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The Oracles Against the Nations
13:1 to 23:18

The oracles against the nations DIG: Who is the intended audience of these prophecies? Why might God lead Isaiah to pronounce judgment upon all these nations if *only Judah,* and not the nations themselves, would have heard them? What does this say about Judah's tendency to trust in alliances with lesser nations for protection? Why is ADONAI not merely just one more god, added to all the others?

Isaiah now turns **his** attention away from **his** own **people** and begins to deal with nine surrounding sinful **Gentile nations** or cities around **Judah**. These messages were probably not written for *them* to read. The messages were probably to be read by **God's** people to show that **He** would judge the southern kingdom of **Judah's** enemies. As in the other oracles, the historical situation, the impending Assyrian advance throughout the whole region, serves as a backdrop for the prophecies. The Hebrew word for *oracle* is related to a Hebrew verb meaning *to lift up or carry* and is possibly to be understood as either lifting up one's voice or carrying a burden. **Such an oracle often contains a message of doom.**

Furthermore, the section continues with the treatment of **pride** that appears in the first chapters of the book. It is the arrogance of the nations that will finally bring them down **(13:11** and **19; 14:11; 16:6; 23:9).** Because they have exalted **themselves** in the face of **ADONAI**, creating gods in **their** image **(2:6-22; 17:7-11),** they will not endure.[44] But he deals with those **nations** as they come in

contact with **Judah**, moving westward from Babylon to Tyre, and the effect they have on **the Jewish nation**.

There is one central theme in **Chapters 1** through **39**, the trustworthiness of **God**. If **Judah** places her trust anywhere but **ADONAI**, **she** will be destroyed. Both **Chapters 7-12** and **36-39** make this same point. Ahaz trusted in Assyria and guaranteed destruction. Hezekiah trusted in **the LORD,** and Assyria was destroyed. Between those two extremes we see the oracles to the nations. **God's** message of doom to the nations demands our attention just as much today as it did then. We must either trust in **God**, or **the nations**. **ADONAI**, through **His** prophet **Isaiah**, makes this case forcefully.

There are two series of oracles. The first series, from **13:1** to **20:6**, is marked by great optimism. Even the world's super powers are subject the **ADONAI** and **His** word is full of promise. The second series of oracles, **21:1** to **23:18**, is very different. Even though the content of each oracle makes its subject clear, each oracle has an air of mystery, even foreboding. There is, in fact, an all-encompassing sense of doom and darkness.

In Chapters 13 to 35 Isaiah seeks to answer these questions: Can God deliver Isra'el from those who would harm her? Can He be trusted? Or is He just one more god, added to all the others? But here in the Oracles to the Nations, the specific question that begs for an answer is this, "Is God Lord over All the nations?"