

Why Are the Nations Judged?

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[0:00] Isaiah chapter 14, we're going to read the first 23 verses. The Lord will have compassion on Jacob. Once again, he will choose Israel and will settle them in their own land.

! Aliens will join them and unite with the house of Jacob. Nations will take them and bring them to their own place. And the house of Israel will possess the nations as men servants and maid servants in the Lord's land.

They will make captives of their captors and rule over their oppressors. On the day the Lord gives you relief from suffering and turmoil and cruel bondage, you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon.

How the oppressor has come to an end! How his fury has ended! The Lord has broken the rod of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers, which in anger struck down peoples with unceasing blows, and in fury subdued nations with relentless aggression.

All the lands are at rest and at peace. They break into singing. Even the pine trees and the cedars of Lebanon exult over you and say, Now that you have been laid low, no woodsman comes to cut us down.

[1:18] The grave below is all astir to meet you at your coming. It rouses the spirits of the departed to greet you, all those who were leaders in the world.

It makes them rise from their thrones, all those who were kings over the nations. They will all respond. They will say to you, You also have become weak as we are.

You have become like us. All your pomp has been brought down to the grave, along with the noise of your harps. Maggots are spread out beneath you, and worms cover you.

How you have fallen from heaven. O morning star, sun of the dawn, you have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations.

You said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven. I will raise my throne above the stars of God. I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.

[2:17] I will ascend above the tops of the clouds. I will make myself like the most high. But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.

Those who see you stare at you. They ponder your fate. Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble? The man who made the world a desert, who overthrew its cities and would not let its captives go home?

All the kings of the nations lie in state, each in his own tomb. But you are cast out of your tomb like a rejected branch. You are covered with the slain, with those pierced by the sword, those who descend to the stones of the pit.

Like a corpse trampled underfoot, you will not join them in burial, for you have destroyed your land and killed your people. The offspring of the wicked will never be mentioned again.

Prepare a place to slaughter his sons for the sins of their forefathers. They are not to rise to inherit the land and cover the earth with their cities.

[3:27] I will rise up against them, declares the Lord Almighty. I will cut off from Babylon her name and survivors, her offspring and descendants, declares the Lord. I will turn her into a place for owls and into swampland.

I will sweep her with the broom of destruction, declares the Lord Almighty. Well, we've come in our study of Isaiah's prophecies to 11 chapters, chapters 13 to, or chapter 13 through 23.

11 chapters of God judging the nations and there are similar sections of judgments upon the nations in the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel and they simply mirror this, these same chapters that we're studying in Isaiah.

He mentions 10 nations that surrounded Judah, Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Syria, Cush, Egypt, Edom, Arabia, and Tyre.

Now, rather than taking each of these nations and seeing the judgments of God upon them, we're going to take these chapters as a whole and draw from them important lessons. And there is one overarching lesson that stands out on the face of these chapters.

[4:51] And it is that the Lord reigns over all the nations. He's not just a little God over a little nation, Judah, but Israel's God, Judah's God, is Lord of all.

Our God reigns. And he shows it in two ways so far that we've seen. He shows it because he makes a plan for the nations and then he brings it to pass.

All the nations do nothing but what God plans. And then by his hand, he brings that plan to pass. That shows he's God of the nations.

And then secondly, he shows that he's God of the nations by judging the nations. Now, so far in Isaiah, we've seen God judging his own nation, Judah.

And he's raised up other nations to judge his nation, Judah. But now what we're seeing is that having judged his people, Judah, he then turns and judges all these other nations themselves, demonstrating he is Lord over all the nations.

[6:00] they answer to him. Now, if these chapters were a movie, I am sure that it would be rated for mature audiences.

because there are very graphic and disturbing things recorded for us in these chapters. After all, it is showing us God, the Holy One, taking out his wrath upon the nations.

So, you consider the worst of man's wrath and now you think about God's wrath. Indeed, disturbing things are said here.

And we have scenes of war, horrific scenes of devastation. We see grown men writhing in agony like women labor in labor.

terror. We see fear and terror painted in their eyes. And it reminds me of what we saw from the 9-11 incident.

[7:15] Remember some of the images that came to us and we saw faces that all you could say is that there was terror in their eyes.

as they looked and saw what was happening to these twin towers. As they were falling, as people were jumping, as they were fleeing the devastation. Terror filled their eyes.

That's the picture that Isaiah is painting for us. He tells us of women of Moab frantically fleeing their homes like fluttering birds that have just been pushed out of the nest.

He speaks of men and women weeping and wailing and howling. He speaks of few survivors of a world that once was full of vegetation being reduced to desert land by war.

He speaks of carnage and destruction of luxurious palaces that used to be home to lavish displays of wealth and revelry now inhabited by hooting owls and howling hyenas and wild goats and jackals ghost towns mass graves of the slain pierced through with the sword blood everywhere.

[8:38] It's not a pretty sight when God almighty rises to judge the nations. And yet we don't find Isaiah apologizing for these things.

indeed we don't find God blaming the devil for all of this as if well this is what the devil does or this is what men do. We find verse after verse after verse after verse where the Lord himself says I am the one who is doing these things.

And though the nations have their own reasons for wreaking carnage on other nations they are doing so because they are fulfilling God's plan upon the nations and unbeknownst to them he is the first cause and these are the statements we find throughout these chapters I will punish the world for its evil I will punish the wicked for their sins I will make man scarcer than pure gold I will stir up against them the medes I will rise up against the Babylonians I will cut off from Babylon her name her survivors her offspring and descendants thus saith the Lord and I could multiply texts of the Lord saying I am the one who's going to do all these things so God is not bashful to take to himself the work of judgment it is part of his glory he is judge and he's a righteous judge he's a just judge and he works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed and since he does not apologize for his judgment neither should we be apologetic of a

God who reigns over all and who judges his enemies so we're told not just the fact that God judges the nations but we're told why isn't that good that we're told why are these nations receiving such devastation from God almighty because he's our judge and he will judge us one day we ought to

know what it is he does not like what it is that he judges men for and what we find is that God's judgments!

are not just random they're not chaotic they're not impulsive unpredictable uncontrollable fits of rage he just gets mad and blasts a nation no it's it's all very predictable it's all very principled and consistent he says in chapter 13 and verse 11 I will punish the world for its evil I will punish the wicked for their sins I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and the humble and will humble the pride of the ruthless and there's several things stated just in that one verse but one thing we can't escape is that God's punishment is the result of sin sin wickedness sin is what brings God's punishment on men and nations what is sin it's the contradiction of God's holy nature it's what rubs God the wrong way it's what's offensive to

[12:08] God it's what his holiness finds repulsive what is sin sin is breaking God's law God says don't do this and sin is doing that God says do this and sin is not doing it indeed as John tells us everyone who sins breaks the law for in fact sin is lawlessness so the nations were sinning in many ways but I want to point out four sins in particular that keep coming up not only in Isaiah but in Jeremiah and Ezekiel 2 in these chapters where God judges the nations the prophets are full of a description of the sins of the nations for which they're judged and I want us to see four of them that take predominance in the scriptures the first is pride we see that in 13 11 I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their sins

I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless so God hates pride pride rubs God the wrong way and the nations are oozing with pride pride in their possessions pride in their power their military their wealth pride in their control and rule of other nations and God hates it pride in their accomplishments chapter 13 and verse 19 Babylon the jewel of kingdoms the glory of the Babylonian pride will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah so there we see we remember Nebuchadnezzar walking on the roof of his palace and looking out over Babylon remember what he said as he looked at it it's not is this not the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence by my mighty power for the glory of my majesty that's pride folks bragging about what he had done and had done for himself to be made known and so pride attracts God's destruction honey attracts bees pride attracts God's destruction when men lift themselves up God sets out with determination to bring them down and so God stirs up the ruthless medes okay you guys are ruthless you guys are merciless I've got another nation to deal with you the medes and I'll bring your pride low and so he had in this scripture that was read for us in chapter 14 a description of the reception in hell for the king of Babylon who once slaughtered the nations and made kingdoms!

we find the grave is all astir the departed spirits of kings who once ruled over their little kingdoms and were destroyed by Babylon's king they're all stirring and they're saying to you have become as weak as we are all your pomp has been brought down to the grave maggots are spread out beneath you and worms!

cover you kids how's that for a bed maggots for a bed spread and worms for a bed spread you see death strikes a blow at the pride of man in his body that he used to take such care of and feed and pamper and indulge now you see it's covered with maggots and worms God is bringing down man's pride oh but his spirit lives on and these departed spirits of kings go on speaking and we hear this this departed king of Babylon being addressed how you have fallen I want you to notice the words in verses 12 through 15 about up and down raised exalted and and down okay how you have fallen from heaven oh morning star son of the dawn you have been cast down to the earth you who once laid low the nations you said in your heart

[16:42] I will ascend to heaven I will raise my throne above the stars of God I will sit enthroned on the mountain of assembly on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain I will ascend above the tops of the clouds I will make myself like the most high that's as high as you can get as the high as the most high that's man lifting himself up but you are brought down to the grave down to the depths of the pit you see death is the end of this self exaltation some have seen in these words a description of Satan's fall that's doubtful although there may be allusion to it He's!

talking about! Babylon's king who wreaked havoc on the other nations and he's speaking of a man he's speaking of the the audacity of a human being lifting himself up against the most high God what pride that a creature should actually challenge the creator that's what we have pictured for us here the creature refusing to bow beneath God but wanting to rise above God and have the prerogatives of God indeed Babylon says in chapter 47 of Isaiah Isaiah says you said to yourself I

will continue forever I am and there is none beside me you know who those words really belong to God alone who else can say I am and there is none beside me that's that's those are the words of God and here's this braggadocious king of Babylon taking that to himself so Babylon in the Bible comes to represent all human pride and arrogance of a man lifting himself up in the place of God but pride by no means is just the sin of Babylon this one nation we don't have time to point out all the other verses chapter 16 talks about you've heard of Moab's pride her over weaning pride and conceit her pride and her insolence but her boasts are empty therefore the Moabites wail God's going to make them scream you can read of the pomp of Keturah and Tyre who planned all this destruction against Tyre well the Lord Almighty planned it to bring low the pride of all glory and to humble all who are renowned on the earth so the further we read in Isaiah the further we read in our Bibles the clearer we see that pride is not the sin of a few nations a Babylon here a Moab there but rather the world of men and nations it's man's impulse to lift himself up to refuse to humble himself beneath God to let God be God and I will be man and give him his due of worship instead he puts himself in the place of God and there's no greater pride than that is there a man in the place of God that's the ugly reality of this sin of pride every disobedience to God's law is an act of utmost pride against God have you thought of that every time you break one of God's law that's sin it is of the utmost pride against God it's it's lifting ourselves up above God we say to him what I think is more important than what you think what I want is more important than what you want now I know you say wives are to submit to their husbands and everything but I don't think that's the way 21st century women ought to live with their husbands you say but I say I know you say remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy it's it's my day says the Lord but I've worked hard all week you see every time we break one of God's commandments we put ourselves above God that's pride that's arrogance there is no higher man is to serve and obey God instead we cast off his yoke and serve and obey ourselves we can never lift ourselves up without putting [21:32] God down it's like a teeter totter every time you go up somebody else goes down and that's the way pride is every time you lift yourself up God always goes down it's putting God down that's what pride does and that's why God hates pride there is nothing worse than putting God down that's why he sets himself against it wherever he finds it whether in individuals or in nations he's out to bring low all who lift his expense so the nations are punished by God for their pride Babylon this mighty world empire reduced to nothing Tyre the wall street of that day brought to nothing so all the nations Babylon Assyria

America America what's America's greatest danger it's not nations with nuclear weapons it's not terrorists who hate us it's God who opposes the proud that's our greatest danger and it's the impulse in every citizen to lift ourselves up above God that's our greatest danger it's the greatest danger of any nation because God judges the nations for their pride now secondly another sin for which God judges the nations is its idolatry and false religion God made man to worship him indeed from one man he made every nation of men on the earth and he made them all to worship him did you know that that all the nations owe him worship!

nations full of people who have never read in the Bible that you shall have no other God besides me you shall not bow down to anything and yet God is judging them for their idolatry how can he do that and be just well Paul tells us there in Romans chapter one it's it's because God has clearly revealed himself to all men in creation by the things that are made men can discern

God's eternal power and God head the heavens are declaring the glory of God sufficiently to leave all the nations without excuse and because they have the knowledge of God but decided that this knowledge of God is not worth holding on to and they just discarded it like a bad card in your hand therefore God pours out his wrath upon people the problem was not inadequate revelation from God oh we didn't know that we were supposed to worship you and you alone no the problem is man's hatred for that God because though they knew God they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God and instead they suppress the truth because that means they push down the truth that they knew all creation screams there's a creator and you owe worship to him you receive everything from him every day you eat his food you receive his gifts and you owe him thanks and praise and living for his glory and you refuse to live for him that's wickedness!

every man has that knowledge and they try to suppress it they try to push it down like balloons in a swimming pool they try to push it down but it keeps popping back up and they push it down they suppress it they're trying to forget about this God who will judge them one day but they know about him their conscience tells them of him and idolatry is man's preferred way of forgetting God it's

man's favorite way of forgetting God intentionally forgetting what he's like who he is and so men replace him with imaginary gods of their own making gods that they can manipulate with their sacrifices or whatever they do they control the gods to give them what they want so they can continue on in their own wicked ways and Isaiah will have lots more to say about idolatry later in his book but even here we see it's one of the reasons he destroys the nations they've refused to worship the one true

[27 : 16] God and have gone in search of other gods God doesn't take it lightly when the nations replace him with idols and we little realize how offensive that is to God to see his creatures ever on the receiving end of his blessings and then taking those blessings not to thank and worship and serve him but to serve idols idols of self the wicked will be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God be they Egypt Babylon Assyria or America yes we we are trying to forget God as fast as we can we're removing every remembrance we have of him from public places and even churches are helping to forget him by proclaiming distorted false gods of their own making a God without holy wrath a God who judges no one a God who accepts everyone into heaven regardless of their lifestyle be they homosexual be they sexually immoral be they liar gossip slanderer thief that's not the God of the

Bible Isaiah doesn't know that God Paul doesn't know that God the Lord Jesus doesn't speak of that God and yet those are the replacement gods you see that's the idol in God's place the God of scripture has been replaced by a God of man's own making a kinder gentler version that doesn't judge sinners it's idolatry and God's wrath burns against idolatry and so Babylon and Moab and Damascus and Syria and Egypt all of them in these chapters are condemned and when God's judgment falls none of their idols can do anything to save them another sin that brings down God's wrath is violence the nations exercising their violence their oppression their brutality their cruel aggressiveness of one nation against the other we read it in this chapter they're called oppressors causing suffering and turmoil and cruel bondage taking men captive not letting just murdering slaughtering raping pillaging this is what we read in these chapters now

God made man to love one another didn't he that's the essence of of our responsibility to each other to love each other as we love ourselves but it wasn't long after man's fall into sin then the first son born into the world came slew his brother Abel and what brother did to brother soon neighbor did to neighbor and by the time of Noah in Genesis 6 we read now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence so God said to Noah I'm going to put an end to all people for the earth is filled with violence because of them I'm surely going to destroy both them and the earth what brother did to brother and neighbor did to neighbor nation then did to nation and because of it God destroys them man's pride has led to war nations wanting to dominate others wanting to possess lands resources peoples and to satisfy that lust nations are willing to spill the blood of creatures made in God's image now war has been glamorized by movies and books but war is a gruesome and horrific thing I don't know what you found but I found men who have seen action in war real action are very reticent and slow to speak of it they're not the loud mouths out telling them they're the kind that would rather have that out of their minds forever they've seen men do to men things that ought not be done that's violent oppression and the

God who sits on his throne who gives given a law to all men and written it on their hearts that you're to love one another doesn't stand by and see this wickedness going on unmoved his wrath boils until it pours out upon the nations and gives to them what they have given to others God has vengeance God has wrath for those who have treated their neighbor the other nations with violence because of the wrath of the Babylonians a ruthless nation a nation that showed no mercy to other peoples therefore God says I'm going to call the meads the ruthless meads to come and destroy you and you're going to get a taste of your own medicine and whoever is captured will be thrust through there'll be no Geneva convention rules for prisoners of war all who are caught will be run through with the sword and their infants will be dashed to pieces before their eyes and their houses looted and their wives ravished no mercy shown why because God is repaying

[33 : 30] Babylon for the very deeds that she did against other nations he's giving them what they had given others I will bring to an end all the groaning she has caused do you see God doesn't like what he sees I'm going to bring it to an end he says and that's why he judges Babylon how the oppressor has come to an end how his fury has ended for the Lord has broken the rod of the wicked the scepter of the rulers now Babylon is not alone in doing violence to other nations it's not the only nation condemned here for their oppression and violence you can read the Assyrians and Syrians

and Cush and the Egyptians yeah the Egyptians will be destroyed by a cruel master by a fierce king because they have been cruel masters and fierce to others God doesn't stand by unaffected by one nation bullying another nation one boy bullying another boy one girl bullying another girl no that's the sort of sin that brought judgment hands that shed innocent blood are abominable to him and then lastly the last reason of the four that we're showing that carry the most ink from

Isaiah God judges the nations fourthly because of their mistreatment of his people God's people all these nations these ten nations were enemies of Israel it's not just that they were killing each other and doing horrible things to each other yes they were but they all had this in common in that they were all doing horrible things to Judah God's people and so whether that be the destruction of the land of the people of their children the infants whatever that be sometimes nations were judged neighboring nations were judged just because they laughed at God's people when they were being destroyed by other nations Ammon laughed and clapped their hands and rejoiced when Israel fell and God saw it and he brought judgment upon Ammon just for their attitude toward the destroyed Israelites Moab ridiculed Israel they made fun of Israel in the time of her distress for that Moab was to be destroyed and was to know distress and be ridiculed other nations neighboring nations would cut down the Israelite stragglers who were fleeing for their lives from other greater nations so Edom would be judged others saw their opportunity to rush in and plunder God's people and take advantage of them when they were weakened by battle malicious neighbors who were painful briars and sharp thorns to Israel and God took revenge on them you know a thousand years earlier God said to the father of this nation Abraham I'm going to bless you and make you a nation and I will bless those who bless you and those who curse you

I will curse! God's saying that I'm going to judge the nations based on their attitude toward you! And so the Moabites who tried to curse Israel through Balaam were themselves cursed and destroyed and Isaiah is showing that that promise is going to be fulfilled in his day and beyond that God is going to judge nations based upon how they treated and their attitude toward his people so I will crush the Assyrians in my land on my mountains I will trample him down his yoke will be taken from my people here came the Assyrians sweeping in putting a yoke on his people demanding service God says I'm coming to destroy you Assyria I'm going to take your because it was my people you put under the yoke most of Isaiah's ink is given to

Babylon the epitome of Judah's enemies who would conquer and take into captivity and plunder and oppress them and then God would repay them so the lesson to the nations is clear when you touch God's people you touch the apple of his eye don't mess with my people or you'll be found messing with me that's what God saying to the nations and that's the very promise we see in the New Testament being fulfilled not upon a nation over in Palestine but being fulfilled to the church of Jesus Christ who is called in the New Testament the Israel of God not now talking about Israel according to the flesh for not all Israel was Israel now talking about all those who are true sons of Abraham and show it by their faith just like Abraham that they believe on Jesus Christ and become children of

[39:09] Abraham and heirs according to all the promises now God's principle is true of the church whoever touches you touches the apple of my eye nations you mess with my people wherever they be found among you and you're messing with me and I will judge you one day for how you treat my people my church so what do we have in the first century we have Saul of Tarsus breathing out slaughter against not the Jews not the church or not the not the Israel against the church he's breathing out slaughter against the church and it's then as he's going up to Damascus to slaughter some more that Jesus the head of the church meets him and with a display of his glory smites him to the ground and stops him and says Saul Saul why are you persecuting me the union between

Christ and his church his people is so tight that when you mistreat God's people you mistreat him and he judges men for their attitudes and actions toward his people so Matthew 25 portrays that awesome scene at the end of the world and all the nations of the world are gathered before who Jesus Christ and he's judging them separating the goats and the sheep and what's the basis of judgment that day well it's their treatment toward God's people towards Jesus people towards his church towards Christians it's it's what you did and did not do for the least of these my Christian brothers Jesus says that will send you that will be seen to be the determining factor of that day those who were kind and compassionate toward the people of God will be seen to be part of that people and will go away into everlasting life those who did nothing for the people of

God will be seen to be those who did nothing for Jesus and will go away into everlasting punishment the principle lives on in the church the true Israel of God God punishing! the nations for their treatment of his people well the message to the nation should be clear don't mess with my people but the nations of the world are slow learners and those who forget history are doomed to repeat it and so what do we find at the end of the age we find the nations all gathering together to fight against who the people of God and they got them surrounded!

The great battle of battles come back by the word of his mouth slay the nations and that's it judgment set up nations men judged heaven hell forever it's all over then you see God judging the nations for their sins of pride violence idolatry mistreatment of God's people now you say what's all this got to do with us John why have we spent the day studying God's judgments upon the nations well just this you're going to have to stand one day before the same judge that judged these nations no different judge and the problem you're going to have is the same problem that they have it's sin that's what brings God's wrath and punishment so if you have no sin then you don't need to worry about that judgment day because as we've seen this!

[43:09] morning it's sin that attracts God's wrath it's pride things like that mistreatment of other people and putting things in God's place and thinking less of him and coming up with imaginary forms of him it's that kind of thing but if you don't have any of that there is absolutely no problem with you in the day of judgment if you have but one sin one attitude one thought one deed done or left undone then my friend you've got the same problem as the nations and you see Isaiah is trying to prepare us for chapter 53 that's where he's going well what happens in chapter 53 John well we see someone and he's being judged by God for sin and it's not a pretty sight when

God judges sin we can't even tell that it is a man his visage is so marred that men turn their face that's disgusting and who is he it is his own son it's God's own son and he's he's being damned he's being judged he's being condemned what for because God made him who had no sin to be sin for us and now he's judging that sin and he's crushing his own son in place of all his people who would turn from their wicked ways and trust in this savior alone Isaiah is preparing us for that blazing display of God's glory when he judged sin in his son he wants you to be ready to see him and love him and trust in him but you see if you don't see that you're under judgment if you don't see that you have a problem you'll yawn when we come to chapter 53 oh that

I know that I know all about that you can't yawn at God his son or judging you for eternity it's either God punishing sin in your substitute or in you forever and ever in hell so he's preparing us to receive the gospel and oh that you would look and live today the Lord Jesus was judged for sinners but only sinners who repent and turn their back on their sin and come to Jesus to be saved from it come to him today wherever you're at cast yourself upon him and be able to come to the day of judgment knowing that all your sins have been separated from you as far as the east is from the west they've all been punished in your substitute!

let's pray Lord we thank you for showing us this day what you are like correcting all of our silly thoughts about you and replacing it with the truth about you you are indeed an awesome God God to be feared sin is the most ugly thing in the universe to you make it that to us make pride and idolatry mistreatment of others hateful to us and thank you Jesus that you came to save sinners from our sins make him more precious to us our father and thank you that this judge this judge who should have damned us and sent us to hell in Christ receives his people and now protects us from all of his and our enemies we thank you that he's coming again not to bear sin but to bring salvation to all who are waiting for him and we praise you in his name

Amen