

- ***READ Isaiah 24:21-23*** When we think of the Old Testament Prophets, we almost certainly think about these texts being written by men who have very important messages to deliver to God's people from God Himself. These men were mouthpieces for God who had taken in His council and were now able to go and share with the people of God the divine perspective from on high. They were now able to see things as God saw things. This has been my perception of the Prophets, and to an extent this is an accurate perception. I say to an extent because the message of the Prophets is not only focused on the covenant people of God in Israel, but there are also a number of messages that are addressing the nations outside of Israel.
 - This text that we just read together here in **Isaiah 24** is part of an extended portion of Isaiah's book (**Isaiah 13-27**) in which the Lord addresses a number of nations that could be found surrounding the land of Judah. The same could also be true for **chapters 46-51 of Jeremiah** and **Ezekiel 25-32**. These major prophets, as we term them, are shown to also have concern for other nations to the tune of between 12-23% of their entire books being dedicated to them. This is even more true when it comes to some of the writings of the Minor Prophets where 100% of the messages are addressed to a nation or nations outside of Israel. Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah would fall into this category.
 - The messages to these nations is often quite similar to the message sent to Israel and Judah through the messages of the prophets of God. There are accusations and conviction of sin towards these nations, opportunity to repent in the case of Jonah and Ninevah, but more often than not there are strong words of judgment. Some of the strongest words are found in **Isaiah 24:21-23**, and God makes it abundantly clear that the destruction coming upon the nations of the earth would prove that He reigns as King over all of the nations. And yet, that still doesn't answer the question that is on my mind concerning why it is that God addresses these nations through His prophets. This is the main question we're going to tackle tonight, and it might surprise us once we are through to recognize that it all comes back to us today.
- I. **A proper understanding of why God addresses the nations begins back in Deuteronomy 32. Song of Moses — Deuteronomy 32:1-43 (Peter J. Gentry) —** Moses had been around these people long enough to recognize their rebellious and stubborn spirit. He knew that following his death they would continue to rebel against God and bring His wrath down upon them. (**Deuteronomy 31:28,29**) Therefore, he takes time just prior to his death to share a song of warning with them as a reminder of God's unfailing love towards them even in the face of the people's continued rebellion.
- A. **Stanza 1 (vv.1-6) — God is faithful to a faithless people.**
1. Moses begins by calling all of the heavens and earth as his witness for the greatness of God, His perfection, His just ways, His righteousness, and His commitment to truth. **(1-4)**
 2. He does this to establish the way that God operates and how that is completely contrasted by the corrupted, devious, and crooked character of the nation of Israel. **(5,6)**
- B. **Stanza 2 (vv.7-14) — Examination of the history between the two sides will show God as always being loving and faithful towards Israel. The language and imagery here is similar to establishing a case in a court of law. God is constantly found to be faithful..**
1. Moses encourages the nation to ask those of older generations to teach them of the lovingkindness of God towards all nations and especially Israel. **(7-9)**
 2. God specially chose Israel to serve in this position as the nation with whom He would have a special covenant that would bring out the fulfillment of His Messianic promises. They never truly lacked anything for God always provided for their needs. **(10-14)**

C. Stanza 3 (vv.15-25) — Israel is accused of forgetting God and for this they will be judged by the nations around them.

1. Their sins are addressed in **15-18**. They had abandoned their God with whom they had made a covenant. They had provoked and enraged His jealousy by sacrificing to to demons. They had ignored God and forgotten that it was He who blessed them.
2. Their unfaithfulness will cause God's anger to be kindled & punishment is soon to follow. **(19-22)**
3. God's punishment will come upon them with great force and no one will be spared. **(23-25)**

D. Stanza 4 (vv.26-38) — Moses challenges the earthly perception that the nations were simply more powerful than God and able to defeat Israel/Judah.

1. God had every right to completely destroy these rebellious people, but He didn't want the surrounding nations to be able to taunt God as though He couldn't stop their destruction from taking place. **(26,27)**
2. Yet, God would still punish Israel for the breaking of God's covenant, but the people still wouldn't understand what was going on. They were clueless to the reality of the situation. **(28-30)**
3. Even the enemies were clueless as to their part in all of this. They thought their gods were all powerful, but Moses reminds them that their gods would only lead them in the way of Sodom and Gomorrah. **(31-33)**
4. The prideful arrogance and rebellion in putting hope in false gods would eventually lead God to bring judgment upon the nations, and this would give opportunity for His people to be shown compassion. **(34-38)**

E. Stanza 5 (vv.39-43) — God's vengeance & vindication are seen.

1. God announces Himself as the only true God. His judgments against the nations would be just in avenging their rebellion. **(39-42)**
2. Though these judgments, God would avenge His people and purify them along with the land. Just as in all things, the Lord's will and plans would be accomplished. **(43)**

F. Conclusions Drawn From The Song Of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:44-47):

1. Moses has shared this song with the people of Israel to serve as a warning and reminder of what will happen if they continue on in the path of rebellion against the One who lovingly took them into His arms and chose them to be the means through which all the nations of the earth would be blessed. They would be punished by God through the nations surrounding them, but eventually God would redeem them through the punishing of those same rebellious nations.
2. And wouldn't you know...that is exactly what we see taking place throughout the rest of the history of the Old Testament. Time and time again, the people of God rebelled and He would punish them through some means of defeat at the hands of their enemies. They would realize their mistakes and turn back to the Lord, but that would only begin the whole cycle and process of rebellion over again. God's faithfulness and love continued to be shown to them through the sending of prophets with their warnings, but the people and the nations only continued to stiffen their necks and resist the Lord. Instead of each group playing the role God had given them to play, they each decided to be prideful and rebellious, and the message of the prophets spells the end result of this continued prideful rebellion.

II. The Prophets continue these warnings of sin and punishment against the nations of the earth based upon their continued rebellion against God and harm against His people.

A. The very things that Moses spoke of concerning the misunderstanding of the Lord being behind the punishments of His people at the hands of the nations surely did come to pass. The nations thought that they were the powerful nations who were able to go up against this nation that

claimed to serve the true God of heaven and achieve victory, but they failed to recognize that they were only be used as tools to accomplish God's purposes. For this prideful arrogance as well as their pagan idolatry, God is ready to render judgment upon them.

B. Texts in Isaiah that show God's continued judgment against the rebellious nations.

1. **Assyria** — *But when the Lord finishes all his work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem, he will say, "I will punish the king of Assyria for his arrogant acts and the proud look in his eyes....Therefore, the Lord God of Armies will inflict an emaciating disease on the well-fed of Assyria, and He will kindle a burning fire under its glory."* (Isaiah 10:12;15-19)
2. **Babylon** — *"I will punish the world for its evil, and wicked people for their iniquities. I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant and humiliate the insolence of tyrants."* (Isaiah 13:11)
3. **Babylonian King** — *"Shining morning star, how you have fallen from the heavens! You destroyer of nations, you have been cut down to the ground. You said to yourself, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will set up my throne above the stars of God. I will sit on the mount of the gods' assembly, in the remotest parts of the North. I will ascend above the highest clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." But you will be brought down to Sheol into the deepest regions of the Pit."* (Isaiah 14:12-15)
4. **Moab** — *"We have heard of Moab's pride— how very proud he is— his haughtiness, his pride, his arrogance, and his empty boasting. Therefore let Moab wail; let every one of them wail for Moab. You who are completely devastated, mourn for the raisin cakes of Kir-hareseth."* (Isaiah 16:6,7)

III. Those warnings and punishments are followed with words of hope for the future even for the rebellious nations of the world.

A. Notice just a couple of examples from this section addressed to the nations concerning the future hope of blessing from God.

1. **Egypt & Assyria (Isaiah 19:16-25)** — *"On that day Israel will form a triple alliance with Egypt and Assyria—a blessing within the land. The Lord of Armies will bless them, saying, "Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance are blessed."* (Isaiah 16:6,7)
2. **The Whole Earth** — *"The Lord God will wipe away the tears from every face and remove His people's disgrace from the whole earth, for the Lord has spoken."* (Isaiah 25:8)

B. Who or what is at the center of these promises of hope for the nations in the future?

1. Firstly, we can go all the way back to **chapter 2** and read of the impending establishment of *"the mountain of the Lord's house."* (Isaiah 2:2) These thoughts are echoed again in **chapter 11**, and **25:6-10**. I am convinced that these sections of **Isaiah** are all pointing to the time when the Lord's kingdom would be established, and that would tie in perfectly with the many Messianic prophecies that are found all throughout Isaiah.
2. He is first spoken of in **7:14** as being named Immanuel to signify God being with His people. He is later spoke of in **9:6,7** as being the One on whose shoulders the government would rest. He is referred to as Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, & Prince of Peace. We could look at a number of additional Messianic text to show that this great King was to be expected, but I want to allow this to suffice in simply showing that there would come a time where not only Israel would be redeemed...but so would all of the nations of the earth. This would be done through the man who would be the fulfillment of each of the three covenants that were associated with the children of Israel...the Abrahamic (all nations blessed through Abraham's seed), the Mosaic (perfectly kept the Law), and the Davidic (David's descendant who would sit on his throne forever.).

IV. The New Testament shows us that the hope for the nations (us!) is found through faith in Jesus.

- A. The Gospel was originally offered to the Jews as the natural recipients of this new message that was the fulfillment of God's plan through Israel.
1. The beginning of the Gospel being given to mankind is found in **Acts 2** and it seems that only Jews were the recipients on that day (**Acts 2:5**) and from that day on for some time. This seems logical sense the Christian and Gospel movement was an outgrowth of what God had been doing through Israel.
 2. 3,000 Jews were baptized in **Acts 2**, thousands more were added to the number of the saved in **Acts 4:4**, and from this point on there are numerous stories of Jewish individuals being delivered the Gospel and becoming obedient.
- B. But then we see the Gospel being offered to people outside of Jewish heritage who would find themselves in the same position as the nations mentioned throughout the writings of the Prophets.
1. It isn't until **Acts 10** that we see a Gentile man (a man like ourselves in the fact that he was not a Jew) having the Gospel offered to him. His name is Cornelius, and Peter is sent to his home by God. I want to notice exactly what Peter says upon recognizing what is taking place. *"Peter began to speak: 'Now I truly understand that God doesn't show favoritism, but in every nation the person who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. He sent the message to the Israelites, proclaiming the good news of peace through Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all.'"* (**Acts 10:34-36**)
 2. Peter goes on in **Acts 11** to defend his providing the Gospel to the Gentiles based upon the fact that Holy Spirit had been given to them. *"If, then, God gave them the same gift that he also gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, how could I possibly hinder God?" When they heard this they became silent. And they glorified God, saying, "So then, God has given repentance resulting in life even to the Gentiles."* (**Acts 11:17,18**)
 3. Peter also finds himself present in **Acts 15** when he subject of the salvation of the Gentiles is the main topic of discussion. He, Barnabas, and Paul give experiential evidence for the acceptance of the Gentiles through obedience to the Gospel (**Acts 15:6-12**), but then it is James who stands up and makes the connection from the Prophets (**Amos 9:11,12**) that the salvation of the Gentiles through the Messiah was always a part of God's plan. (**Acts 15:13-18**) When the Prophets speak to the nations, they are addressing people who God desires to have fellowship with through His Son who would come to die even for their sins. Yes, God used them as tools to punish His people, and yes He would punish them for their own rebellion, but everything that was taking place was being done to prepare for the coming of the Messiah... the One through whom all of the nations of the earth would be blessed. (**Genesis 12:3**)

I recognize that we have covered a lot of ground this evening, but I truly hope that we are all grasping the fact that we are so greatly impacted by God's interactions with the nations in the Prophets. We are impacted because every time it speaks of the nations being redeemed on God's mountain through the Messiah...that is speaking about us! It is speaking about our redemption in Christ Jesus through faith! We are the fruit of those nations who God would one day truly rule over as King, and we should be incredibly grateful to God that He not only loved His covenant of Israel, but that He loved all of the nations of the earth to the extent that He would give His Son as a sacrifice even for them. May God's mercy and grace be realized in our lives throughout this week. And may this recognition motivate and encourage us to live in such a way that we are exalting God as our King in this life.