

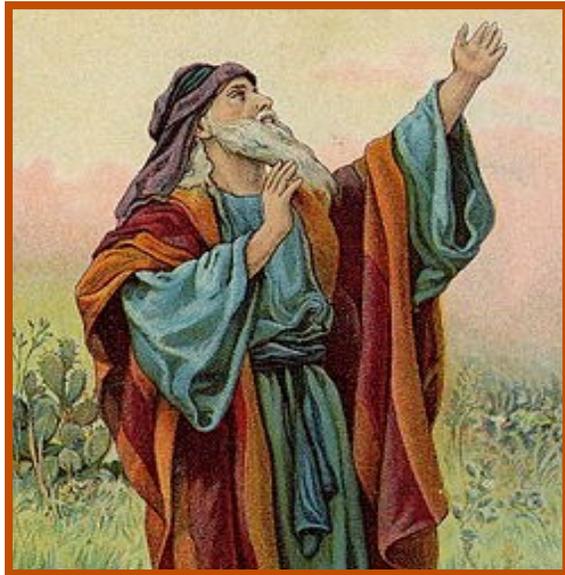
says Isaiah, will finally lead men to turn to the Holy One of Israel -- again, a favorite name he uses for God. Then men will give up the altars of idols, and the poles sacred to Asherah, the personification of female vitality.

Isaiah says that even if they have planted choice things, they will reap little. It reminds us of chapter 1 of Haggai, where God said through Haggai: You have planted much, reaped little - and have done many other things that should give good results, but they have not given them, because of the people's infidelity to God.

Some versions of 10b - 11 speak of "the desirable one", a surname for Adonis of Tammuz, worshipped in Babylonia and Syria as god of spring. In his honor people planted things that would shoot up quickly, but not last, expressing the short life and speedy death of Adonis.

The next three verses, 12-14 according to some scholars form a separate section, not belonging to this one, but speaking of the raging of Assyria. That is not impossible, but seems very unlikely, for Isaiah had already written a full section on Assyria.

End of Chapter 17



"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME"
ISAIAH 61:1

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THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

CHAPTER 17

AND HIS NAME
WILL BE CALLED
WONDERFUL COUNSELOR,
MIGHTY GOD,
EVERLASTING FATHER,
PRINCE OF
PEACE.
ISAIAH 9:6

Isaiah is called "The Book of Salvation." The name *Isaiah* means "the salvation of the Lord" or "the Lord is salvation." Isaiah is the first book containing the writings of the prophets of the Bible. And the author, Isaiah, who is called the Prince of Prophets, shines above all the other writers and prophets of Scripture. His mastery of the language, his rich and vast vocabulary, and his poetic skill have earned him the title, "Shakespeare of the Bible." He was educated, distinguished, and privileged, yet remained a deeply spiritual man. He was committed to obedience over the long haul of his 55-60 year ministry as a prophet of God. He was a true patriot who loved his country and his people. Strong tradition suggests that he died a martyr's death under the reign of King Manasseh by being placed within the hollow of a tree trunk and sawed in two.

Isaiah's calling as a prophet was primarily to the nation of Judah (the southern kingdom) and to Jerusalem, urging the people to repent from their sins and return to God. He also foretold the coming of the Messiah and the salvation of the Lord. Many of his prophecies predicted events that occurred in Isaiah's near future, yet at the same time they foretold the events of the distant future (such as the coming of the Messiah), and even some events still to come in the last days (such as the second coming of Christ).

In summary, the message of Isaiah is that salvation comes from God—not man. God alone is Savior, Ruler and King.

Commentary on the book of Isaiah is by noted theologian Rev. William G. Most (1914-1999). His contributions to theology have been recognized all over the world. He published 12 books and a host of articles on topics ranging from biblical studies to Mariology and Latin grammar.

Book of Isaiah

Summary of Chapter 17

Oracle against Damascus and Ephraim. Summary and Comments. 17:1-14

At the start of this section, Isaiah predicts that Damascus will no longer be a city, but a heap of ruins. The problem is: In ancient times Damascus was not destroyed, but continued to exist, even though it stopped being the seat of a powerful king (such as we see in Isaiah 7). It is still a city today.

First, we recall the extremely colorful language we saw in chapter 13, where in speaking of the destruction of Babylon - which really was physically destroyed - the prophet used extreme language, saying the sun would not give its light etc. We gave references to another passage of Isaiah on the punishment of Edom and one from Ezekiel on the punishment of Egypt. So we see that Semites do not speak like modern Americans.

Further, we must notice that the real center of this passage is the destruction of the northern kingdom, called here Ephraim. That did happen with the fall of Samaria in 721. It had allied with Damascus, which also lost its power. Further, in the Dead Sea Scrolls in what we have come to call the Damascus Document, in 5. 12, we find interpretations much different than ours. It says that the word <Well> stands for the Law, and those who dug it were the converts of Israel who left the land of Judah to sojourn in the land of Damascus. Now did some of the Scroll people really live in Damascus? Not very likely. This was a symbolic use of the name Damascus. Further, in the Peshar on the prophet Habakkuk from Qumram (xii. 3-4) we find that Lebanon has come to stand for the Temple. Similarly the old Targum Onkelos uses the name Lebanon where Habakkuk in the Hebrew text had spoken of the Temple. Also <Temple> was used to stand for the Council of the Community.

In Hosea 8:13, from the middle of the 8th century, the prophet threatens that if they do not reform, they "will return to Egypt." That was of course symbolic, for oppression. Samaria was destroyed in 721, Assyria oppressed them, and then took so many of them into captivity.

Again, the name Kittim at first meant the people of Crete. But in the Scrolls it is commonly used to stand for the Romans. Even before that, in 1 Mac 1:1, Kittim stood for Greece proper. And in Daniel 11:30 the Kittim means the Romans.

Apocalypse/Revelation 11:8 says that the two witnesses after being killed will lie in the streets of the great city which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt where also their Lord was crucified! What a free symbolism: Sodom = Egypt = Jerusalem.

So it is easily possible Isaiah was using similar symbolic language here.

A smaller problem is about the "cities of Aroer". Some versions make it just "her cities". The Hebrew would admit either possibility. The general message is the same either way. (There were three cities named Aroer, two of them could be meant here, the two in Transjordan).

The northern kingdom had prospered under Jeroboam II, and even a bit after him. But now it is to be turned into poverty. It will be like a field after the harvesters have gone through, leaving only a few stray gleanings. That,