

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Isaiah: Jahweh Is Salvation

Part XXXIV: Understanding The Certainty Of National Judgment On Arabia (Isaiah 21:13-17)

I. Introduction

- A. The pronouncement of God's judgment on Edom by way of Assyrian invasion that we studied in Isaiah 21:11-12 is followed by the prediction of God's judgment on Arabia in Isaiah 21:13-17.
- B. However, in contrast to the case of Edom, Arabia makes no call for help and God's prophet offers no message of possible deliverance in reply to such a call. Spiritual hardness is met with God's sure, set judgment.
- C. We view this passage to understand the solemnity of God's judgment on spiritually hardened parties:

II. Understanding The Certainty Of National Judgment On Arabia, Isaiah 21:13-17.

- A. The prophet Isaiah announced the burden of God's judgment against "Arabia" (Isaiah 21:13a KJV), and the Hebrew word here is '*arab*', "always the collective name of the Arabs," Edward J. Young, The Book of Isaiah, v. II, p. 79, fn. 43. This title actually refers those in Arabia who were Arabian tribes, *Ibid.*, p. 79-80.
- B. From the context we understand that the doom of Assyrian oppressions that was announced to occur for Edom in Isaiah 21:11-12 was to extend to engulf Arab tribes in Arabia as described in Isaiah 21:13-15 (as follows):
 1. Isaiah predicted that the Assyrian invasion would create such danger that "caravans" of Dedan, a region in Arabia, "that were able to travel undisturbed in normal conditions and times would now have to leave the main road and lie in hiding among the bushes," Isaiah 21:13; *Ibid.*, p. 79-80. Isaiah calls these "bushes" a "forest" (KJV, v. 13a), but such bushes would have been mere shrubs or thickets "possible even for a caravan to make its camp and to remain unnoticed and hidden," *Ibid.*, p. 80. The need for caravans to hide this way in the Assyrian invasion is clarified in a relief from Ashurbanipal's palace in Nineveh: it depicts Assyrian infantry and cavalry pursuing Arabs fleeing on camelback, with one driving the camel and the other shooting back with a simple bow opposite the far superior armament of the Assyrians, *Ibid.*, fn. 47.
 2. People from the oasis of Teima in northwest Arabia would bring water and bread for fugitives, showing how far into the desert the Assyrian pursuit would extend, Isaiah 21:14; *Ibid.*, p. 81.
 3. The great amount of suffering, death and the sheer psychological burden of war faced by the Arabs is mentioned in Isaiah 21:15: four times in that verse, Isaiah uses the phrase "from before" to describe the suffering and fear the Arabs would face in the swords, the drawn swords about to slay them, from the bent bow prepared to send an arrow to kill them and from the draining psychological burden (*kobed*, B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 458) of war on the afflicted, *Ibid.*, Young, p. 82.
- C. However, in sharp contrast to the case of Edom in Isaiah 21:11-12, no call for hope of deliverance arises from Arabia in Isaiah 21:13-17, and no message of a hope of deliverance is pronounced by Isaiah: spiritual hardness is met by sure, firmly fixed judgment, an awful state of affairs (as follows):
 1. The absence of a call for the hope of deliverance that was present in Edom (Isaiah 21:11) is absent in the case of Arabia in Isaiah 21:13-15, and likewise God's judgment is affirmed: within a year, as an employer and a hired laborer would reckon in setting a definite time for a laborer to work, the military strength of Kedar, a major Arab tribe in Arabia, would end, Isaiah 21:16 ESV; *Ibid.*
 2. The remaining archers of the mighty men of Kedar would be few following the invasion of Assyria, for the Lord, the God of Israel, had spoken it as a sure prediction of divine judgment, Isaiah 21:17.
 3. "For Kedar there is no hope. The night is to overshadow the land, and light will not appear," *Ibid.* What had once been a group of mighty warriors of archers would become, by way of their fleeing from swords, from drawn swords and from the psychological weightiness of war, a mere, few archers, Isaiah 21:15-17.

Lesson: *God pronounced sure judgment on the Arabs in Arabia due to their lack of spiritual repentance toward Him. God's judgment was surely fixed, it would arrive in a year, and what had been a mighty group of Arab merchants with their caravans that brought them lucrative trade would be decimated, and what had been mighty Arab warriors through defeat would become a few. Spiritual hardness would be met with God's sure judgment.*

Application: *(1) May we realize that God both must and surely will severely judge spiritual hardness. (2) Thus, may we repent as needed, and may we revere the Lord and obey Him to be blessed. (3) May we also NOT put our hope in an unrepentant world around us, be it the economic (Arab caravans of trade) or military (mighty archers of Kedar) realms, but hope in the Lord, not loving this world system, but doing God's will, 1 John 2:15-17.*