



Good News
Bible Reading Program

A free educational service provided by the United Church of God, *an International Association*

— April 2003 —

DATE	READING TOPIC	SCRIPTURES
1 Apr	Proverb against the king of Babylon; Fall of Lucifer; Babylon and Assyria to be destroyed	Isaiah 14:3-27
2 Apr	Death of Ahaz; Oracles against Philistia and Moab	2 Kings 16:19-20; 2 Chronicles 28:26-27; Isaiah 14:28-16:14
3 Apr	Oracle against Damascus; Glory of Jacob will wane; Invading multitude; Message to Ethiopia	Isaiah 17-18
4 Apr	Oracle against Egypt; Egypt, Assyria & Israel at peace; Sign against Egypt and Ethiopia	Isaiah 19:1-20:6
5 Apr	Oracles against Babylon, Edom and Arabia	Isaiah 21
6 Apr	Oracle against Jerusalem; Shebna to be demoted and Eliakim promoted, given the key of David	Isaiah 22
7 Apr	Oracle against Tyre	Isaiah 23
8 Apr	Coming curse upon the earth; Rejoicing in God's victory	Isaiah 24
9 Apr	Rejoicing in God's victory	Isaiah 25
10 Apr	Song of trust in God's salvation, righteousness and justice; Place of refuge; Israel gathered and restored	Isaiah 26-27
11 Apr	Rebuke against evil and injustice; Destruction coming; Israel's future restoration	Micah 2
12-23 Apr	12-DAY BREAK (one of four planned breaks in the year)	
24 Apr	Woe to Ephraim; Truth in God's Word is here a little and there a little; Jerusalem's covenant with death; Messiah as a Cornerstone laid in Zion for a sure foundation	Isaiah 28
25 Apr	Woe to Ariel (Zion); Blind and hypocrites; Future healing and restoration of understanding	Isaiah 29
26 Apr	Shame in trusting in Egypt; Punishment for despising God; God's grace and teaching in His Kingdom; Assyria judged	Isaiah 30
27 Apr	Woe to those trusting in Egypt; God will save Jerusalem; The future reign of the Messiah	Isaiah 31-32
28 Apr	Ambassadors of peace shall weep; Judgment on Zion; Jerusalem in the messianic reign	Isaiah 33
29 Apr	Coming Day of the Lord; Future paradise on earth	Isaiah 34-35
30 Apr	Hezekiah rebels against Assyria and subdues Philistines; Simeonite campaigns; Hezekiah's tunnel	2 Kings 18:7-8; 1 Chronicles 4:24-43; 2 Kings 20:20

Highlights to Think About From This Month's Reading

O Lucifer, Son of the Morning (Isaiah 14:3-27)

April 1

The prophecies against Babylon continue—specifically against the *ruler* of Babylon. It is obvious from verses 1-3 that this has a primary fulfillment in the final ruler of *end-time* Babylon, a world dictator over a resurrected Roman Empire of the last days who is called “the Beast” in the book of Revelation (see 19:19-20). The ancient kings of Babylon were forerunners of this final ruler. As ancient Babylon was conquered in one day by the Medes and Persians (as foretold by the famous miracle of the handwriting on the wall recorded in Daniel 5), so will end-time Babylon and its ruler meet sudden end at Christ’s return (Revelation 18–19).

Yet the final ruler himself is portrayed in Isaiah 14 as a type of someone else. His name, in verse 12, is given as Lucifer. But actually this is a Latin name—meaning “Light-Bearer.” It is a translation of the Hebrew *Heylel*. This word, based on related Hebrew words, seems to mean “Brightness” or “Praising”—or, if the word is considered as Heyl-el, perhaps even “Brightness of God” or “Praise to God” (though such translations are not normally given because most scholars reject the angelic identity this could imply).

It also appears that Heylel was the Hebrew name for the “Day Star,” that is, the planet Venus. Some now even see in the name Helel ben Shahar (son of Dawn) a reference to a pagan deity represented by the planet Venus.

In any case, we are left with the picture of a grand star, likened to Venus, that wants to be grander than the other stars: “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God” (verse 13). To really understand the picture here we need to know a little about astronomy.

Venus is the brightest object in the sky except for the sun and moon. We now understand it to be a planet. But to the ancients it was classed as a star—simply because their words for star meant a small, shining point of light in the sky. Notice that the reference in verse 12 is “Day Star, son of the morning.” The planet Venus is still referred to as either the morning star or the evening star—because it is visible only just before sunrise or just after sunset. Before dawn, Venus rises from the eastern horizon. But before it is able to climb into the sky (to rise above the other stars and be the highest), the light of the rising sun—the ultimate physical daystar—causes Venus to disappear in the growing light of day. After sunset, Venus appears just above the western horizon—but it sets (or is brought down to the ground) very quickly.

The individual pictured in these verses exalts himself with five “I wills” (verses 13-14). He aspires to universal domination—“to be like the Most High” (verse 14). This attitude certainly applied to the rulers of ancient Babylon, who viewed themselves as exalted above all other human rulers (compare Daniel 4:29-37)—and it likely similarly applies to the unbridled arrogance of the final end-time ruler of Babylon. But it applies most of all to the *spiritual* ruler of Babylon of all ages—the power behind the throne—Satan the devil. We are told in the book of Revelation that it is Satan, the serpent and dragon of old, who gives power and authority to the Beast (13:2). Indeed, the various “heads” of prophetic Babylon through all ages (compare Revelation 13:1; 17:3)—the succession of gentile world empires—are pictured as emerging from the devil (12:3).

That the devil is primarily meant in this passage in Isaiah 14 is also supported by the fact that Jesus appears to refer to verse 12 when He says, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18). Furthermore, “stars” represent *angels* elsewhere in prophecy (see Revelation 1:20). Indeed, “a third of the stars of heaven,” meaning angels, were cast to the earth with Satan in his revolt against God in eons past (12:4). We learn more of Satan’s rebellion in Ezekiel 28:11-17, where, again, a human ruler is first used to typify him (in fact, as we will later see, that human ruler of Tyre is none other than the same end-time Beast).

Yet it is not entirely clear whether the revolt against God pictured in Isaiah 14 refers to the ancient struggle that predated man’s existence (again, see Revelation 12:4) or the one that will occur when Satan and his demons again attempt to assault God’s heaven three and a half years before Christ’s return (see verses 7-14). Many scholars note that the language in Isaiah 14:12 is in the form of a *lament*, an expression of mourning over a great loss. This would reflect God’s grief and sense of loss over the companionship of this trusted cherub (Ezekiel 28:14) and the rebellion Satan had instigated, indicating this passage refers to that initial rebellion. However, it is also possible that the primeval satanic rebellion described here is related as a forerunner of the similar latter-day assault described in Revelation 12. The outcome is the same either way. Satan failed miserably the first

time—and he will fail again at the end. For more information, request our free booklet *Is There Really a Devil?*

Lucifer, the aspiring daystar—who was brightest of the “morning stars” (see Job 38:7) and even now still appears as an “angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14)—is no match for the ultimate “Morning Star,” the “Sun of Righteousness,” Jesus Christ (see Revelation 22:16; Malachi 4:2), or the ultimate “Father of lights,” God the Father (see James 1:17).

One of the ironies of the passage in Isaiah 14 “is the idea that to be *like the Most High* (v. 14) is to be self-exalted, whereas it [in truth] is to be self-giving (cf. Phil. 2:5ff.). The ugliness as well as the brevity of the false glory is powerfully shown in vv. 16-21” (*The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, 1970, note on Isaiah 14:20-21). In reading what is said about the downfall of the ruler of Babylon, realize that all of it applies to both the human ruler *and* Satan—if not in fact then in type.

Verses 22-23 describe the destruction of Babylon. Interestingly, after its fall ancient Babylon did become an abandoned place of marshes as the Euphrates River gradually changed course and moved farther away from the city (a process begun when Babylon’s conqueror Cyrus of Persia removed dikes that kept the river in a particular course). Isaiah referred to it before the fact as the “Wilderness of the Sea” (Isaiah 21:1, 9). In fact, this is part of the reason that Alexander the Great’s successor Seleucus moved his capital from Babylon shortly after establishing it there (see previous highlights). Yet there will probably be a greater fulfillment of this prophecy when end-time Babylon is cast down. Perhaps such a fate will befall the *modern* capital of Babylon, apparently the city of Rome.

Revelation 20:1 tells us that Satan, and by implication his demons, will be bound for 1,000 years in a particular place—called a “pit” or “abyss”—which Leviticus 16:22 typifies as an “uninhabited land” or “wilderness.” The confinement prophesied for the demons will keep them away from the human beings living during the reign of Christ and His saints—and keep human beings away from *them*. Perhaps the mention of wild and weird animals and birds at Babylon in conjunction with its desolation (Isaiah 13:21-22) is meant to typify or even indicate demons there (see Revelation 18:2). In fact, regarding a parallel passage, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* reports that at least one scholar “attempts to render the assonance of tsiim ’eth ’yim (*siyyim et- iyyim*, ‘desert creatures and hyenas’) by ‘goblins and ghouls’.... [Another scholar] considered them, not as animals, but probably demons of the desert” (footnote on Jeremiah 50:39).

Finally, God relates destruction to come on Assyria (verses 24-25), which, as with so many of these prophecies, seems to indicate both ancient and future punishment. End-time Assyria is largely synonymous with end-time Babylon, since they represent the same power bloc. The forces of this power will be broken in God’s land (Israel) and on God’s mountains (Jerusalem and its environs)—and this punishment will affect all nations (verse 26). This is supported by other prophetic passages (Revelation 16:14, 16; Joel 3:1-2, 12-14).

When the end-time Assyrian yoke of oppression and slavery is broken, God’s people will be free. At the same time, the power of Satan will be overthrown. God’s land and mountains (verse 25) will then be the whole earth (Revelation 11:15). And with Satan’s power broken everywhere, *all* people will at long last be free.

As a final note on the passage, it should be mentioned that the word rendered “hell” in verse 9 is the same word left untranslated in the rest of the chapter—*sheol* (see verses 11, 15). While some attempt to read into these verses a shadowy or fiery underworld, the Hebrew word *sheol* is often translated “the grave,” which is the true meaning of the word. And in the grave human beings have no consciousness (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10). Indeed, the dead are portrayed in Scripture as “sleeping” until the resurrection (Daniel 12:2; 1 Corinthians 11:30; 2 Peter 3:4). To learn more about this particular subject, send for our free booklets *What Happens After Death?* and *Heaven & Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?*

The Year King Ahaz Died; A Viper Against Philistia

(2 Kings 16:19-20; 2 Chronicles 28:26-27; Isaiah 14:28–16:14)

April 2

The next item in the book of Isaiah is a prophecy against Philistia dated to “the year that King Ahaz died” (14:28). Thus, the death of Ahaz in 715 B.C. finally comes. Whether or not he had reasserted himself in the years since Hezekiah’s reign began is not known, although there is reason to think so, as we’ll see.

In any case, we see here that just being king did not automatically carry with it the adulation of the people. Although the people often followed in the idolatrous ways of a wicked king, they sometimes were able to recognize his questionable behavior. In this case in particular, Hezekiah provided such a contrast to this evil king and had led the people to a renewed commitment to God.

However, it was now 13 or 14 years since Hezekiah's great Passover and there is no way to know whether or not the commitment of the people had remained steadfast.

Still, the people's opinion of Ahaz was shown through the nature of the burial they gave him. He was buried in Jerusalem, but not in the royal cemetery with those given a place of honor (2 Chronicles 28:27). Hezekiah himself was likely involved in the decision of course—and perhaps Isaiah as well. A similar fate had been accorded Jehoram (who had been married to, and influenced by, Ahab's daughter Athaliah, 2 Chronicles 21:20).

Returning to the book of Isaiah, the specific dating of the prophecy to the year Ahaz died may be a clue that elements of this particular prophecy were actually meant for the people of that day. Ahaz was pro-Assyrian. In former days, he had been a vassal of the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III. In fact, Tiglath attacked and defeated the Philistines in 734 B.C. at the urging of Ahaz. But Tiglath had died 12 years before this prophecy was given—in 727 B.C., shortly after Ahaz himself was essentially replaced as king of Judah by Hezekiah.

Yet perhaps Ahaz had, as earlier suggested, reasserted himself at some point. We do know that in 720 Sargon II of Assyria demanded tribute of Judah and that Judah appears to have capitulated. It is possible that Ahaz's hand had been strengthened in the wake of that. In any case, some commentaries suggest that upon Ahaz's death, the Philistines sent a mission to Hezekiah to propose a rebellion against Assyria—that this is who is meant by “the messengers of the nation” in verse 32.

Verse 29 seems to be slightly mistranslated in the King James and New King James Versions. Notice it in J.P. Green's Literal Translation: “Do not rejoice, O Philistia, all of you, for the rod of your striking [that is, your own military power] is broken, because a viper comes forth from the root of a [or the] snake, and his fruit [or offspring] shall be a fiery flying serpent.”

References to a snake or serpent, a viper and a “fiery flying serpent” or dragon would seem to point to Satan (Revelation 12:4, 9; see highlights on Isaiah 6)—and, by extension, to the gentile empires empowered by him (see highlights for the previous reading). In fact, dragon-like creatures were prominent emblems in Assyria and Babylon.

The usurper Sargon II had actually stormed through Philistia twice in recent years (720 and 716 B.C.). He seems to be the “viper” that “comes forth”—that is, presently continues to come forth—against the Philistines, causing their power to be broken. Indeed, he had just come the previous year! What makes the Philistines think they can now defeat him?

The viper is seen coming from the root, or the roots, of a snake or serpent—or of *the* serpent—and thus sharing the same origins of this serpent. Prior knowledge of this serpent would seem to refer to the Philistines having been bitten before—as they were by Tiglath-Pileser III. If that is so, notice that the viper is not the serpent Tiglath's son. Rather, the viper comes from the *same roots* the serpent did. This could well apply to Sargon II, who, not the son of Tiglath, was an Assyrian general of noble roots.

Sargon had already come against the Philistines twice. And he would do so again, in a much greater way, two years later in 713-712 B.C.—to put down a Philistine rebellion at Ashdod and neighboring areas (see Isaiah 20:1).

Then notice the warning about the viper's draconian offspring (verse 29). Sargon's son—Sennacherib—would utterly crush a *later* Philistine rebellion in 701 B.C., the same rebellion in which Hezekiah also took part. The fact that smoke (probably either rising dust from the Assyrian armies or smoke from the fiery destruction they would bring) is coming from the north (verse 31) is another indication that an invasion from Mesopotamia is meant—as that is the direction from which such invasions came.

How does the passage say the Philistine entourage should be answered? Besides the foregoing, that the only place the Philistines could go for refuge would be Zion, or Jerusalem (verse 32). Amazingly, only Jerusalem did not fall to Sennacherib's invasion, as we will later see.

Of course, since prophecy is often dual in application, it is possible that these verses have relevance for the last days—that an end-time Assyrian ruler, coming from the same roots as Tiglath-Pileser and his immediate successors, could again fulfill the prophecy in some way.

Further prophecies against the Philistines can be found in Jeremiah 47, Ezekiel 25:15-17, Joel 3:4-8, Amos 1:6-8, Zephaniah 2:4-7 and Zechariah 9:5-7.

The Burden Against Moab; “Let My Outcasts Dwell With You”

(2 Kings 16:19-20; 2 Chronicles 28:26-27; Isaiah 14:28–16:14)

Apr. 2 Cont'd

Isaiah 15 and 16 are addressed to Moab. Terrible devastation is going to befall its people. Beyond that, there are multiple ways to possibly understand this passage, none of which is certain.

Reliance on the pagan temple of Dibon in the north of the country (15:2; 16:12) is foolishness. God calls it Dimon in 15:9, which “sounds like *blood* in Hebrew” (*The Nelson Study Bible*, 1997, note on verse 9)—and explains that its waters will indeed be full of blood.

“Three-year-old heifer” in verse 5 could also be translated “Third Eglath”—designating an unknown city. But the translation “three-year-old heifer” does fit the context: “The expression ‘three years old’ implies one at its full vigor (Gen. 15:9), as yet not brought under the yoke; as Moab heretofore unsubdued, but now about to be broken” (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown’s Commentary*, 1961, note on Isaiah 15:5).

Moabite fugitives flee to Zoar, in southwest Moab on the south end of the Dead Sea—a border city with Edom and Judah. We then see them in the way of Horonaim, “a town of Moab not far from Zoar.... It means ‘the two poles,’ being near caves” (note on verse 5). Lack of water and fertile land have driven them south (verse 6), and they continue to the “Brook of the Willows” (verse 7). “*Margin* has ‘valley of Arabians’; i.e., to the valley on the boundary between them and Arabian Petrea; now Wady-el Araba. Arabia means a ‘desert’” (note on verse 7).

Yet God sends lions after even the escapees (verse 9). Some equate this with Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, represented as a winged lion in vision (see Daniel 2, 7). But the remnant of Jacob in the end time is also referred to as a lion (Micah 5:7-8).

That Isaiah 15–16 is an end-time prophecy there can be no doubt. For 16:4-5 contains a clear picture of the reign of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Also, you should read **Jeremiah 48:1-5, 28-36** at this point. While it might *appear* from the end of Isaiah’s prophecy that the events mentioned would transpire within three years of when he delivered it (see Isaiah 16:13-14), we should notice that Jeremiah wrote long afterward and gave, in many respects, the very same prophecy. This adds to the certainty of this being a prophecy of the last days. Yet the prophesied destruction on Moab might seem to contradict another end-time prophecy.

Daniel 11:40–12:3 also contains a prophecy of the “time of the end.” In these verses, the “king of the North”—the final human dictator of the last days (known as “the Beast” in Revelation)—will invade and occupy many Middle Eastern countries. “But these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon” (verse 41). These ancient regions largely constitute the modern nation of Jordan. So do the Jordanians escape or are they destroyed? How do we resolve this?

The forces of this end-time Beast power will invade the various Middle Eastern nations a few years prior to Christ’s return, as other prophecies show. But the punishment on Moab appears to come *in the final year* before Christ’s return: “...upon Moab, upon it I will bring the *year of their punishment*,’ says the LORD” (Jeremiah 48:44). A related prophecy pertaining to Edom names this the Day of the Lord: “For it is the day of the LORD’s vengeance, the *year of recompense* for the cause of Zion” (Isaiah 34:8).

Thus, Ammon, Moab and Edom will initially escape destruction from the Beast power. But during the Day of the Lord, the final year before Christ’s return, they and the Beast power itself will experience devastating punishment from God for their treatment of God’s people Israel, i.e., both physical and spiritual Israel. That year will be the time of the blowing of the seven trumpets of Revelation (see Revelation 6:12-17; 8–9; 11:15)—a time of terrifying, cataclysmic events. And it appears that part of the punishment on these nations will be inflicted by a somewhat resurgent Israel and Judah (compare Isaiah 41:14-15; Micah 4:13; Jeremiah 51:19-24; Zechariah 12:6; 14:14). We will consider this in more detail when we come to Jeremiah 51 in our reading.

Moving on, the first verse of Isaiah 16 says, “Send the lamb to the ruler of the land....” This could be a reference to the ancient tribute of lambs that Moab used to pay to David (see 2 Kings 3:4). Perhaps it is a way of saying to Moab, “Submit to Judah again if you want to be protected.” Or maybe the “ruler of the land” is now the Messiah of verse 5, who is of the line of David as mentioned—and Moab is being told, in this manner, to submit to *Him*. It is also possible that the lamb itself refers to Jesus Christ, the “Lamb of God” (compare Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29; Revelation 5:6). Perhaps He is here pictured being sent by God the Father to Jerusalem to take over from the present ruler of the land. Still, it is also possible that the lamb refers to the remnant of Moab as a taunt—that, continuing from the previous verse, if they flee through the wilderness through Judah, they will be like a lamb ravaged by “lions” (Isaiah 15:9).

We also see mention in 16:1 of *Sela*, meaning the “rock.” God elsewhere tells Moab to “dwell in the rock” (Jeremiah 48:28). Yet He earlier gave the same instruction to Israel (Isaiah 2:10). The reference in Isaiah 16:1 could represent a figurative picture of people hiding in rock caves (as in Isaiah 10:19-21 and Revelation 6:15-17)—either from God, to no avail, or from danger in

general—or refuge in an actual place called Sela in Edom (2 Kings 14:7). That place today is known by its Greek name with the same meaning, Petra. The city of Petra is Jordan’s prime tourist attraction, as its ancient inhabitants, the Nabataeans, carved tombs, temples and even a massive amphitheater right out of the rock walls of this secluded and sealed-in valley. There is no place like it on earth.

Some see Isaiah 16:1-4 as an indication that Petra is the location of a prophesied place of future protection for God’s Church or a faithful remnant of Israel (compare Revelation 12:14-16; Isaiah 26:20-21; 33:15-17; 42:11; Zephaniah 2:1-3, 8; Matthew 24:16; Luke 21:21, 36). However, there are too many variables and unclear elements to be sure. First of all, as already mentioned, there is no certainty that a specific place is even meant in Isaiah 16:1. And if it is, there is no way to be sure that the place is Petra as opposed to some other location designated as a rock. However, it does seem likely that Petra is meant if “Brook of the Willows” is alternately understood to mean, as mentioned above, the Wadi al-Arabah—which would put it in the right vicinity.

Interestingly, an international correspondent for WorldNetDaily wrote an article on the famous “rose-red city” of Petra, noting that the Israelis believe it may indeed serve as a place of refuge for *them* in the future. He reported: “WorldNetDaily traveled to Petra with the Amman-based Mossad intelligence agent Avi Rubin—a former airborne commando in the Israel Defense Force. Rubin explained that Petra might be the ultimate defensive position in a regional war. ‘It is an outstanding defensive position. Airborne assault would be most difficult. It is what I would call a natural defensive position. The Roman legions, the Crusaders, the Arabs and now the IDF, Iraq and the Jordanian army all recognized this,’ said Rubin. ‘The most important defensive feature is called ‘the Shiq,’ which is about 2,000 meters long. {Today, the passage is marked by the ‘Indiana Jones’ souvenir shop.} It is a narrow passageway which leads into the city. It has very high, sheer walls which will protect the Israeli population as they enter the city from the west. The rocks of Petra can help protect from gunfire, bombing, artillery and perhaps even absorb some radiation’.... Rubin said that both the IDF and the Mossad had examined Petra from a strategic and military perspective” (Anthony LoBaido, “A City for ‘End Times’: Is Petra Hiding Place for Israeli Remnant During Armageddon,” WorldNetDaily, April 24, 2001, on-line at www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=22539).

Yet while the King James and New King James Versions give the sense of Moab hiding the “outcasts” in these verses, other translations make the passage an appeal to hide and protect the refugees of Moab. While that might seem unlikely, since it appears that God calls them *His* outcasts and has sent lions after the outcasts of Moab, these other translations view “my outcasts” as a Moabite appeal—in other words, “Let us dwell with you, Judah,” which Judah then rejects.

Another puzzling element is the fact that the Moabite fugitives are first seen running far south—and are then stated to be cast out of their hiding place at the “fords of the Arnon,” which would be quite a ways to the north again, up near Dibon. Perhaps this indicates that they go southwest into Edom or Judah but that the Jews, who will apparently be resurgent to some degree during the Day of the Lord (see Zechariah 12:6; 14:14), then chase them back into Moab. (This would actually make it more likely that the inhabitants of Sela, if it is Petra, are not the Moabites.) Or perhaps the Moabites actually try to *assault* those in Sela to take over their place of refuge (compare Zephaniah 2:1-3, 8)—and God drives the Moabite invaders out of there and into the open, forcing them to flee back north.

In any event, it still seems most probable that Isaiah 16:3-4 is an appeal by God rather than the Moabites—for Moab to hide *His* outcasts. Moab, in this scenario, gets into trouble for denying them refuge (though God, it would seem, secures it for them anyway). Then, when it comes time for Moab’s outcasts to seek refuge, God, in this same scenario, denies them—just as they formerly denied Him.

What, then, of Isaiah 16:13-14 saying Moab’s destruction would take place “within three years”? While this may have referred to an event in Isaiah’s day—*The Nelson Study Bible* suggesting “the quelling of a rebellion against Sargon in 715 B.C.” (note on verses 13-14)—we should again keep in mind Jeremiah’s much later use of basically the same prophecy. Perhaps Isaiah’s words regarding three years, then, are for the future. It could be that the time frame of “now” in verse 14 is the point at which Moab is supposed to hide God’s outcasts (verses 3-4). This would be the beginning of the Great Tribulation, which, as other prophecies show, will occur three and a half years before the return of Christ. The Day of the Lord apparently begins two and a half years from this point—again, one year before Christ’s return (see previous highlights for Hosea 6:2). And this means the Day of

the Lord commences “within three years” from the beginning of the Tribulation. So it is possible that this is what is intended.

Speculation about how and where God will protect His people during the coming Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord is always interesting. However, it’s not important that we know the answers in advance, or else God would have made them clear. What is important is that we keep our hope and faith in the spiritual Rock, Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 10:4; Psalm 18:2; Matthew 16:18; Romans 9:33; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:6-8). Christ’s consistent teaching is that a Christian’s primary focus should be on spiritual preparedness (Matthew 24:44; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-6).

Further prophecies against Moab can be found in Isaiah 25:10-12, Jeremiah 48, Ezekiel 25:8-11, Amos 2:1-3 and Zephaniah 2:8-11.

Prophecy Against Damascus and Israel;

The Invading Multitude; Message to Ethiopia (Isaiah 17–18)

April 3

As we saw in the prophecies of Isaiah to Ahaz (Isaiah 7), Syria and Israel were allies. Chapter 17 starts out as a prophecy against Damascus, the capital of Syria, but by verse 3 the subject is Ephraim and the rest of Israel more than it is Syria.

The dating of this prophecy is not certain. The Assyrians had, at the time of Israel’s first deportation in 732 B.C., also destroyed Damascus and taken its citizens captive north to Kir, thereby fulfilling, at least in part, a prophecy of Amos (2 Kings 16:9; Amos 1:3-5). Yet we know that the Assyrians later came against Damascus again, around 720 B.C., and retook it. For this reason, since the prophecy mentions the “remnant of Syria” (Isaiah 17:3), many date the prophecy to the early reign of Hezekiah—to between 729 and 722 B.C.—following the early deportations of Israel and Syria and yet prior to their later fall.

However, Isaiah 17:12–18:7, which contains a message to Ethiopia (Hebrew *Cush*), seems to be part of the same prophecy or “burden” as the early part of Isaiah 17. And there is reason for dating this section to around 715 B.C. At that time, around the death of Ahaz, “a Cushite dynasty took over Egypt...and probably sent ambassadors to Jerusalem” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on 18:1). This is a reference to “Shabako, the Nubian successor to Osorkon [IV],” the latter, apparently known also as King So (2 Kings 17:4), having been defeated by Sargon II of Assyria in 716 (Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, 1987, pp. 412-413). Thus, as our previous few readings have borne some relation at least to 715 B.C.—and our next reading will refer to an event dated to 713-712 B.C.—this dating seems likely. And the first part of Isaiah 17 seems to date from the same time since, as mentioned, Isaiah 17–18 appears to be a single prophecy.

If that is so, here we have a prophecy of Israel and Syria’s fall given after Israel has already fallen. This makes it most likely an end-time prophecy. Supporting this conclusion is the repeated phrase “in that day” (17:4, 7, 9), which often refers to events surrounding the coming of the Messiah to reign over the nations (compare 2:11, 17, 20; 4:1-2; 11:10-11; 12:1, 4). Following Israel’s ancient captivity, its people journeyed, over the centuries, to northwest Europe—and are now represented, in large part, by the American and British peoples. (For more on this, request or download our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*).

An end-time prophecy of Damascus and Syria could apply to those living in the nation of Syria today. Or it could also refer to Aramaean peoples who were, in ancient days, deported by the Assyrians to Kir, just south of the Caucasus Mountains. Some of these people became the Armenians. And others probably migrated through the Caucasus and into Europe along with the Israelites. Besides Amos 1:3-5, additional prophecies against Damascus can be found in Jeremiah 49:23-27 and Zechariah 9:1.

The Israelites, we are told in Isaiah 17:7-8, will finally turn to God in the midst of the destruction that comes upon them. Then, following more details of that destruction in verses 9-11, the prophecy changes focus. We are told of a massive invasion force that God will punish. “The connection of this fragment with what precedes is: notwithstanding the calamities coming upon Israel, the people of God shall not be utterly destroyed...[and] the Assyrian spoilers shall perish” (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown’s Commentary*, note on 17:12–18:7). Some have connected Isaiah 17:14 to the overnight destruction of the Assyrian army of Sennacherib that would occur in the days of Hezekiah (see Isaiah 37:36). While a likely forerunner, this is still predominantly an end-time prophecy.

Notice what the *JFB Commentary* says regarding the next section addressed to Ethiopia: “Isaiah announces the overthrow of Sennacherib’s hosts and desires the Ethiopian ambassadors, now in

Jerusalem, to bring word of it to their own nation; and he calls the whole world to witness the event (vs. 3). As ch. 17:12-14 announced the presence of the foe, so ch. 18 foretells his overthrow. The heading in [the] *English Version*, ‘God will destroy the Ethiopians,’ is a mistake arising from the wrong rendering ‘Woe,’ whereas the *Hebrew* does not express a threat, but is an *appeal* calling attention (ch. 55:1; Zech. 2:6): ‘Ho.’ He is not speaking *against* but *to* the Ethiopians, calling on them to hear his prophetic announcement as to the destruction of their enemies” (note on Isaiah 18).

Indeed, in the end time too, the ruler of Assyria—the “king of the North”—will be an enemy of Ethiopia, as we elsewhere see him bringing the Ethiopians as well as the Egyptians under his subjection (see Daniel 11:42-43). This is another reason we may view the defeat of the enemy force in Isaiah 18 in an end-time context. Also, compare verse 6 with Revelation 19:17-18.

Finally, mention is made of a “present” being brought from Ethiopia to Jerusalem. This is stated in Zephaniah 3:10 as well: “From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, the daughter of My dispersed ones, shall bring My offering.”

These verses also appear related to Psalm 68, where David says to God: “Because of Your temple at Jerusalem, kings will bring presents to you.... Envoys will come out of Egypt; Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands to God” (verses 29-31). Yet Isaiah and Zephaniah appear to indicate a *particular* present or offering—*singular*. As to what all of this might mean we can only speculate.

Interestingly, many Ethiopians practiced the Jewish religion before the days of Christ. (Note the eunuch of the Ethiopian royal court who was in Jerusalem to worship—see Acts 8:27.) In the Ethiopian national epic, the *Kebrā Nagast* (“The Glory of Kings”), written down in the 13th century, it is claimed that this tradition goes back to the Queen of Sheba at the time of Solomon. Indeed, it states that Solomon fathered a son by her named Menelik, who then founded the dynasty of Ethiopian rulers.

Whether or not this is true is unconfirmed, as the Bible is silent on it. However, history does tell us of a number of later Jewish colonies in Egypt that eventually disappeared—and there is reason to believe that refugees from these colonies were forced south and resettled in Ethiopia. Surprisingly, Ethiopians are today actually permitted to settle in the state of Israel under the Jewish law of return. While these people are black, it is possible that many are indeed descendants of Jews who intermarried with the native population.

The *Kebrā Nagast*, it should be mentioned in this context, prominently mentions the Ark of the Covenant, the gilded chest built in Moses’ day to hold the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. This most sacred of Israelite relics was lost at some point between the days of Solomon and Ezra, though we don’t know when, where or how. According to the *Kebrā Nagast*, Menelik, to safeguard it from Solomon’s growing apostasy, secretly took the ark with him to Ethiopia, leaving behind a replica that he had asked the faithful priests to make. While this sounds rather unlikely, it is nevertheless widely believed among Ethiopians today that their nation is in actual possession of the Ark of the Covenant—that it sits guarded and unapproachable in an old church in the city of Aksum in northern Ethiopia. In fact, each local church in Ethiopia has its own *Tabot*, or representation of the ark, to memorialize that conviction.

British journalist Graham Hancock, in his book *The Sign and the Seal: The Quest for the Lost Ark of the Covenant*, 1992, actually gives a more plausible explanation, different from the *Kebrā Nagast*, as to how the ark might actually have ended up in Ethiopia. He speculates that the ark was taken out of Judah by the Levites to protect it from the apostasy of Hezekiah’s son Manasseh—that when Josiah later told the Levites to put the ark back into the temple (2 Chronicles 35:3) this was never done, as it had supposedly already been moved to a new temple at a Jewish colony in Aswan in southern Egypt. Historically, as mentioned above, these Jewish colonists were later forced to flee from the Egyptians, and Hancock provides some evidence that they migrated south into Ethiopia—with, he maintains, the Ark of the Covenant. This hypothesis is also explored in a 2002 book titled *In Search of the Lost Ark of the Covenant* by Robert Cornuke and David Halbrook. Author Grant Jeffrey, in *Armageddon: Appointment with Destiny*, 1990, while embracing the *Kebrā Nagast* version of events, lends some support to the ark’s residing in Ethiopia today (pp. 108-122, 229-233).

Still, there are other theories about the ark’s whereabouts that also appear credible—including the possibility that Jeremiah hid it or took it with him at the time of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. The apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees (2:1-8) says he hid it in a cave on Mount Nebo. (Realize, however, that while the apocryphal books can be useful historical sources like many other secular writings, they are not inspired Scripture and often contain errors.) Many others believe the

ark was hidden in a chamber under the Temple Mount. There is, of course, also a very strong possibility that God allowed it to be destroyed by the Babylonians along with its precious contents.

Nonetheless, given what we've seen, a number of people have suggested that the particular present the Ethiopians bring in the last days might be the actual Ark of the Covenant containing the Ten Commandments. Jeremiah says that some time into the peaceful reign of Jesus Christ, people will no longer talk about or think about the ark (Jeremiah 3:16-17)—but this would seem to imply that it will be an issue immediately before then. There is simply no way to be sure.

Finally, while such matters are certainly interesting, we should avoid getting caught up in them to the exclusion of more important spiritual study.

Egypt's Judgment and Deliverance;

Israel One of Three With Egypt and Assyria (Isaiah 19:1–20:6)

April 4

In Isaiah 19, Isaiah delivers this “burden against Egypt.” Set as it is between Isaiah 18 and 20, the prophecy would appear to have been written between 715 and 709 B.C. After a period of infighting and anarchy (19:2), Egypt is to come under the dominance of an oppressive foreign power (verse 4). Historically, such oppression came a number of times—from Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Seleucid Syria, Rome and later conquerors.

(Alexander the Great was welcomed as Egypt's *deliverer* from Persia and some identify him with the savior of verse 20—and they see the peace between Israel, Egypt and Assyria at the end of the chapter as representative of the stability within Alexander's brief empire. But this is clearly not what is meant at all.)

The fact that Egypt is reconciled with *Assyria* at the end of the chapter shows that Assyria is most likely the “cruel master” mentioned *earlier* in the chapter (verse 4). The prophecy, therefore, might have had some fulfillment in what would begin around 45 years later—the conquest and assimilation of Egypt by the Assyrian Empire under Esarhaddon and then Ashurbanipal. These kings took over from Egypt's ruling Ethiopian dynasty.

However the entire chapter, particularly the way it ends, reveals that this prophecy mainly concerns the end time. As was mentioned in the highlights for our previous reading, the end-time ruler of Assyria—the “king of the North” of Daniel and the Beast of Revelation—will invade and oppress Egypt and Ethiopia in the years just prior to Christ's return (Daniel 11:42-43). This means that the “Savior and Mighty One” to deliver the Egyptians (verse 20) is the returning Jesus Christ, who will crush their Assyrian oppressors. (It should also be considered that Assyria of the last days is apparently the dominant power within a resurrected Babylon and Rome—so Egypt's ancient conquests by these and related empires would also appear to serve as forerunners of the coming end-time oppression.)

Verse 17 says that the land of Judah will initially be terrifying to the Egyptians. This did not happen in Isaiah's day. The reference is, again, to the last days. However, it is unclear whom the Egyptians fear. It could possibly be the resurgent Jews at Christ's return (see Zechariah 12:6; 14:14). Then again, perhaps it is the Egyptians' oppressor, the Assyro-Babylonian Beast power, that terrifies them. Its ruling dictator, the king of the North, will have set up his headquarters in Jerusalem (Daniel 11:45, KJV). But most likely it is the awesome power of the returning Christ that they fear. Perhaps they will not understand who He is. And for those who do, they may still be afraid—as they will have been enemies of the Jews and Christians before this. They might imagine terrible retribution. Yet Christ has come to rescue them as well.

Ultimately Egypt will come under His loving dominion (verses 18-22). Verse 19 points out that Egypt will one day have its own altar to God, providing us a glimpse into how God will be worshiped when more nations than Israel come under His rule. Historically, not all altars were built for the purpose of offering incense or sacrifices (compare Joshua 22). However, Isaiah 19:21 does mention sacrifice and offering (the Hebrew apparently denoting peace offering and grain offering respectively), which might be offered on that altar.

Malachi 1:11 confirms that other nations will be permitted to have centers of worship at which to offer incense to God as well as offerings (again probably grain offerings, as indicated by the Hebrew here). There is evidently no mention of burnt or sin offerings in these verses, so whether or not these will also be offered at satellite places of worship is not clear. Nevertheless, the nations—Egypt included—will still be expected to attend the feasts of God in Jerusalem or they will be disciplined by such divine measures as the removal of rainfall (Zechariah 14:16-19). God's striking of Egypt in Isaiah 19:22 may refer to these same disciplinary actions, although it could simply refer to the Assyrian oppression.

Eventually, Egypt will reconcile with God, with the people of Israel and with the Assyrians, and will become one of the leading nations in a world of peace (verses 23-25). The highway between Assyria and Egypt must necessarily run through Israel, which lies between them geographically. It is evidently the same route of return taken previously by the returning Israelite exiles from both lands (see Isaiah 11:11, 16). In this case, “the highway symbolizes good will and understanding, free and speedy access. The word, used as an image by Isaiah, indicates the close relationship between once hostile nations forged by a shared commitment to the God of the Jews. When God can say of Egypt and Assyria as well as of Israel, ‘my people’ (19:25), the world will have peace and blessing at last” (Lawrence Richards, *The Bible Reader’s Companion*, 1991, note on 19:23).

Further prophecies concerning Egypt can be found in Jeremiah 46 and Ezekiel 29–32.

Sign Against the South (Isaiah 19:1–20:6)

Apr. 4 Cont’d

Isaiah 20:1 is the only place that the Assyrian king Sargon II is actually mentioned in the Bible by name. His name here, and the defeat of Ashdod, enables us to date this episode. “Tartan”—the New King James margin has “or *the Commander in Chief*”—refers to one of the three chief officers of the Assyrian Empire (see 2 Kings 18:17).

One source describes the period this way: “Unrest in the Holy Land did not cease...and in 713-712 B.C. the Assyrians had to put down additional rebellions in Ashdod. The revolt in 712 B.C. was supported by the Ethiopian pharaoh, founder of the twenty-fifth dynasty in Egypt (Isaiah 20). According to Sargon’s inscriptions, Judah, Edom, and Moab were also involved in the revolt, though they surrendered—evidently quickly, and most of the Assyrian wrath was vent upon Ashdod. In a campaign against Ashdod and its port Asdudimmu (Ashdod-yam), Sargon also conquered Gibbethon, Ekron, and Gath. From the informative description of the capture of [the Jewish city of] Azekah ‘lying on a mountain ridge like the edge of a sword,’ it appears that this campaign was directed against Judah as well” (Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*, 1977, p. 97).

It would seem, however, that Hezekiah did not participate in the actual rebellion. Perhaps he was about to and Isaiah’s urgings prevented him from going through with it—thus saving him and his kingdom from Sargon’s full wrath. *The New Bible Commentary* explains the same events this way: “The Philistine city of Ashdod had revolted against Assyria, which promptly deposed its king [Azuri in 713]. A new ringleader, Yamani, carried on the struggle, with pledged support from Egypt and Ethiopia, and had also approached Judah. Isaiah’s powerful dissuasion turned out to be fully justified: Egypt failed to fight, Ashdod was subjugated [in 712], and Yamani, who had fled to Ethiopia, was handed over [by the fearful Egyptians] to the Assyrians’ *tender mercies*.... The year was 711” (note on 20:1-6).

In any case, neither Isaiah “nor other biblical or extrabiblical sources reveal the outcome where Hezekiah is concerned. One can only surmise that Sargon’s malevolent objectives remained unfulfilled [that is, if he had intended major action against Judah], though at least one Assyrian text refers to Judah as a tribute state, thus implying that Hezekiah was, temporarily at least, subject to Sargon” (Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, p. 413).

God told Isaiah to walk around barefoot and naked for three years as a sign of Assyria taking the Egyptians and Ethiopians captive. The term “naked” might still have allowed for a loincloth. Probably, “Isaiah’s symbolical action did not continue all this time [of three years], but *at intervals*, to keep it before the people’s mind during that period” (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown’s Commentary*, note on verse 3). The three years themselves are probably 713 through 711—from the initial defeat of Ashdod to the end of the rebellion. (The three years might not mean three full years but a time stretching across three calendar years.)

The prophecy of verses 3-4 is likely a reference to the Assyrian conquest of Ethiopian-led Egypt under Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal. However, as with the other prophecies of this section, it probably also applies to the end-time subjugation of Egypt and Ethiopia by the final Assyrian Beast power.

The “they” in verse 5 are those who are looking to Egypt for deliverance from Assyria, which would have included Judah at the time Isaiah wrote. However, if the prophecy was specific to his time it would make more sense to have said “you” if referring to Judah. In the last days, Judah will *not* be looking to *Egypt* for its deliverance—as this would require the Jewish state of Israel to be looking to the Arab world for deliverance, which is extremely unlikely. So the “they” likely refers to other end-time nations looking to Egypt or its Muslim allies for help. And the “inhabitants of this territory”

who look to Egypt for aid (verse 6) would seem to be the modern Palestinians. Just as Egypt, they will not escape conquest by the end-time Assyrian Beast.

Babylon to Fall to the Medes and Persians (Isaiah 21)

April 5

Isaiah 21:1-10 is a prophecy addressed to the “Wilderness of the Sea” (verse 1)—wilderness meaning a desert but in the sense of a *deserted*, uninhabited region. As indicated by verse 9, this apparently refers to Babylon. Various explanations are given for the label. One source says it “may be a sarcastic parody of Babylon, whose southern region on the Persian Gulf was called the ‘Land of the Sea’” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 1).

Another states: “One Greek writer gave this name to the plain on which Babylon stood, as it was divided by lakes and marshy country” (*Bible Reader’s Companion*, note on verse 1). In fact, the Chaldean rulers of Babylon were of the “Sealands” dynasty—this being the name of their district of marshlands to the south, which bordered on the Persian Gulf. Says another source: “The plain [stretching from Babylon south to Persia] was [originally] covered with the water of the Euphrates like a ‘sea’...until [the Babylonian queen] Semiramis raised great dams against it. Cyrus [of Persia, who conquered Babylon] removed these dykes, and so converted the whole country again into a vast desert[ed]-marsh” (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown’s Commentary*, note on verse 1). Indeed, this was mentioned in our highlights covering Isaiah 14:23.

The image of Babylon—and the pagan gentile empires following in its tradition—rising from the “sea” is one we find elsewhere in Scripture (Daniel 7; Revelation 13; 17). In Revelation 17 the waters—while probably representing actual waters on one level since ancient Babylon and its later successor, Rome, were both situated near the sea—are also shown to be symbolic of “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues” from which Babylon and its successor kingdoms are formed (verse 15). Yet at the same time “Babylon” can signify false religion and man’s corrupt civilization sprung from there in general, and thus a figurative desert wilderness—a place of wandering in spiritual confusion, lacking in the much-needed truth of God.

It is interesting to consider that the prophecy in Isaiah 21 may have been given immediately after the fall of Ashdod mentioned in chapter 20. Notice what happened in the wake of the Philistine defeat: “After whipping his client states, possibly including Judah, back into line, Sargon returned to Assyria to deal once more with the intractable Marduk-apla-iddina [Merodach-Baladan] of the Sealands dynasty in Babylonia” (Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, p. 409). Indeed, at this time, in 710 B.C., the Assyrians forced Merodach from power following a 10-year reign.

Yet the prophecy of chapter 21 may also have come following events in 703 B.C. The Assyrian emperor Sargon II “suffered an invasion by the Cimmerians of the north [i.e., captive Israelites] in 706. It is possible that he died in the following year as a result of these hostilities” (p. 409). Following his son Sennacherib replacing him in 705, revolts broke out around the empire.

Sennacherib “had barely come to power when he was faced with a rebellion in Babylonia led by the perennial foe of Assyria, Marduk-apla-iddina [Merodach-Baladan]. This leader of the Aramean Sealands dynasty had just returned from exile imposed upon him by Sargon, but with characteristic tenacity gained support for Babylonian independence from such widely scattered sources as Elam [or Persia] to the east and the Aramean [or Syrian] states to the west.... In any case, [after a brief reign by Merodach in Babylon in 703 B.C.] Sennacherib prevailed, took the city of Babylon, and reasserted Assyrian authority. He also undertook a systematic subjugation of the entire Sealands area” (pp. 413-414).

So was Isaiah referring to one of these episodes? There may have at least been a lesson in them. In the previous chapter, Isaiah warned the people of Judah not to put their trust in Egypt to deliver them because it would fall. The only other likely option, then, for relief from Assyria would seem to have been Babylonian revolt. Yet Isaiah was essentially telling the Jews not to put their trust in Babylon either—because it would likewise fall.

However, as in Isaiah 13, chapter 21 presents us with Babylon being overthrown not by Assyria but by Media—and chapter 21 now mentions Elam or Persia as bringing Babylon down too. Yet in Isaiah’s day the Medes and Persians were allied with the Babylonians against the Assyrian yoke. It was not until around 170 years later (in 539 B.C.) that the Neo-Babylonian Empire—ascendant after the fall of Assyria—fell to the Medes and Persians. Not surprisingly, because of this fact, many try to postdate this prophecy to after Babylon’s fall. Significant in this regard is the fact that Isaiah used the word Elam and not Persia: “The name ‘Persia’ was not in use until the captivity; it means a ‘horseman’; Cyrus first trained the Persians in horsemanship. It is a mark of authenticity that the name is not found before Daniel and Ezekiel” (*JFB Commentary*, note on verse 2).

Yet while this prophecy did find partial fulfillment in the events of 539 B.C., we should view it, as with so many other prophecies in this section, as an end-time prophecy. Supporting this likelihood is the cry “Babylon is fallen, is fallen!” in verse 9, which is repeated in Revelation 14:8 and 18:2 as applying to the end of this present, evil age.

Yet that would seem to indicate that modern Medes and Persians will be involved in the overthrow of the final Babylon. Who, then, are the Medes and Persians today? No doubt many still live in their ancient homeland of Iran. The name Iran apparently derives from “Aryan”—Indo-European people ranging from India to Europe. That some Persians later migrated eastward is well attested to by the existence of the Parsis (Parsees) in India. But to see the Persians’ northern and westward migration, we should perhaps consider the Medes first.

The first-century Roman scholar Pliny the Elder wrote in his *Natural History* of “the river Don [north of the Black Sea], where the inhabitants are said to be descended from the Medes” (Book 6, sec. 11). The Caucasus Mountains between the Black and Caspian Seas formed the northern border of the Median Empire. When conquered by Alexander the Great, many evidently fled north through the Caucasus, following the migration pattern of the Israelites and Assyrians before them. Thus, the Medes today would appear to refer to people dwelling in northwest Iran, southwest Russia and the Ukraine.

Many of the Elamites or Persians appear to have followed essentially the same course, though traveling along the *south* coast of the Black Sea as well (through northern Turkey) and going even farther into Europe. The Greeks used the term Elimaei to designate Elam near Babylon. Yet they also stated that the Elimaei lived northwest of them in the area of southern Yugoslavia (“Elimea,” *Smith’s Classical Dictionary*).

Strabo, the first-century-B.C. Greco-Roman geographer, referred to the people of Yugoslavia on the Adriatic Sea as the Eneti—from Paphlagonia in Asia Minor or Turkey (*Geography of Strabo*, p. 227). Thus the Latin word for these people was Eneti (or Veneti)—and the Germans referred to them and the other Slavic peoples in Eastern Europe as Wends. The Elamites had actually named the most famous mountain of their homeland Elwend (George Rawlinson, *Seven Great Monarchies*, chap. 1: Media)—of which Wend seems a reasonable shortening. In the Persian conquest of the Babylonian Empire, the River Orontes in northern Syria was renamed Elwend. Indeed, it appears that Persians migrated here and into Asia Minor when they ruled the area. Upon Alexander’s takeover, these appear to have continued on westward, eventually migrating into Eastern Europe.

Interestingly, a tribal territory of ancient Elam was named Kashu (*Encyclopaedia Biblica*, map, p. 4845) and in Poland we find a language called Kashubian named after a people known as the Kashub (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., “Lekhitic languages”; 11th ed., “Kashubes,” on-line at 25.1911encyclopedia.org/K/KA/KASHUBES.htm).

Thus, Elam today would seem to be many of the Iranians, a small minority of India, and many of the Slavic peoples of Eastern Europe.

According to Ezekiel 38–39, the people of eastern Eurasia will be allied together at the beginning of the Kingdom age—shortly after the return of Jesus Christ. It is likely that this alliance will have come together prior to His arrival—and that some of the various national leaders of the eastern regions constitute the “kings from the east” mentioned in Revelation 16:12. While some of these nationalities will initially participate in the end-time Babylonian or Tyrian system (Ezekiel 27; Revelation 18), they will later come *against* end-time Babylon. Thus, in the end, Media and Persia appear to again play a role in Babylon’s downfall.

Proclamations Against Edom and Arabia (Isaiah 21)

Apr. 5 Cont’d

In verses 11-12, a prophecy is given against “Dumah.” Seir, also mentioned here, is a reference to Edom (compare 34:5-17; Genesis 32:3; Ezekiel 35), either the people or the land of Idumea in what is now southern Jordan. Concerning Dumah, it was apparently an actual place “located at the intersection of the east-west trade route between Babylon and Edom and the north-south route between Palmyra (in Syria) and Edom. Dumah played a vital military and economic role in the relationship between Mesopotamia and Edom, and its fate greatly affected Edom” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 11). Dumah may also be used for all of Edom here because its name meant “silence” in Hebrew, thus implying that Edom would “soon be reduced to silence or destruction” (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown’s Commentary*, note on verse 11). Indeed, the NIV margin states that Dumah is actually a word play on the name Edom.

The Edomite asks, “What of the night?” (verse 11)—or, rather, “How much of the night is left?” The watchman, Isaiah, answers that “morning comes, and also the night” (verse 12). This is

interpreted in various ways. One way is that things will get better for the Edomites before again turning bad. Another way is that things will turn better for God's people yet turn worse for Edom (see *Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, notes on verses 11-12).

Either way, this would seem to refer in part to ancient events. Edom was about to come out from Assyrian domination for a while—only to come under Judah's dominion. And later, Edom would be subjugated by the Babylonians. Yet the prophecy may also have end-time parallels. Edom will escape out of the hand of the latter-day king of the North (Daniel 11:41). But then, when Israel and Judah are delivered at Christ's return, Edom will be destroyed (see Obadiah). The only way to escape punishment, Isaiah explains, is to "return" (Isaiah 21:12)—the Old Testament term for "repent."

Isaiah then follows with a prophecy against Arabia. Place references are Tema, modern Tayma about 200 miles southeast of Dumah in northwest Arabia, and Dedan, about 90 miles southwest of Tema. However, it is also possible that the name Tema is the origin of the name for the western coastal plain of Arabia, Thiamah, where Mecca sits (see "Arabia," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1985, Vol. 13, map on p. 872). This entire area, the Hejaz, is extremely holy to Muslims.

Reference is also made to Kedar, a son of Ishmael (compare Genesis 25:13). "The tribe seems to have been one of the most conspicuous of all the Ishmaelite tribes, and hence the rabbis call the Arabians universally by this name" ("Kedar," *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, 1986).

The year reference in verse 16 is not clear. Sargon did invade Arabia in 715 B.C. If this is what's meant then Isaiah's prophecy would be dated 716 B.C., out of order from surrounding chapters (chapter 20 being dated to 711 B.C.). Perhaps, more likely, the prophecy refers to the Simeonite attack on Edom in the days of Hezekiah about which we will soon read: "Those of the far south, Tema and Dedan, will have to succour their more exposed brother tribe of Kedar. This could mean that the trading caravans will have blundered into war-ravaged parts and returned empty-handed and starving" (*New Bible Commentary*, note on verses 13-17). This seems to have occurred before Sennacherib's invasion, thus dating this prophecy to shortly before 703 or so.

Yet it is perhaps most likely that the year prior to destruction refers to a point in the end time—perhaps a year from when light begins to dawn on the captive Israelites, at the beginning of the Day of the Lord. This would imply destruction upon Arabia at the return of Jesus Christ.

Prophecy Against the Valley of Vision; Shebna and Eliakim (Isaiah 22)

April 6

"Valley of Vision [verses 1, 5] sarcastically describes Jerusalem. Mount Zion is ironically personified in its valleys from which it could see nothing. Instead of partying on housetops, the ailing city should have been in its prayer closets" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 1).

Isaiah explained that "a day of trouble and treading down and perplexity" was coming (verse 5). In verse 6 it appears to have already come, but the words of verse 7 show that it had not yet occurred. God often speaks of things that have not yet happened as though they already have (compare Romans 4:17). The day of trouble likely refers to the impending invasion of Sennacherib in Isaiah's day. However, given the messianic reference later in the chapter—which we will take note of shortly—it is possible that the rest of the passage has a dual application, referring to events in Isaiah's day as well as the latter days. And in an end-time context, the day of trouble would represent the time of Jacob's trouble—the coming awful Great Tribulation.

Isaiah 22:6 shows the involvement of Elam. This would seem to indicate Elam attacking but perhaps not. It says Elam "bore the quiver," which could indicate that it is serving another army, perhaps even by compulsion, which would make sense if this applied to the ancient Assyrian army, which likely had Elamites and other peoples pressed into involuntary service (the Elamite nation as a whole was supportive of Babylon against Assyrian rule). Again, however, it is conceivable that the reference is dual, applying also to the end time. As modern Elam is found in Eastern Europe, Iran and India, perhaps weapons from these areas will be utilized by the end-time Assyrian army in its initial assault on the modern nations of Israel. A "quiver" in a modern context might represent a store of missiles.

Verse 8 refers to the armor of the "House of the Forest"—no doubt a reference to the "House of the Forest of Lebanon," which Solomon built. It was used as the national armory (compare 1 Kings 7:2; 10:16-17). The Jews were not relying on God but looking to their own military stockpiles. How different is that from the Israelite nations today?

As to what was transpiring in Isaiah's day, we should realize that Hezekiah was making preparations for a rebellion against Assyria. He was evidently in talks with Egypt, certain of the Philistines and Merodach-Baladan of Babylon about throwing off the Assyrian yoke. Remember that

a general spirit of rebellion broke out all over the empire following the death of Sargon in 705. Within two years, in 703, Merodach-Baladan was back on the throne of Babylon for a short stint. Indeed, this prophecy likely dates to the period between 703 and 701, the latter date being when Sennacherib comes to stem the rebellious tide. In the meantime, Hezekiah and Jerusalem's other leaders were making preparations for war.

That brings us to Isaiah 22:9-11. The city of David is damaged (verse 9) by great numbers of houses being torn down to expand and fortify the city wall (verse 10). "Confirming this, Israeli archaeologist Nahman Avigad, in the course of his excavations of the old Jewish Quarter, uncovered a massive 130-foot stretch of city wall, partly built directly onto bedrock, and partly on top of houses only recently constructed. The dating of the pottery in these houses provided clear evidence that the huge wall was part of this same Hezekiah-directed fortification effort" (Ian Wilson, *The Bible Is History*, 1999, p. 162).

Verse 11 appears to refer to the pool and tunnel also mentioned in 2 Kings 20:20, referring to "improvements in the water supply of Jerusalem in preparation for possible attack (compare Isa 22.8b-11). This conduit, with an identifying inscription has been found and is now popularly called Hezekiah's Tunnel, or the Siloam Tunnel (compare 2 Chr 32.30). It runs from [the spring of] Gihon (see 1 Kings 1.33 n.), which was outside the city wall, to the Pool of Siloam, which was inside the wall. Extending 1700 feet through solid rock, this tunnel was a remarkable engineering achievement in its time" (*Oxford Annotated Bible*, note on 2 Kings 20:20-21).

"At the southern end of the tunnel, workmen inscribed in ancient Hebrew script on the walls of the tunnel a vivid description of the completion of the tunnel on the day when workmen cutting from the two sides met. The inscription is now in the Istanbul Museum. The text runs in part: '... while there were still three cubits to be cut through, (there was heard) the voice of a man calling to his fellow, for there was *an overlap* in the rock on the right (and on the left). And when the tunnel was driven through, the quarrymen hewed (the rock) each man toward his fellow, axe against axe; and the water flowed from the spring toward the reservoir for 1,200 cubits, and the height of the rock above the head(s) of the quarrymen was one hundred cubits'" (E.M. Blaiklock and R.K. Harrison, *The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, 1983, p. 414).

(These are just some of many examples of the important role that archaeology is playing in the proof of the Bible. To find out more, request or download our free booklet *Is the Bible True?*)

We will read of further developments in this project in 2 Chronicles 32:2-5, 30. Sadly, these verses continue to point out Judah's trust in its own defenses instead of trusting God.

Verse 13—"Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"—is cited by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:32 to describe the futility of life if there were no resurrection. If we were living only for today, then this could logically be our whole pursuit. But God has revealed otherwise. And God had revealed to Jerusalem that they needed to draw close to Him in sincere repentance. Through the Bible, He proclaims the same thing to the people of Judah and Israel today (and, by extension, to all people). Yet because of their flippant attitude—"Hey, might as well live it up because we're going to die anyway"—God says they *will* die (verse 14).

In connection with Hezekiah's preparations for Sennacherib's impending attack, a change in leadership is demanded. Shebna has been the "steward" who is "over the house"—like a modern prime minister or chief of staff. He is accused of making a tomb "on high" (verse 16). Archaeologists have actually found a lintel fragment of a tomb with Hebrew script from Hezekiah's time, which stood in Silwan, on the steep slope across the valley from David's city, in full view of the inhabitants of ancient Jerusalem. The fragment (now in the British Museum) says it belonged to a person who was "over the house." The name, partially destroyed, ends with the common Hebrew ending *-yahu*, meaning God—and the name Shebna is thought to be a short form of the name Shebanyahu or Shebaniah, applying to someone else in Nehemiah 9:4. Many scholars believe this fragment was part of Shebna's sepulcher.

"*Pride* is the sin of this official, who like the pharaohs of Egypt sought to build himself a lasting monument while his land was in peril. Perhaps we can see a parallel between Shebna and those modern elected officials who put reelection above the good of the nation" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on Isaiah 22:15).

The Bible says Shebna is to be driven from his office, pulled down and dragged away into a large country and killed—and his job given to Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah. We will later see that when Sennacherib sends his representatives to Jerusalem, they are met by Eliakim, who is said at that time to be "over the house" (36:3, KJV), and either the same or a different Shebna is the *scribe*. There is

no evidence that Shebna the steward was dragged away, say to Assyria, although it is possible that he was.

It is of course possible that this prophecy did not apply to the present Shebna and Eliakim of Isaiah's day—or did not primarily apply to them. They could have been used as types of others. Eliakim, incidentally, means “God Will Establish.”

Some have seen links in the passage to a later “son of Hilkiah,” Jeremiah the prophet—who was apparently given stewardship over the house of David, overseeing its transfer to another land. Furthermore, we *know* that Eliakim represents the future Messiah. Verse 22, regarding the key of David and opening and shutting, is specifically said to apply to Jesus in Revelation 3:7. This perhaps ties in with the “keys of the kingdom” given to God's Church (Matthew 16:19)—seemingly related to the “key of knowledge” (Luke 11:52) of salvation in the Kingdom (compare Matthew 23:13). It ties back to David because Jesus Christ will inherit the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6-7), and His saints will share His throne—the Davidic throne—with Him (Revelation 3:21).

Yet why would the Messiah, as King, be taking over a steward's office? Consider that when He is crowned as King of the Kingdom, Christ will actually be the Steward of the Kingdom of God the Father. Indeed, this is parallel to the past history of the Davidic monarchy, wherein the human ruler actually rules as a steward for the *real* king—God.

The *rejected* steward, Shebna, if a scenario of Jeremiah's day or the end time is intended on some level, could apply to a later steward—that is, a prime minister or a monarch—in Jeremiah's day dragged off to Babylon at Jerusalem's fall, or in the end time dragged away into Israel's final captivity.

Prophecy Against Tyre (Isaiah 23)

April 7

Chapter 23 is a prophecy against Tyre, a chief city of the Phoenicians—inextricably linked to Sidon, of which Tyre was the primary colony. Tarshish refers to lands in the west, generally Spain—where sat the Phoenician colony of Tartessus. Chittim (KJV) is translated Cyprus in the NKJV, although it can mean “western lands” generally (see NKJV margin). The Sidonians and Tyrians are told to “cross over” to these “western lands” (see verse 12). This is likely referring to their fleeing to Spain and their colonies in northwest Africa, such as Carthage. Shihor (verse 3) is generally recognized as another name for the Nile (see Jeremiah 2:18).

Verse 13 mentions “the Assyrian” (KJV) who founded Babylon (by implication) for the Chaldeans. This could refer back to the founding of Babel by Nimrod, from which Asshur went out to build various Assyrian cities (compare Genesis 10:8-12). In this sense the Assyrians founded Babylon—that is, the original *empire* of Babylon. But more likely this is referring to the later involvement of Assyria in that land, and to the city that had been reestablished under Assyrian rule more recently. Just as Babylon was brought to ruin (and would be again), so would Tyre be destroyed.

Sargon had completed the Assyrians' five-year siege of Tyre in 720 B.C. It is possible that this prophecy of Isaiah is out of chronological order and was actually given previous to many other prophecies we've been reading—back to before Tyre's fall. However, it seems more likely that Tyre's destruction referred to here is the one the Babylonians would bring about around 573 B.C.

Verses 15 and 17 refer to a 70-year period. This may refer to basically the same 70-year period Jeremiah refers to (Jeremiah 25:11-12)—the time from Nebuchadnezzar II beginning his reign to the fall of Babylon (609-539 B.C.). The “days of one king” may mean the days of one kingdom—that of Babylon—or possibly the lifespan of a man.

Of course, the prophetic statements here may all represent events that are yet to come. In the highlights on Isaiah 13, we saw how the ancient Babylonians became the Romans—as did many of the Phoenicians. Incidentally, this directly ties the Chaldeans and Phoenicians together, as they are in the current passage. In any event, the Phoenicians were the merchants of the ancient world. And they were also the merchants of the Middle Ages and Renaissance—the merchants of Venice and many other European cities having descended from the Syro-Phoenician traders spread across southern Europe.

Tyre was the “marketplace for the nations” (23:3). You can read about the rise of another “Tyre” as a great end-time trading block in Ezekiel 26:1–28:19. This trading block is referred to in Revelation 18 as Babylon. In Revelation 17, in a more religious context, we see a direct tie-in to Isaiah 23:17: “She will return to her hire, and commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth” (compare Revelation 17:2). Perhaps we can see a connection in the “virgin daughter of Sidon” (Isaiah 23:12)—that is, a *supposed* virgin but really a harlot (verse 16). Jezebel, daughter of the king of Sidon, was a direct type of the end-time religious and commercial system that

will soon plunge the world into the final crisis leading up to the return of Christ (compare Revelation 2:20-23).

Further prophecies against Tyre can be found in Joel 3:4-8, Amos 1:9-10 and Zechariah 9:1-4.

“The Curse Has Devoured the Earth” (Isaiah 24)

April 8

Isaiah 24–27 is often referred to as the “little Apocalypse” or the “Isaiah Apocalypse.” That’s because it describes, in broad, general terms, the great cosmic events that will mark the end of the age—as described in the book of Revelation.

Verse 5 of chapter 24 mentions the breaking of the “everlasting covenant.” And the implication is that all the earth’s inhabitants are part of this covenant arrangement. Yet when did God make a covenant with all humanity? Says *The Bible Reader’s Companion*: “Many see this as a reference to God’s covenant with Noah, never again to destroy the Earth by a flood (cf. Gen. 9:11-17). That covenant also implies human moral responsibility, for it makes man responsible to God to account for shed blood (9:4-6). Thus the laws and statutes here are not those of the O[ld] T[estament] law [that is, the totality of specific obligations given to Israel under the Sinai Covenant]. They are natural moral laws, expressed in human conscience, which God has imbedded in human nature, to which Paul refers in Rom. 2:12-16)” (note on verse 5).

The Nelson Study Bible comments: “The usual language concerning a breach of the covenant is applied more generally to the wicked nations. Perhaps these words speak of that innate sense of right and wrong—the conscience—that God has given to all humankind, but which everyone violates (Rom. 1:18-32; compare Acts 24:16)” (verse 5).

Actually, God did give laws at the time of Adam, but man rejected them—and, as a consequence, God destroyed mankind except for Noah and his family. Noah understood God’s laws and passed them on. But man has transgressed them and changed them to suit himself. And, as mentioned, man as a whole has violated the wonderful gift of conscience that God has given to every person. The earth is defiled by all of this—especially, as stated, by the innocent blood shed on it. So it lies under a curse. And God will bring great havoc on the world.

Some, we should note, misquote this section of the Bible, using it to “prove” that the returning Christ totally destroys the earth and all life on it—and that His thousand-year reign that follows is then over a desolate, uninhabited earth. In support of this wrong teaching, they cite the first half of verse 6, which speaks of the scorching of the earth’s inhabitants. But they leave out the end of the verse—“and few men are left.” Here is a classic illustration of using the Bible to prove an already preconceived idea instead of allowing Scripture to interpret itself. For reading all of verse 6 shows that mankind, though greatly diminished by end-time plague and war, isn’t totally destroyed. Clearly, there will still be people left alive.

Verse 16 gives the impression of people rejoicing in song, while the prophet is bemoaning the “treacherous dealers,” perhaps referring to false messiahs or the False Prophet (see Matthew 24:24; Revelation 16:13).

Then a mighty earthquake is described. Cataclysmic events befall the planet, and the “windows from on high are open” (Isaiah 24:18-20)—apparently picturing the great upheaval and hail to come at the end (compare Revelation 8:8-11; 11:19; 16:18-21). Then there is mention of the “host of exalted ones,” in addition to the kings of the earth, being punished and imprisoned for many days, which could include the human armies that assail Christ at His return as well as Satan and His demons (verses 21-22; compare Revelation 19:20–20:3).

The chapter concludes with the reign of the Lord in Zion (verse 23; compare Revelation 21:22-25).

“For You Have Done Wonderful Things” (Isaiah 25)

April 9

In Isaiah 25, following the destruction of His enemies, God provides a marvelous feast for the whole earth—a wonderful world of plenty for those who are ruled by Jesus Christ. This is what is pictured each year by God’s great fall festival, the Feast of Tabernacles (see Leviticus 23:33-43; Deuteronomy 16:13-15). As was mentioned in our highlights on Isaiah 4, the reign of Christ over all nations will be like one long, expanding Feast of Tabernacles—during which more and more people will submit their lives to God until the actual Feast of Tabernacles is observed by all peoples (see Zechariah 14:16).

God will remove the veil of spiritual blindness that now lies over all nations (verse 7). The apostle Paul mentions it in 2 Corinthians 4: “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this world [Satan the devil] has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them” (verses

3-4). In the wonderful world that is coming, Satan, who “deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9), will be bound in prison (20:1-3)—and all nations will finally see. Not immediately of course. While some people will recognize right away that Christ has liberated them, for others it will take longer. But eventually, through a program of education directed by Christ and the resurrected saints, the true knowledge of God will come to fill the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9).

Yet for the present age, the veil remains. Even now, though, God lifts the veil for each person whom He calls to be part of the firstfruits of salvation—His Church. Rending and opening the spiritual veil, allowing access to God and His spiritual knowledge, has been made possible through the rending of Christ’s body and His resultant death, all of which was symbolized by God’s tearing of the veil in the temple at the very moment He died (Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 10:20).

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul discusses the subject of the resurrection and concludes that when we have received immortality, “then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’” (verse 54). That saying is found here—in Isaiah 25:8.

Song of Trust; Deliverance of Israel (Isaiah 26–27)

April 10

Chapter 26 is a song about the end time. “In that day” (verse 1) means the Day of the Lord—but the bright part of it beyond the gloom. Salvation is at last coming to God’s people, which will lead to the salvation of *all* people.

Several themes are addressed. The chapter begins by emphasizing righteousness and trust in God. Look again at verse 3. What a wonderful promise this is. If we trust in God, come what may, we will have perfect peace—inner peace of mind or, as Paul puts it, “the peace of God that surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7).

The chapter goes on to address the punishment and reform of the wicked.

Verse 19 describes the resurrection. “Some argue that this is a figurative application of the idea of resurrection. But there could have been no figure of speech if no belief that ‘their bodies will rise’ existed in ancient Israel. And what a wonder this is. Storms of judgment may sweep over our earth. Wars may devastate, and disease may ravage. Famines may decimate the land, while starvation stalks our families. There are indeed dread fates that are to be feared. But these are not history’s last words! At the end of history—both the history of nations, and the personal history of each individual—the shout of God’s promise echoes. ‘Your dead will live; their bodies will rise!’ What a truth to hold fast in troubled times” (*Bible Reader’s Companion*, note on verse 19).

Verses 20-21 mention God directing His people to take refuge “until the indignation is past.” This ties in with other verses related to a place of protection for some of God’s saints during the final days before Christ’s return (see Zephaniah 2:1-3; Revelation 12:14). God will also preserve alive a remnant of the physical descendants of Israel.

Leviathan (Isaiah 27:1) is mentioned in several places in Scripture (compare Job 41; Psalm 74:14; 104:26). It may be a literal sea creature, but here, as in other places, it is apparently a reference to Satan, the serpent and dragon of Revelation 12, and the “beast from the sea” (Revelation 13), the resurgent gentile empire of the last days, the heads of which are portrayed as emerging from Satan (12:3; 13:1-2).

Finally, God turns to the wonderful restoration of national Israel that’s coming. His vineyard was forsaken (Isaiah 5:1-5). But now He will tend it again (27:2-4). The great trumpet will call the exiles of Israel to return to the land of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Their emaciated and war-ravaged population, dwindled down to a small fraction of their former numbers, will again begin to blossom and grow (verse 6)—in the very best environment possible.

Micah Speaks Out (Micah 2)

April 11

Micah’s prophecies continued during the days of Ahaz and on into the reign of Hezekiah (Micah 1:1). Sadly, even during Hezekiah’s righteous reign, Judah had devolved into serious corruption.

“Imagine a society that allows powerful citizens to seize property and land whenever they want, especially from those who are too weak or poor to defend themselves. That was happening in Micah’s day. The wealthy and powerful of Judah were grabbing real estate that belonged to others, by force if necessary (Mic 2.2; 3.10). The prophet condemned this practice, which amounted to robbery and murder. But the leaders of the country allowed it to go unchecked. In fact, they not only denied justice to the poor, but as good as skinned them alive in order to enrich themselves (3.1-3; compare Pr 22.16).

“In seizing the lands of their countrymen, the powerful businesspeople of Judah were violating key principles of the Law. They were openly breaking the Ten Commandments (Ex 20.13, 15, 17), the law forbidding permanent sale of land (Lv 25.23-28), and the law against changing landmarks (Dt

19.14). The Lord promised retribution in kind by allowing foreigners to seize the lands of Judah (Mic 2.4, 5)” (“Illegal Search and Seizure,” *Word in Life Bible*, sidebar on 2:2).

But the people don’t want to hear what Micah has to say. Notice the paraphrase in the Contemporary English Version: “‘Enough of your preaching!’ That’s what you tell me. ‘We won’t be disgraced, so stop preaching!’ ... Get out of here you crooks! You’ll find no rest here. You’re not fit to belong to the LORD’s people, and you will be destroyed.’ The only prophet you want is a liar who will say, ‘Drink and get drunk!’” (verses 6, 10-11).

The wrongdoing and evil attitudes of the people described in this chapter could well apply to people today—and so can the warnings. Indeed, it seems they do, for God addresses all Israel in verse 12. But here the message takes a positive turn. God says He will eventually assemble all of Israel from all the lands to which they have been scattered—a humbled remnant left after the great destruction that is coming—to at last walk uprightly in His ways. The message of God is ever one of hope. Despite the wrongdoing of man and the punishment he heaps upon himself, God is merciful beyond all imagination. And He will save His people yet.

We will read the rest of Micah soon.

12-DAY BREAK

April 12-23

Starting April 12, there is break in the program for 12 days. Regular reading resumes April 24. (There are four planned breaks in each calendar year. This allows more time for personal study at these occasions and perhaps an opportunity for you to catch up in the reading if you have fallen behind.)

Here a Little and There a Little; Covenant With Death (Isaiah 28)

April 24

In the previous two chapters of Isaiah, he had focused on the wonderful future that awaits Israel and Judah. But now he returns to his dire theme of warning. In this chapter we have first a condemnation of Ephraim followed by one addressed to the “scornful men...in Jerusalem” (verse 14).

While this prophecy could have been given earlier, its position in the text would seem to date it to shortly before Sennacherib’s invasion of 701 B.C.—two decades after the deportation of Ephraim. So the warning to Ephraim, the chief of the northern ten tribes, was very likely a message intended for Israel of the last days. Indeed, the wording of verses 5-6 and particularly verse 22—“destruction determined even upon the whole earth”—makes that rather clear.

Verses 1-8 show that the people of Israel have become drunk. While this could denote a problem with actual alcoholic drunkenness, it is more likely meant to signify spiritual drunkenness, as in other scriptural passages. The people become practically intoxicated through false ideologies and their own stubbornness. In this state, they are incapable of understanding what God has to say to them—and thus are blind to His truth.

Verses 9-10 explain the way God reveals knowledge—and it is a major key to understanding the Bible. It is not merely as a babe drinking milk (compare Hebrews 5:13). Rather, we must *work* at studying the Bible. It is somewhat like assembling a jigsaw puzzle, with the message of truth scattered throughout its pages. We must search out all that the Bible has to say about a particular subject—bringing scattered information together—to understand God’s truth about that matter: “For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little” (Isaiah 28:10).

Some reject this concept by pointing to the context of the people’s blindness and drunkenness and the repetition of the above phrase in verse 13, where it is added, “...that they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught.” But that is actually consistent with interpreting verses 9-10 as relating the proper way to understand. In fact, it should help us to better grasp the point God is making. God has revealed His truth here a little and there a little for this very purpose—so that when those in the world, whose minds are willingly closed to His truth, attempt to comprehend it, they are unable. To them it seems one great mass of confusion—indeed it seems drunkenness when they themselves are the ones who are spiritually drunk. And they fall backwards over it, tripping and stumbling. But to those God has called to understand His purpose, it all comes together—and it all makes sense. For the same reason Jesus spoke in parables—so the multitudes would *not* understand but His true followers would (Luke 8:10).

The context, then, is this. God has arranged His Word so that spiritually drunk people are unable to comprehend it. They trip and stumble over it as drunkards trip and stumble in general. They refuse to hear (Isaiah 28:12)—indeed, they refuse to hear and heed the way to understand given in verses 9-10—so they remain drunk. That was true in Isaiah’s time—and, sadly, it remains true today.

The mention of the foundation and cornerstone (verse 16), quoted by the apostles Peter and Paul as referring to Jesus Christ (Romans 9:33; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:6), *also* reveals this prophecy to have a later application. Paul emphasized that “whoever believes” (Isaiah 28:16; Romans 10:11) was not restricted to the Jews—and explained this as opening the way for the gentiles to come to God. Moreover, Isaiah 28:11-12 is quoted by Paul in discussing the subject of speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:21).

Isaiah mentions Jerusalem’s leaders making a “covenant with death” or “agreement with Sheol [the grave]” (Isaiah 28:14-15, 18). “The phrase simply means that the people of Israel [or Judah] thought they had an agreement worked out by which they could avoid death. But God will soon annul that and strike His people with judgment (28:28)” (*Bible Reader’s Companion*, note on verse 15). In Isaiah’s day, perhaps this applied to the nation’s agreement with Egypt or Babylon to defend against Assyria. Yet, because some of this passage apparently refers to the end time as we’ve seen, the covenant with death may as well. In that context, it could refer to an Israeli pact or treaty with Europe that may initially preserve the Jewish state—an agreement such as that made with Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B.C. (see Daniel 11:23) and later with the Romans. None of these agreements has preserved the people of the Holy Land—and neither would any made in the end time.

Isaiah 28 contains some powerful imagery from Israel’s history in verse 21. The mention of God rising up as at Mount Perazim refers back to a battle David fought with the Philistines when they sought to get rid of him soon after he became king of the combined northern and southern tribes (compare 2 Samuel 5:17-20; 1 Chronicles 14:8-11). The “Valley of Gibeon” refers to the famous “Joshua’s long day” battle against the Amorites in defense of Gibeon, when God not only prevented the sun from setting, but also used hailstones to kill even more Amorites than the Israelites killed with the sword (compare Joshua 10:6-14).

What should be disconcerting to the Israelites is that in this prophecy God’s wrath is directed against *them* rather than against their enemies.

Finally, in the last few verses of Isaiah 28, God uses some harvesting analogies that contain both a warning and some encouragement. The farmer uses his judgment on how much the grain needs to be ground. God, the farmer, will continue to “grind” Israel through trials as long as He determines it is necessary. It’s not up to Israel, “the grain” in the analogies, to say when God should bring their trials to an end. But God adds two encouraging thoughts. He reminds Israel that He is aware of the fact that some types of grain need delicate threshing methods, lest the grain be ruined. To be sure, some of the trials He allows His people to endure are truly “gentle” by comparison to what they could be without His oversight. The other point is that, regardless of how much threshing needs to be done, it’s only part of the process. That is, Israel can count on the fact that at some point, “the grinding”—that is, the trials—will cease, and God will move on to the next part of His plan.

As David wrote in Psalm 103, “For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust” and “the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting” (verses 14, 17).

Message to Ariel (Isaiah 29)

April 25

It is apparent that in spite of Hezekiah’s faithfulness, the nation as a whole has not made the turnaround God requires.

Jerusalem is referred to as “Ariel.” Some translate this name as “Lion of God”—the lion being the emblem of Judah and its kings. Others view the name as meaning “Altar Hearth”—seeing Jerusalem as the place of sacrifice and that Jerusalem itself will be made a sacrifice in its coming destruction. Yet Jerusalem was not destroyed in Isaiah’s day. The Assyrians laid siege to it, as described in verse 3, but they did not enter and destroy the city.

It is not clear whether verses 5-8 are referring to Jerusalem’s destruction by a great multitude of enemies or to the destruction of the enemies themselves. A seemingly parallel passage in Isaiah 17:12-14 would appear to argue for the latter. In the end time, Jerusalem will be initially invaded and trampled down by foreigners (Revelation 11:2). But, leaving the city at the very end to gather at Megiddo (16:16), these forces will return with others at Christ’s return to be wiped out (19:19-21; Joel 3:2, 12-14).

The first part of Isaiah 29:10 is used by Paul to describe how God has temporarily blinded the Israelites (compare Romans 11:8, Deuteronomy 29:4). Part of this blindness is accomplished, as the last part of Isaiah 29:10 explains, through the removal of righteous teachers. All that is left to the people then is God’s Word. And yet people won’t even seriously look at what the Bible has to say even when they are asked to. Isaiah 29:11-12 profoundly summarizes their two main excuses for not reading it. The “literate” (educated religious leaders) claim it is no use to try because parts of the

Bible are mysteriously sealed from human understanding, and the “illiterate” (the common people) claim it is no use to try because understanding the Bible requires more education than they have.

Jesus quoted verse 13 in chastising the Pharisees for their hypocrisy (Matthew 15:8-9; Mark 7:6-7). People’s religion can become hollow—appearing righteous to the outward observer but in reality substituting human tradition and reason for God’s actual instructions. They lack heartfelt desire to really to listen to what God has to say. And again, Paul chose verse 14 of Isaiah 29 to support his discussion about how the wise of this world do not understand the truth of God (1 Corinthians 1:19). It is thus a prophecy of how God would use His servants to demonstrate this fact.

One lesson we should draw from this passage in Isaiah 29—that is, verses 9-14—is the danger in people looking too much to the instruction they receive from their spiritual leaders and not ultimately to God and His Word. People can add their own ideas to God’s Word and His revealed way of worship. Even if a leader is righteous, people must be careful about placing too much trust in him. He is certainly not perfect. And if people are relying too much on human leaders to guide them, then God may see fit to remove that leadership as in verse 10 and leave them with blind guides instead. This is basically the way God worked with His people throughout the time of the judges and the Jewish monarchy. God would provide strong righteous leadership for a time—and then withdraw it—over and over and over again. In so doing, each generation was tested to see who was merely following men and who really followed the true God to the point of *continuing* to follow Him even when the righteous leadership was withdrawn and wicked influences prevailed.

Thankfully, Israel as a whole will at last come to know God’s truth and live by it. Verses 18 and 24 foretell the time when all people will have their spiritual eyes and ears (their minds) opened to read and understand God’s Word.

“Speak to Us Smooth Things”; “This Is the Way; Walk in It” (Isaiah 30) April 26

Because of the threats against them from the Assyrian Empire to the north, Israel and Judah sought help from the empire to the south—Egypt. Hoshea of Israel had sought help from So, king of Egypt (2 Kings 17:4)—to no avail. Judah apparently did so during Hezekiah’s reign, as described by the Assyrian general who attacked Jerusalem (Isaiah 36:6). And they did not seek God’s counsel in the matter.

Isaiah is told to write the message from God on a scroll—“that it may be for time to come, forever and ever” (verse 8). Yes, it was a message for Isaiah’s day. But it is one for our day too—the very reason we are reading it right now! The people didn’t want to hear God’s commandments (verse 9). They didn’t want to hear any warning message (verse 10). In fact, they demanded that their religious leaders tell them only the things they wanted to hear.

It is the same today. People do not like correction and rebuke, as needful as they are: “It’s dangerous for a patient to ask [his or] her doctor only for good news. Once a serious illness is diagnosed it can be treated. If that same illness is simply denied, it is likely to kill. It’s the same with God’s words through the prophets. Their warnings may not be pleasant. But only if we listen and take them to heart is there hope” (*Bible Reader’s Companion*, note on verse 10).

Despite the rebellion of the people, God will at last humble them and bring them to repentance—offering them salvation at the return of Jesus Christ. And they will at last flourish.

In Isaiah 11:9, God said of the millennial rule of Jesus Christ, “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain.” And now we get a glimpse of how this will be ensured. God says: “Your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left” (29:20-21).

What this is saying is that godly teachers will no longer be persecuted and driven into a corner—out of sight and ignored. Instead, people will generally welcome God’s guidance. Moreover, it is stated that when people start to veer out of line from God’s law, a voice will remind them of what they should do. (We will consider what this means in a moment.) The voices will be those of their teachers, whom they will at times actually see. And amazingly, the teachers, the priesthood of that time, will be the glorified followers of Jesus Christ from this age—at last made perfect to rule with Him over all nations.

Now, what are we to make of this instructive intervention? It clearly does not refer simply to general instruction. A word “behind” someone implies that he is caught in some action. So does that mean people will be completely prevented from sinning every time they start to entertain a wrong thought? That just does not make any sense. People will still have to choose the right way and then exercise the character to do right and think right continually, for they must develop holy righteous

character through this process. It is most likely that people will be allowed to make mistakes in order to learn from them—perhaps even commit crimes like lying and stealing. Where there are flesh-and-blood human beings, there are a host of problems. And no doubt, there will be even then.

Yet imagine if a person were about to commit a serious violent crime against another person—rape or murder for instance. Surely the incidence of such attempts would be diminished through general righteous instruction. But that alone would not utterly eliminate impulsive actions. God, however, says that people will not be allowed to hurt or destroy in all of His Kingdom. The answer? They will hear a word behind them—to mercifully guide them into right thinking if they will be so led. And if not, they will be restrained and perhaps punished. God’s saints, the “policemen” of the world to come, will not allow people to afflict terrible atrocities on one another. Such evil is allowed today because this is not God’s world. The Kingdom age is a different story—for then it *will* be God’s world.

We can perhaps also envision people who go through a period of drifting from God and His ways. Eventually, such people may need to be directly confronted by their teachers. The fact is that we don’t really know how often such intervention will be required. It will probably be reserved for drastic situations rather than as a matter of course. On the other hand, people seeing their glorified teachers and receiving general instruction from them will likely be more commonplace.

If you commit to God now and remain faithful to Him, yours will be one of the voices providing guidance and direction to human beings in that amazing time to come.

Finally, God states that He will be the One to destroy the Assyrians, not Egypt (verse 31). This is apparently part of the prophecy of end-time events, of which the destruction of Sennacherib’s army in Isaiah’s day was a forerunner. Notice the reference to Tophet in verse 33. “Tophet, located south of Jerusalem, was the place where the valleys of Hinnom and Kidron met. It was probably a deep, wide pit containing a bonfire of blazing wood, where children had at times been burned to death as offerings to pagan deities (2 Kin. 23:10; Jer. 7:32, 32; 19:6, 11-14). The area has filled in significantly through the centuries” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Isaiah 30:33).

It is interesting to note that God says Tophet was prepared for the ruler of Assyria—here a reference to the end-time European dictator known as “the Beast” in Revelation. God said in Joel 3 that the destruction on His enemies at the end would occur in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, which is often identified with the Kidron Valley (see highlights on Joel 3). And Jesus used Gehenna (*Gai Hinnom*—the “Valley of Hinnom” outside Jerusalem where trash was burned) to represent the coming “lake of fire,” which, according to the book of Revelation, will burn up the wicked. In Revelation 19:20, we learn that the Beast and his accomplice the False Prophet will be cast into the “lake of fire,” which appears to be a reference to this place of Tophet, where the Kidron and Hinnom Valleys meet. Christ will evidently ignite Hinnom (Isaiah 30:33) and will perhaps keep it burning throughout the Millennium, since Satan (the *ultimate* ruler of Assyria) is cast into the lake of fire where the Beast and False Prophet were cast—and He is cast there at the end of the thousand years (Revelation 20:10). Thus it is a fire in the same place if not the very same fire. This fire will eventually engulf and purify the entire earth, burning up all the incorrigibly wicked (compare verses 13-15; 21:8; 2 Peter 3:10-12; Malachi 4:1, 3).

Deliverance Is from God; The Righteous King (Isaiah 31–32)

April 27

Chapter 31 restates much of the theme of chapter 30: The people were looking to Egypt for help instead of looking to God. And ultimately Assyria would fall, but not because of Egypt. This was true of the destruction that came upon Sennacherib’s army in Isaiah’s day. And it will also be true of what happens at the return of Jesus Christ—when He destroys the armies of the nations, including Assyria, that come against Him.

Indeed, this is all primarily an end-time prophecy, since chapter 32 carries right on from God’s victory. The king who would reign in righteousness was not a reference to Hezekiah, who already sat on the throne of Judah. Rather, this speaks of the reign of the Messiah. Verses 5-8 describe how, under His righteous rule, there will be no more labeling of right as wrong and wrong as right. Everything will be seen for what it truly is. Evil will be decried and judged, and good will at last be exalted.

Verse 10 says, “In a year and some days...” The King James Version has “many days and years.” The literal wording is “days upon a year” (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown’s Commentary*, note on verse 10). If it really does mean a year and some days, this was perhaps a reference by Isaiah to the coming destruction of Sennacherib in 701 B.C. The women and daughters of verses 9-11 are possibly understood to mean “the cities and villages of Judea” (note on verses 9-20). Many of them will be

ravaged and destroyed. Jerusalem will not be: “Not Jerusalem itself, but other cities destroyed by Sennacherib in his march.... However, the prophecy, in its full accomplishment, refers to the utter desolation of Judea and its *capital* [Jerusalem] by Rome [soon after Christ’s first coming], and subsequently [by the end-time resurrection of Rome—the final Assyria and Babylon], previous to the second coming of the King (Ps. 118:26; Luke 13:35; 19:38); ‘the joyous city’ is in this view, Jerusalem” (note on verse 13).

But the days of trouble will not last forever. On the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given to the apostles, Peter cited the book of Joel to explain what was occurring (Acts 2:16-21; Joel 2:28-32). Of course, prophecies of God pouring out His Spirit were not limited to Joel. Isaiah 32:15, for instance, also describes this outpouring—though, as with Joel, its ultimate fulfillment is yet to occur, when God’s Spirit is available to all mankind (see also Isaiah 44:3; Proverbs 1:23; Ezekiel 39:29; Zechariah 12:10).

It is this outpouring of God’s Spirit, in concert with the direct rule of Jesus Christ, that will at last bring peace to the world. For God’s Spirit (Isaiah 32:15) enables righteousness (verse 16)—the keeping of God’s commandments (Psalm 119:172). And the keeping of God’s commandments results in peace (Isaiah 32:17)—which Jesus Himself will maintain throughout His rule (verse 18).

Ambassadors of Peace Weep; Then Jerusalem a Quiet Home (Isaiah 33) April 28

This “woe differs from the others in that it is addressed to Assyria, not to Judah [that is, it starts out that way]. By focusing exclusively on Assyria’s defeat and Judah’s salvation, the prophecy magnifies Judah’s exalted King (vv. 3, 5, 10). This woe oracle consists of an introduction of the main themes of the oracle (vv. 1-6); an emphasis on Judah’s need for salvation and the Lord’s provision of that need (vv. 7-13), and its spiritual impact on sinners (vv. 14-16); and a conclusion showing the majestic King in His beauty (vv. 17-24)” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on chap. 33).

In verse 7, we see how the hopes of the ambassadors for peace have been dashed. How often this has been true—particularly of Jerusalem. This ancient city’s name means “Possession of Peace.” But of all the war-wracked and violent places on the earth, Jerusalem has been one of the worst. Thankfully, God will at last intervene for His people. He will defeat the enemies of peace and establish it permanently. Jesus will reign in Jerusalem—a “quiet home.” It will at long last live up to its name and truly be the city of peace.

Incidentally, many believe that America’s Founding Fathers considered verse 22 as part of their justification for establishing three separate branches of government in the United States—the judicial, legislative and executive branches.

The Day of the Lord’s Vengeance; Followed by Paradise (Isaiah 34–35) April 29

That chapter 34 is a prophecy of the last days is clear from the reference to the heavens being dissolved and “rolled up like a scroll,” a picture also presented in the heavenly signs of Revelation 6:13-14. Some see this terminology as descriptive of a mushroom cloud.

The prophecy concerns multinational devastation to occur during the Day of the Lord, focusing on God’s judgment against Edom (Idumea). Other prophecies against Edom can be found in Isaiah 63:1-6, Jeremiah 49:7-22, Ezekiel 25:12-14, Ezekiel 35, Amos 1:11-12, Obadiah 1-14 and Malachi 1:2-5.

The Day of the Lord is described as the time of God’s vengeance on the nations for their affliction of Zion—perhaps referring to the evil they have done to both physical Israel and spiritual Israel, the latter meaning the Church of God. And God tells us that this period of final vengeance will last for a year (Isaiah 34:8). In Revelation 6:17, the heavenly signs are said to introduce the “great day of His wrath.” Following these signs in Revelation is the blowing of seven trumpets, each heralding titanic, cataclysmic world upheaval. It appears, then, that these trumpets are blown over the course of this final “year of recompense.”

The waste and destruction that will come on the land of Edom (Isaiah 34:9-15)—with its becoming a habitation for unclean animals—seems very much to parallel what will happen to Babylon (Isaiah 13:19-22; 14:22-23; Jeremiah 50:39; 51:37), wherein the wasteland of such animals is perhaps symbolic of the prison for Satan and his demons (compare Revelation 18:2). And yet end-time Babylon is evidently to be identified with Rome. Interestingly, Jewish commentaries have traditionally identified Edom with Rome, or at least the dynasty of Rome’s leaders, and with the rulers of Germany—as was noted in the Bible Reading Program comments on the book of Obadiah. The Babylonian Talmud mentions “Germamia of Edom” (Megilla 6b). Again, it is possible that there is some connection here, though, as also explained in the comments on Obadiah, it appears that Edom primarily comprises many of the Turks and Palestinians along with various other scattered

Middle Eastern groups. However, we should perhaps consider the large number of Turks and other Muslim immigrants who live in Germany and other European nations today. Moreover, Turkey itself may eventually become part of the European Union, thus fusing a significant part of Edom with Babylon.

Isaiah 35 is entirely millennial—that is, descriptive of the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ and His saints (see Revelation 20:4-6)—and presents a contrasting picture to the desolation of chapter 34. The deserts will bloom as nature is transformed—miraculously healed. Human beings will also be healed by the miracle-working power of God.

Yet the healing will not only be external. The blind seeing, deaf hearing, lame leaping and mute singing (Isaiah 35:5-6), while literal, are also symbolic. Those who are spiritually blind will at last come to see and understand the knowledge of God. Those who are unwilling to hear God’s message will at last listen. Those who are spiritually crippled, unable to walk in God’s commandments, will at last be able to run and leap in the way of God. And those who are now silent in regard to God and His mighty works will at last praise Him and proclaim His truth.

This will be made possible by “waters bursting forth in the desert”—again literal but also spiritual, referring to the coming outpouring of the Spirit of God. The presence of God’s Spirit will work great miracles, both visible change in nature and, more importantly, transformation of the inner hearts and minds of people.

What is now the narrow and difficult path of life, which only few find (Matthew 7:14), will, in the age to come, be a broad highway that everyone will be able to follow to the Kingdom of God. The highway, too, is both literal and figurative. It is the path of return for the exiles to Zion—the physical route and the spiritual way of life that God requires.

It will be a safe road (verse 9)—on which no beast is found. Again, this is a physical and spiritual promise. As we saw in Isaiah 11, the nature of animals will be changed. They will no longer be dangerous. And the political “Beast” powers of the earth will no longer be around to harm anyone.

It will be a time of tremendous joy—when “sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (35:10).

Hezekiah Rebels Against Assyria

(2 Kings 18:7-8; 1 Chronicles 4:24-43; 2 Kings 20:20)

April 30

It has already been mentioned that there was a “spirit of general rebellion following Sargon’s death in 705 [B.C.]” (Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, p. 416). In 703 Merodach-Baladan was back on the throne of Babylon for a short period. Yet the new Assyrian emperor, Sennacherib, “prevailed, took the city of Babylon, and reasserted Assyrian authority” (p. 414). “Meanwhile, with Egyptian encouragement Hezekiah also rebelled” (p. 414). We read of this rebellion in 2 Kings 18:7.

The Macmillan Bible Atlas relates more details of what happened: “The time of greatest trial for Judah [Sennacherib’s invasion of 701 B.C.] was soon to come. The death of Sargon was a sign for new uprisings throughout the kingdom and Hezekiah king of Judah stood at the head of the conspirators in Palestine. Among the cities of Philistia, Ashkelon raised the banner of revolt [against Assyria] and the people of Ekron joined the conspiracy, after deposing their king, Padi, and sending him in chains to Hezekiah....

“Hezekiah understood the extent of the danger which he incurred and began to prepare extensively for the coming conflict. His most famous work was the hewing of the Siloam water conduit in Jerusalem, which carried water from the spring of Gihon into the city” (p. 98). We read of this already in the highlights for Isaiah 22.

“He also strengthened the fortifications of Jerusalem (Is. 22:8-11) and fortified and provisioned the central cities of Judah (1 Chron. 4:38-41). The borders of the kingdom were expanded at the expense of the kingdoms which had refused to join the conspiracy, mainly in the direction of Gaza and Edom (2 Kings 18:8; 1 Chron. 4:42-43)” (p. 98). Thus, Hezekiah’s subjugation of the Philistines in 2 Kings 18:8 refers not to *all* the Philistines but to those that would not join his rebellion as Ashkelon and Ekron did.

The concluding phrase “to this day” offers some interesting insight into how the Bible was written, for it clearly refers to whatever point in time it was when the author of this section penned this notation. See *How to Understand the Bible* for more information on how God used many authors over many years to compile what we now have as the Bible.