

Isaiah 17 - Destruction of Damascus (Syria) and Samaria (Israel)

I. Prophecies of condemnation (Is 1:1—35:10)

(2) Condemnation of the nations (Is 13:1—23:18)

(E) Damascus and Samaria (17:1-14)

(a) Damascus (17:1-3)

(b) Samaria (17:4-11)

(c) God will judge Assyria who He used to judge Damascus and Samaria (17:12-14)

Isaiah 17

(E) Damascus and Samaria (17:1-14)

(a) Damascus (17:1-3)

1 The pronouncement concerning Damascus: "Behold, Damascus is about to be removed from being a city And will become a fallen ruin.

1 The oracle concerning Damascus. "Behold, Damascus is about to be removed from being a city And will become a fallen ruin.

1 A message about Damascus: "Look! Damascus will cease to be a city. Instead, it will become a pile of ruins.

1 The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap.

2 "The cities of Aroer are abandoned; They will be for herds to lie down in, And there will be no one to frighten *them*.

2 "The cities of Aroer are forsaken; They will be for flocks to lie down in, And there will be no one to frighten *them*.

2 The cities of Oraru will be deserted— they will be devoted to herds that will lay at rest, and terrorism will be no more.

2 The cities of Aroer are forsaken: they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid.

In 17:1-2 Isaiah warned Damascus, the capital city of Aram (Syria), that the city would be taken by the enemy. This occurred when the Assyrians conquered Aram in 732 BC.

Following their usual custom, the Assyrians deported many of the citizens, which left the land and cities deserted.



Dr. John F. Walvoord

The Nations in Prophecy, 164

“Damascus was one of the most ancient cities of the Middle East and one of the few to have a continuous history down to modern times. First mentioned in Genesis 14:15, it continued to have a relationship to Israel throughout the Old Testament period where there are more than forty references and in the New Testament where it is mentioned fifteen times. **The more extended prophecies as found in Isaiah 17:1–14 and Jeremiah 49:23–27 have all been fulfilled** as well as the occasional references found in Isaiah 7:8; 8:4; Amos 1:3–5; 3:12; 5:27.”

<https://walvoord.com/article/306>

Verses 3–5 speaks of the defeat of Damascus in 732 BC and the destruction of Samaria 10 years later (722 BC). Damascus continued to exist as part of the Assyrian Empire and is still here today, but the ruins of Samaria are just now being excavated out of the sandy soil of Israel. The systematic relocation of the ruling classes to the far reaches of the Assyrian Empire is also in view. This was standard Assyrian policy to reduce the likelihood of subsequent rebellion among their conquered peoples. Jacob and Ephraim are alternate names for the Northern Kingdom, and Samaria was its capital.

3 “The fortified city will disappear from Ephraim, And sovereignty from Damascus And the remnant of Aram; They will be like the glory of the sons of Israel,” Declares the LORD of armies.

3 “The fortified city will disappear from Ephraim, And sovereignty from Damascus And the remnant of Aram; They will be like the glory of the sons of Israel,” Declares the LORD of hosts.

3 The fortress will disappear from Ephraim, and royal authority from Damascus; the survivors from Aram will be like the glory of the Israelis,” declares the LORD of the Heavenly Armies.

3 The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria: they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the LORD of hosts.

(b) Samaria (17:4-11)

4 Now on that day the glory of Jacob will fade, And the fatness of his flesh will become lean.

4 Now in that day the glory of Jacob will fade, And the fatness of his flesh will become lean.

4 "At that time, Jacob's glory will have become weakened, and his strong flesh will turn gaunt;

4 And in that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean.

- In v4,7,9 the phrase "in that day" seems to refer to the situation mentioned repeatedly throughout the first portion of Isaiah: the invasion of Aram and Israel by the Assyrian army

5 It will be like the reaper gathering the standing grain, As his arm harvests the ears, Or it will be like one gleaning ears of grain In the Valley of Rephaim.

5 It will be even like the reaper gathering the standing grain, As his arm harvests the ears, Or it will be like one gleaning ears of grain In the valley of Rephaim.

5 it will be as if harvesters gather standing grain, reaping the ears by hand, or it will be as if grain is harvested in the valley of Rephaim.

5 And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim.

6 Yet gleanings will be left in it like the shaking of an olive tree, Two *or* three olives on the topmost branch, Four *or* five on the branches of a fruitful tree, Declares the LORD, the God of Israel.

6 Yet gleanings will be left in it like the shaking of an olive tree, Two *or* three olives on the topmost bough, Four *or* five on the branches of a fruitful tree, Declares the LORD, the God of Israel.

6 Nevertheless, gleanings will remain in Israel, as when an olive tree is beaten— two or three ripe olives left in the topmost branches, four or five left among the branches of a fruit-filled tree," declares the LORD God of Israel.

6 Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the LORD God of Israel.

- Not all people were dispersed. Farmers were left behind to tend the crops and protect the harvest for their new rulers.

— They were joined by refugees from other parts of Assyria and their combined descendants were known as the Samaritans in the time of Jesus

— 2 Chr 11:16 shows that all the faithful from the 10 northern tribes moved south at the time of the civil war that divided the nation after King Solomon's death 150 years earlier
— From then on, all 12 tribes were represented in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, so the 10 tribes from the North weren't totally lost. The Lord has always preserved a believing remnant from all the Tribes of Israel.

Revival to Come to Israel

7 On that day man will look to his Maker And his eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel.

7 In that day man will have regard for his Maker And his eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel.

7 At that time, men will look upon their Maker, and their eyes will honor the Holy One of Israel.

7 At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.

8 And he will not look to the altars, the work of his hands, Nor will he look to that which his fingers have made, Even the Asherim and incense altars.

8 He will not have regard for the altars, the work of his hands, Nor will he look to that which his fingers have made, Even the Asherim and incense stands.

8 They will not look upon the altars, the products that their own fingers have made, and they will have no regard for Asherah poles or incense altars.

8 And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made, either the groves, or the images.

- At that day... Second Coming? A near fulfillment is in Sennacherib's approaching invasion, but v12-14 look forward to the final invasion and battle at Armageddon, et al.

Desolation Caused for Forsaking God

9 On that day their strong cities will be like abandoned places in the forest, Or like branches which they abandoned before the sons of Israel; And the land will be a desolation.

9 In that day their strong cities will be like forsaken places in the forest, Or like branches which they abandoned before the sons of Israel; And the land will be a desolation.

9 "At that time, their fortified cities that they abandoned because of the Israelis will be like desolate places of the forests and hilltops— there will be desolation.

9 In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel: and there shall be desolation.

- In v4,7,9 the phrase "in that day" refers to the situation mentioned repeatedly throughout the first portion of Isaiah—the invasion of Aram and Israel by the Assyrian army

- v9-11: Josephus: Trees on Mt. Olives and Mt. Scopus cut down by Titus during siege of 70 AD. During Turkish misrule, land was denuded of trees. Ottoman taxed trees.
- Restoration began by British and intensified by returning Jews. The land only yielded to the Jews...

10 For you have forgotten the God of your salvation And have not remembered the rock of your refuge. Therefore you plant delightful plants And set them with vine shoots of a strange *god*.

10 For you have forgotten the God of your salvation And have not remembered the rock of your refuge. Therefore you plant delightful plants And set them with vine slips of a strange *god*.

10 For you have forgotten the God of your salvation and have not remembered the Rock that is your strength. Therefore even though you plant delightful plants, sowing them with imported vine-seedlings,

10 Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength, therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shalt set it with strange slips:

11 On the day that you plant *it* you carefully fence *it* in, And in the morning you bring your seed to blossom; *But* the harvest will flee On a day of illness and incurable pain.

11 In the day that you plant *it* you carefully fence *it* in, And in the morning you bring your seed to blossom; *But* the harvest will *be* a heap In a day of sickness and incurable pain.

11 at the time that you plant them, carefully making them grow, the very morning you make your seed to sprout, your harvest will be ruined in a time of grief and unbearable pain."

11 In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish: but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.

(c) God will judge Assyria who He used to judge Damascus and Samaria
(17:12-14)

12 Oh, the uproar of many peoples Who roar like the roaring of the seas, And the rumbling of nations Who rush on like the rumbling of mighty waters!

12 Alas, the uproar of many peoples Who roar like the roaring of the seas, And the rumbling of nations Who rush on like the rumbling of mighty waters!

12 "How terrible it will be for many nations, who rage like the roaring sea! Oh, how the uproar of nations is like the sound of rushing, mighty water— How they roar!

12 Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters!

13 The nations rumble on like the rumbling of many waters, But He will rebuke them, and they will flee far away, And be chased like chaff on the mountains before the wind, Or like whirling dust before a gale.

13 The nations rumble on like the rumbling of many waters, But He will rebuke them and they will flee far away, And be chased like chaff in the mountains before the wind, Or like whirling dust before a gale.

13 The nations roar like the rushing of many waters, but the LORD will rebuke them, and they will run far away, chased like chaff blown down from the mountains or like thick dust that rolls along, blown along by a wind storm.

13 The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.

14 At evening time, behold, *there is* terror! Before morning they are gone. This *will be* the fate of those who plunder us And the lot of those who pillage us.

14 At evening time, behold, *there is* terror! Before morning they are no more. Such *will be* the portion of those who plunder us And the lot of those who pillage us.

14 When the evening arrives, watch out—sudden terror! By morning they will be there no longer! So it will be for those who plunder us and what will happen to those who rob us."

14 And behold at eveningtide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.

- This prophecy (v12-14) was fulfilled in Is 37:68

Having conquered most of the Middle East including the Arameans and the Northern Kingdom, the Assyrians set their sights on Judah. Assyria's King Sennacherib brought his armies to the gates of Jerusalem, so close his commanders were within speaking distance of the Jewish defenders. On the night before they were to attack, the Lord sent His angel into the Assyrian camp on Mt. Scopus to slaughter 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. Before dawn they had packed up and fled, ending 44 years of conquest (Is 37:36-38). This time in Israel's history so parallels the Jewish view of the end times that Sennacherib is seen by them as a type of the Antichrist, while Judah's King Hezekiah models the Messiah.