

# INITIATION INTO ISAIAH

by

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## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### THEME:

The Burden of Damascus and Ephraim in the immediate future and the far off future (Syria and Israel in man's little day and the Day of the Lord).

### REMARKS:

Damascus was the leading city of Syria; today it is called the oldest living city in the world. This may or may not be true. It has experienced many sieges and wars and has fallen prey to many enemies of the past.

Vitringa wrote:

“Damascus has been destroyed oftener than any other town. . . it rises again from ashes.”

*Ephraim is the name of a tribe, a city, and a mountain.*

In this chapter it represents the ten northern tribes which are ordinarily called Israel. Because of the confederacy between Syria and Israel, Israel is linked with the judgments pronounced on Syria. Partners in crime mean partners in punishment. The burden of Damascus should include Israel, as verse 3 indicates.

### OUTLINE:

It is practically impossible to outline this chapter in major divisions, as it is one continuous line of thought (See THEME.)

### COMMENT:

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

This verse presents a real problem inasmuch as it states that Damascus will be “**taken away from being a city,**” and some historians state that Damascus is the oldest city in existence today.

There are two possible explanations.

(1) *Historians are not accurate in making such a bold and general statement.*

The many ruins of that area easily could be the original city of Damascus. This is very likely, but we shall have to leave this aspect of the problem to the archaeologist.

(2) *In view of the fact that Damascus is the oldest city and has withstood the ravages of war, it will cease from being a city in the coming destruction of the Great Tribulation.*

This would reveal the nature of the destruction of the Great Tribulation when the Lord stated that no flesh would survive if these days were not shortened. We know today an atomic missile could make quick work of Damascus or any other metropolitan area in the world. It is interesting to note that Damascus is yet a city and Syria is yet a nation. A correct interpretation may be in an element of truth taken from both these diametrically opposed views.

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

Aroer is a suburban area near Damascus.

**Verse 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.**

The northern kingdom of Israel must bear her share of the burden of Damascus because of an alliance with it. Both were besieged by Tiglath-pileser, as recorded in II Kings 15:29, and were finally deported by the Assyrian, Shalmaneser, as recorded in II Kings 17:6. This was a partial fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.

**Verse 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.**

**Verse 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.**

The prophecy looks beyond the day of the Assyrian to “**that day**” when the nation Israel will again be besieged by the enemy from the north, east, and west. Again they will turn to an alliance and not to God. Israel will make a covenant with a world ruler (Daniel 9:27) and trust an alliance with the “**god of forces**” as recorded in (Daniel 11:36-38).

**Verse 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.**

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

A remnant will turn to God. A remnant will be saved, and this remnant is the true Israel, “. . . **For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel**” (Romans 9:6). Again Paul says “. . . **And so all Israel shall be saved . . .**” (Romans 11:26). The entire nation is not intended here. It is only a remnant as Isaiah states.

**Verse 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:**

This has a spiritual application, but it is likewise interesting to note how this land in our day has been planted with pleasant plants and slips. The forests of the cedars of Lebanon have been almost removed. There were many trees in that land and the Mount of Olives was covered with them. The enemy removed many of them. While the Turks controlled Palestine they exacted a tax on trees. The people cut down practically all the trees in the land and it was almost denuded of greenery. After World War I England began a movement to plant trees in Palestine. The present government of Israel has continued this policy, and literally millions of trees have been set out.

**Verse 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.**

**Verse 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!**

**Verse 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.**

**Verse 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.**

Grave days are in the offing for the land of Israel. Surely God’s people should pray for the “**peace of Jerusalem.**”

~ end of chapter 17 ~

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