he sees.

7“Indeed, he shall see riders, horsemen in pairs, Riders of donkeys, riders of camels, So let him pay close attention, very close attention.”

8Then the lookout called, “O Lord, I stand continually by day on the watchtower, And I am stationed every night at my guard post.

9“Now behold, here comes a troop of riders, horsemen in pairs.” And one answered and said, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon; And all the graven images of her gods are shattered on the ground.”

- Picture of a city awaiting an important outcome
 - The revolt has started and the battle is joined.
 - No electronic communications. A lookout is set to watch for the result.
 - When the message is received, he reports.
- V6
 - The Lord. Sovereign over both the watchman and over Babylon
 - station the lookout.
 - The prophet.
 - He is to watch and listen.
- V7 Indeed, he shall see riders
 - Told what to look for: riders returning from the battle.
- V8 I stand continually by day on the watchtower
 - Isaiah is faithful to his commission
 - May indicate a long wait between v7 and v9
- V9
 - Now behold, here comes a troop of riders, horsemen in pairs.
 - Behold with exclamation. A matter of great importance, eagerly awaited. Like election night.
 - Riders, horsemen in pairs. The sign awaited. Seen in the distance. A mounted column in order.
 - An army returning victorious.
 - Fallen, fallen is Babylon; And all the graven images of her gods are shattered on the ground.
 - Here is the message.
 - Babylon and its revolt are defeated. Fallen 2x for emphasis.
 - Images of her gods are shattered. Complete destruction.
 - Sennacherib records that he filled the city with corpses and as for “the gods dwelling therein, the hands of my people took them and smashed them.”
 - Consequences are coming for Judah.

[A2] Woe with hope 21:10

Isaiah 21:10 (LSB)

10O my trampled people and my afflicted of the threshing floor! What I have heard from Yahweh of hosts, The God of Israel, I have declared to you.

- Here the prophet laments for his people. Afflicted by Assyria, the Babylonian revolt crushed, Assyrian reprisals to come. But there is hope
- my trampled people and my afflicted of the threshing floor
 - Picture of the harvest
 - Continued beating and sifting for a while. Because they became involved in the politics of the world rather than trusting in Yahweh.
 - Comes to an end. Chaff removed. Remnant of grain preserved
- from Yahweh of hosts, The God of Israel
 - Guaranteed.

Oracle of Silence 21:11-12

- Second oracle in the series.
- Where is true security? In the Davidic monarchy.
- Picture of a night watch. Enquiry and answer.

Enquiry: When will the darkness end? 21:11

Isaiah 21:11 (LSB)

11The oracle concerning Dumah. One keeps calling to me from Seir, "Watchman, how far gone is the night? Watchman, how far gone is the night?"

- Here is an oracle about the present darkness and the coming dawn.
- Seir. Edom
- Dumah.
 - Oasis in northern Arabia on east-west trade routes.
 - Strategically important to Edom.
 - Heb: stillness; appropriate for a land under darkness.
- One keeps calling to me
 - Perhaps a single Gentile or the Gentile nation personified
- Watchman, how far gone is the night?
 - Picture of a watchman on the city wall in the night, awake when all are asleep, able to see further than all others.
 - Recognition by Edom that only the prophet in Judah is awake and able to see.
 - Night is the present darkness of the Babylonian world system
 - Asking when the night will end. Repeated for urgency.

Reply: Morning comes, but night before 21:12

Isaiah 21:12 (LSB)

12The watchman says, "Morning comes but also night. If you would inquire, inquire; Come back again."

- Here is the prophet's two-part reply.
- First, dawn is coming but it is still dark. At present the imperial darkness was spreading; the Davidic monarchy appeared destroyed. However there was hope in the future but only for those who submitted to the Davidic king.
- Second, salvation requires repentance and persistence
 - If you would inquire.
 - Repentance.
 - Edom and Judah had been enemies. Only those willing to submit to the Davidic king will be saved.
 - inquire; come back again.
 - Seek earnestly.
 - Be persistent.
 - There is hope.

Oracle of Arabia 21:13-17

- Third oracle in the series.
- Where is true security? Collective security and self-help fails.
- Historical context
 - Assyrian imperialism
 - 715 BC Sargon fought against Arab tribes between Tema and the Gulf of Aqaba.
 - 703 BC Arabs joined Merodach-Baladin in revolt and were crushed by Sennacherib.

The Arabian tribes band together 21:13-15

Isaiah 21:13–15 (LSB)

13The oracle about Arabia. In the thickets of Arabia you must spend the night, O caravans of Dedanites.

14Bring water to meet the thirsty, O inhabitants of the land of Tema, Meet with bread the one who has fled.

15For they have fled from the swords, From the drawn sword, and from the bent bow And from the heaviness of battle.

- Dedan and Tema were locations in the region of Kedar, in northern Arabia. Kedar experienced repeated fighting between Assyria and Babylon.
- Here the prophet speaks of Arabia in chaos, and their solution: self-sufficiency.
- V13
 - In the thickets. Fleeing the fighting. Off the main road, for safety.
- V14
 - Tema.
 - Present Teima, a large oasis in the northern Hejaz area of the Arabian peninsula.
 - Bring water to meet the thirsty...Meet with bread the one who has fled.
 - Needy, displaced people.
 - fugitive. As in 16:2-3 Moabites fleeing to Judah.
 - Water...bread. Those in the land provide for their needs.
 - No mention of Yahweh or Zion. Moab was too proud to submit to the Davidic monarchy. The Arabs also try to go it alone, helping each other.
- V15 fled from the swords...from the heaviness of battle.
 - Refugees from battle.

Self-sufficiency failed 21:16-17

Isaiah 21:16–17 (LSB)

16For thus the Lord said to me, “In a year, as a hired man would count it, all the glory of Kedar will end;
17and the remainder of the number of bowmen, the mighty men of the sons of Kedar, will be few; for Yahweh, the God of Israel, has spoken.”

- Here the prophet gives the outcome: failure.
- Parallel with the oracle for Moab in Is 16:14: But now Yahweh speaks, saying, “Within three years, as a hired man would count them, the glory of Moab will be dishonored along with all his great population, and his remnant will be very small and not mighty.”
- V16
 - Kedar.
 - Second son of Ishmael.
 - In a year.
 - Imminent.
 - as a hired man would count it
 - Exactly
 - Glory...will end
 - Glory is everything that gives life meaning, both tangible and intangible.
 - God will not permit mankind to be self-sufficient.
- V17
 - Remainder...will be few
 - Kedar’s military power will be broken
 - Yahweh, the God of Israel, has spoken
 - The outcome is certain.

Application

True security in darkness

- Look at Isaiah 50:10–11 (LSB)
- 10Who is among you that fears Yahweh, That listens to the voice of His Servant, That walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of Yahweh and rely on his God.
- 11Behold, all you who kindle a fire, Who gird yourselves with firebrands, Walk in the light of your fire And among the brands you have set ablaze. This you will have from My hand: You will lie down in torment.
 - The problem of darkness
 - Who is among you... that walks in darkness and has no light.
 - Two solutions
 - Those who fear Yahweh and listen to the voice of His Servant
 - Let him trust in the name of Yahweh and rely on his God.
 - May be a while in darkness but then light will come
 - Those who do not fear Yahweh
 - all you who kindle a fire, Who gird yourselves with firebrands, Walk in the light of your fire And among the brands you have set ablaze
 - Create their own light and walk in it.
 - Initially get rid of the darkness
 - In the end they lie down in torment
- The oracle of Dumah and the oracle of Arabia illustrate the two solutions
- Look at 21:11-12 (the oracle of Dumah)
 - The first solution: hope in Yahweh
 - In the darkness of Assyrian oppression; throne of David failing
 - Morning is coming but also night.
 - Morning is coming with the future Davidic king. However, In the meantime, oppression will continue.
 - Inquire, come back again.
 - Persevere. Trust in the name of Yahweh and rely on your God.
- Look at 21:13-17 (the oracle of Arabia)
 - The second solution: self-help
 - Fled from the sword. In the darkness of war
 - Bring water...meet with bread. Self-help. Kindle their own fire
 - The glory of Kedar will end. Result
- What are some examples of the present “darkness” in our time (in the world, in our nation, in our culture, in personal lives)?
- How would you help someone in darkness?
 - Bring the gospel: Trust in Christ; walk in Him; persevere until light comes.

- References

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