

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Isaiah: Jahweh Is Salvation

Part XXXI: God's Warning Against Relying On "Positive" Secular Events Instead Of Him (Isaiah 21:1-10)

I. Introduction

- A. Assyria was a great threat to many in Judah, so when Merodach-Baladan from the Persian Gulf (Isa. 39:1) militarily rebelled against Assyria, many in Judah saw this as a "positive" secular event in which to hope.
- B. However, God had testified back in Isaiah 14:24-27 that He wanted to destroy Assyria Himself when its troops came against Jerusalem so as to teach Judah to trust in Him. Thus, Isaiah 21:1-10 warns Judah not to trust in this "positive" secular event instead of trusting in God, and it offers a great lesson for us in our era:

II. God's Warning Against Relying On "Positive" Secular Events Instead Of Him, Isaiah 21:1-10.

- A. The fall of Babylon is mentioned in Isaiah 21:1 KJV as the fall of the "desert of the sea," the plain on which Babylon was built (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Isa. 21:1), but this is not a reference to Babylon's fall to the Medo-Persian empire in 539 B. C., for that would have been cause for joy in Israel. Rather, **this** fall of Babylon "was terrifying, something to be feared" in Judah according to Isaiah 21:3-4; B. K. C., O. T., p. 1067.
- B. Thus, Isaiah 21:1-10 predicts the revolt and fall of Merodach-Baladan, the Chaldean insurgent against Assyria, much to the dismay of many in Judah, and that with a lesson for them (as follows), *Ibid.*, p. 1068:
 1. The revolt is likened to a typically violent storm that rises from Israel's desert in Southern Judah (*negev*, Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 635; Isa. 21:1b), and Elam and Media north of Elam are urged to join in the 705 B. C. revolt of the Chaldean Merodach-Baladin against Assyrian control of the city of Babylon, Isa. 21:2 ESV. The revolter intended to liberate all affected peoples from the "traitor" and "destroyer," from Assyria, *Ibid.*
 2. Yet, the prophecy God would give Isaiah on the ensuing clash between Merodach-Baladin and Assyria's king would be dreadful to Judah's people, Isa. 21:3-4: Isaiah identified with Judah's people, being in pain like a woman in labor and bewildered and trembling in horror as the twilight (*nesheph*, B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 676) of Judah's last hope for security in this revolt would be turned to darkness.
 3. In sharp contrast, however, Judah's people in their current false hope were festive (Isa. 21:5a), but instead of celebrating, Isaiah urged their officers to oil their shields and to prepare for battle, Isaiah 21:5b NIV.
 4. The prophetic vision behind the prophet Isaiah's viewpoint on the situation and the viewpoint of Judah's people who hoped in Merodach-Baladin's revolt against Assyria is described in Isaiah 21:6-9 (as follows):
 - a. God called Isaiah to set a watchman to look intently for the outcome of the battle between Assyria's king and the revolter Chaldean Merodach-Baladin who temporarily controlled Babylon, Isa 21:6a; *Ibid.*
 - b. The watchman closely watched and finally called out that he saw some riders, horsemen in pairs, and they gave the message, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon; and all the carved images of her gods he has shattered to the ground," Isaiah 21:6b-9 ESV. In other words, the revolt by Merodach-Baladin had been put down by Assyria's king Sennacherib, and all the false gods of the revolter and of his allies were had been destroyed.
 5. In history, "Sennacherib pushed Marduk-apal-iddina (Merodach-Baladin) out of Babylon and . . . eventually destroyed the city in 689 B. C.," *Ibid.* Assyria's king also "devastated" the revolter's "home area around the Persian Gulf" along with defeating the nation of Elam that had joined him in his revolt, *Ibid.*
 6. "Babylon's fall seemed like the last straw. Now no one could stop the Assyrian Empire. So Judah felt 'crushed' emotionally like grain 'on the threshing floor (cf. Jer. 51:33,'" *Ibid.*; Isaiah 21:10. Like the revolter's gods that were "shattered" down (*shabar*, *Ibid.*, B. D. B., p. 990-991; *Ibid.*, Kittel, p. 636) to the ground in v. 9b, so Judah's hope would be "crushed" (*dush*, *Ibid.*, B. D. B., p. 190) down on the threshing floor of the ground, v. 10a. The shattering down of the revolter's idols in whom the revolter had put his hope and the similar crushing down of Judah's false hope in the revolt imply a form of idolatry in Judah that needed to be corrected: Judah was to put her faith in God, not in the revolter Merodach-Baladin, for he had only trusted in his false, to-be shattered gods to make his futile and hence shattered revolt effort.

Lesson: When Merodach-Baladin's revolt against Assyria occurred, many in Judah put their hope in that secular event for deliverance from Assyria only to see Isaiah warn that Assyria would crush the whole revolt. God Himself would destroy Assyria when she came against Jerusalem that Judah might trust in Him, nothing else!

Application: (1) May we trust in God and not "positive" secular events for security. (2) May we also not trust in "positive" secular events since they themselves may be authored by people who trust in false idols of some kind.