

## **The Judgment Against Babylon, Edom and Arabia (21:1–17)**

- Isaiah 21 contains 3 short burdens against Babylon, Edom & Arabia. Though these nations differed in strength & influence, they share 1 lesson: human glory is temporary, but God's rule is supreme. These prophecies remind God's people not to trust in human strength but in the LORD.

### 1. Babylon: The Fall of Human Pride (21:1–10)

- God announces judgment upon mighty Babylon, called *"the desert of the sea."* Though Babylon stood beside the Euphrates River, it was surrounded by desert and marshlands. Its destruction would come suddenly, like a violent whirlwind from the south.
- God calls Elam and Media to rise against Babylon: *"Go up, O Elam: besiege, O Media."* This prophecy was fulfilled when the Medo-Persian Empire conquered Babylon in 539 BC (Dan 5). God raises kingdoms and removes them according to His sovereign purpose.
- Isaiah was deeply affected by this vision of judgment. He describes:
  - Physical anguish: *"Pangs have taken hold upon me..."*
  - Emotional distress: *"I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it."*
  - Mental turmoil: *"My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me."*
  - Prolonged sorrow: *"The night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me."*

Isaiah grieved over sin and its consequences. True servants of God proclaim truth faithfully while also showing compassion. Babylon's fall also warned Judah not to trust in foreign powers. Human strength cannot save.

- The scene shifts suddenly to a feast in Babylon: *"Prepare the table... eat, drink."* The people were feasting and celebrating, unaware that judgment is already at the door, indicating a false sense of security. Then comes the cry: *"Arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield!"* Celebration turns instantly into panic. Worldly security can disappear in a moment (1 Thess 5:3).
- Isaiah appoints a watchman to observe and announce what he sees. Finally, the message comes: *"Babylon is fallen, is fallen....."* Babylon's power, glory and idols collapsed together. This was fulfilled historically when Belshazzar feasted while the Medo-Persians captured Babylon (Dan 5). Yet the prophecy also points forward. Revelation repeats the same words concerning the final world system opposed to God (Rev 14:8). All human systems opposed to God will ultimately fall.

- God calls His people *"my threshing, and the corn of my floor."* Threshing separates and refines grain; it does not destroy it. Judah would face discipline, yet God would preserve a faithful remnant. Believers today are also called to remain spiritually alert (Matt 24:42).

### 2. Edom: The Uncertainty of Judgment's Timing (21:11–12)

- Isaiah speaks of "Dumah," which is a poetic name for Edom, the descendants of Esau. The name *Dumah* means silence, possibly pointing to the silence and desolation brought by judgment. ["Idumea" is the Greek/Latin form of Edom, used in later periods]. A voice repeatedly asks: *"Watchman, what of the night?"* The question comes from Seir, Edom's homeland (Josh 24:4), and expresses anxiety concerning coming judgment.
- Historically, Edom often represented opposition to God and His people (Obadiah; Mal 1:2–4). The watchman replies: *"The morning cometh, and also the night."* Morning suggests relief or hope, yet another night follows. There may be temporary relief, but judgment still remains. Human solutions may bring temporary relief, but only the LORD brings lasting light. Historically, Edom eventually disappeared as a nation. God's mercy may delay judgment, but His justice remains certain.

### 3. Arabia: The Fragility of Human Glory (21:13–17)

- Arabia refers to the desert tribes such as Dedan, Tema & Kedar, descendants of Ishmael (Gen 25:13–16). These tribes prospered through caravan trade routes. Yet Isaiah describes a sudden reversal: *"They fled from the swords..."* The prosperous traders became refugees fleeing invading armies, likely under Assyrian pressure. Tema is urged to provide water & bread to fugitives. Human prosperity & security can disappear quickly.
- Unlike Edom, Arabia received a precise timetable for judgment: *"Within a year... all the glory of Kedar shall fail."* Kedar was known for its warriors and archers, yet its strength would collapse rapidly. The phrase *"according to the years of an hireling"* emphasizes exact timing. Just as a hired worker counts his days carefully, God's timetable is exact. The oracle closes: *"For the LORD God of Israel hath spoken it."* What God declares is certain (40:8). Assyria later subdued many Arabian tribes.
- Sometimes God reveals when judgment comes; sometimes He doesn't. In both cases, His Word remains sure. Prophecy is not given to satisfy curiosity but to call God's people to faith, obedience & vigilance (Deut 29:29).