

Lesson 10
Isaiah 14:1 – 16:14
The fall of Babylon, Assyria, the Philistines and Moab

Memory verse: “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.” 1 Peter 5:6 (NIV)

Is there a pattern to history? Is anyone in charge? The British historian Edward Gibbon called history “little more than the register of crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind.” But the American missionary leader Arthur T. Pierson said that “history is His story.” Which one is right?

The prophet Isaiah would stand with Pierson, for these chapters (Chapters 13 to 23) are certainly evidence that God is at work in the nations of the world. In these chapters, the prophet revealed God’s plan not only for Judah, but also for ten Gentile nations. President James Garfield called history “the unrolled scroll of prophecy,” and Isaiah unrolled the scroll for us to read.

World leaders need to learn the lesson that Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way, that “the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses” (Dan. 4:25 NKJV). Paul made the same declaration to the Greek philosophers in Athens: “[God] determined the times set for [the nations] and the exact places where they should live” (Acts 17:26 NIV). Indeed, “history is His story.”

As the prophecy continues from the context of Isaiah 13, it is important that we remember that Isaiah has two aspects of prophetic fulfilment in mind. First, there is the immediate and partial fulfilment regarding the empire of Babylon and its king. Second, there is the distant and ultimate fulfilment regarding the spiritual empire of Babylon - the world system - and its king, Satan.

Why does God tell His people - either in an immediate or an ultimate sense - the destiny of Babylon and her king? So that we can think and live now, knowing the ultimate fate of the world system and Satan. We often have said, “If I only knew then what I know now” once we see how things turn out. Here, God is allowing us the opportunity to know now what we will see then, and to allow it to affect our thinking and our actions

God’s judgment will come against the Philistines also. They should not think that just because God was judging the Israelites, that they had somehow escaped. Some see in this a future judgment for “modern Philistines,” that is, Palestinians. The name “Palestine” is a Latin name from the name Philista, and this may be a prophetic warning to the Palestinians: do not rejoice in the suffering or downfall of Israel, because worse judgment will befall you.

The Moabites were the product of Lot’s incestuous union with his daughter (Gen. 19:30–38) and were the avowed enemies of the Jews (Num. 25; 31; Deut. 23:3). Within three years (16:14), this prophecy against Moab would be fulfilled with great national lamentation.

In the process of the Lord’s judgement against nations, will God’s people take heed?

Scripture reading: Isaiah Chapter 14:3-8; 16:1-5.

Things to learn: 1) Mercy on Israel 2) The essence of a self-focused and self obsessed life 3) The results of non submission to God.

Discussion Questions:

Q1. What lessons are applicable to the Israelites then and Christians today regarding the fall of Babylon in Chapter 14:1-23?

Q2. What assurances and encouragements were given to the Israelites in chapter 14 verses 25 to 32?

Q3. Why did Isaiah burdened for Moab with the judgement of God as revealed in chapter 15 and 16?