

Isaiah Chapter 34

This section of Isaiah's prophecy (34:1 – 35:10), is again apocalyptic in nature. The object of God's wrath will be the "nations", "the earth," and "the world." Here the prophet depicts the worldwide carnage of the Battle of Armageddon when God's "indignation" and "fury" are poured out on "all nations" (goyim, Gentiles).

So great is this destruction that "mountains shall be melted" and the "host of heaven shall be dissolved" (i.e. melt or vanish). So severe is this devastation that the atmospheric "heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll." This apocalyptic judgment will be so cataclysmic that it will affect the earth and its atmosphere, and it will usher in "new heavens and a new earth" (65:17).

"The day of the Lord's vengeance" refers to the Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:16). This is the final devastation of the world that culminates at the end of the Tribulation period. "Day of the Lord": (Joel 2:2; Zeph. 1:15; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5); "time of trouble": (Daniel 12:1); "time of Jacob's trouble": (Jer. 30:7); "the wrath to come": (1 Thess. 1:10); "wrath of the Lamb": (Rev. 6:16-17).

Isaiah 34:1 "Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it."

This message is for all the people of the world. Isaiah is speaking this as a warning to the inhabitants of the earth. The time for this prophecy could be any time from the time it was spoken, until now.

"Come near": Isaiah invited the nations to approach to hear God's sentence of judgment against them.

Isaiah 34:2 "For the indignation of the LORD [is] upon all nations, and [his] fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter."

The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations; they are all in confederacy against God and religion, all in the interests of the devil and therefore he is angry with them all, even with the nations that forget him. He has long suffered all nations to walk in their own ways (Acts 14:16), but now he will no longer keep silence.

As they have all had the benefit of his patience, so now they must all expect to feel his resentment. His fury is in a special manner upon all their armies.

This to me, is speaking of judgment and punishment from God on a people who have no intention of following Him. They try to settle their grievances with war. They place their trust in their armies, instead of in God.

Isaiah 34:3 "Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood."

This speaks of a great destruction of these enemies of God and His people.

Prolonged exposure of dead corpses was and is repulsive and disgraceful (see 14:19).

Ezekiel describes the defeat of Evil and the triumph of God and His people. As the prophet predicted the advance of Evil under the figure of the invasion of an actual army; so he declares the overthrow of Evil by the figure of a host routed and slain, and the consequent purification of a land, partially overrun and disturbed. Some forgetting that this is a figure, have searched history to find out some campaign in the land of Israel, some overthrow of invaders, on which to fix this prophecy, and have assigned localities to the burial-place "Hamon-Gog" (Ezekiel 39:11). There will be so many dead it will take 7 months to bury them. The blood will run to the horses' bridle in this great destruction.

This type of destruction really comes from God. The stink will be so bad from this battle; the people will have to put stoppers on their noses. The battle in Ezekiel is speaking of the battle of Armageddon.

Isaiah 34:4 And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling [fig] from the fig tree.

"Heavens ... scroll": Not even the heavens are to escape the effects of God's wrath. Rev. 6:14 affirms the future fulfillment of this prophecy during Daniel's 70th week.

Revelation 6:12-14 "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;" "And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." "And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places."

Isaiah, in the verse above, is prophesying of something at the end of the age. This was not a prophecy of the near future. The fig tree symbolizes Israel. This is a time when even the powers of heaven are shaken.

Matthew 24:29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:"

This will be a time when mankind will not be able to trust in the material world he sees. Men's hearts will fail them for the things they see.

Luke 21:26 "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."

Isaiah 34:5 "For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment."

It is very important to see that this judgment comes from God. Idumea is the land of Edom. You remember from earlier studies in Genesis, that Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of soup. This (in verse 5), is judgment against his descendants.

Edom: The prophet selects Edom as a representative of the rest of the nations. The negative expression of this scripture stems from their involuntary devotion to God.

"The people of God's curse" is speaking of those who disobey God. It is for those who totally reject Jesus as their Savior. Notice also, the sword of judgment is clean. It is righteous judgment.

Verses 6-7: "Lambs ... goats ... rams ... unicorns (wild oxen), ... bulls": Since the nations had not repented and obeyed God's way of sacrifice for sins, they became the sacrificial penalty for their own sins.

Isaiah 34:6 "The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, [and] with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the LORD hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea."

Bozrah was a chief city of Edom located about 20 miles southeast of the southern end of the Dead Sea.

This is speaking of the judgment of God as a sacrifice to Him. This great judgment is like a sacrifice to God. These people, in their rejection of God, had denied Him His sacrifice. The blood, fatness, kidneys are all God's portion of the sacrifice.

Isaiah 34:7 "And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness."

Unicorns are wild bulls in this particular instance. So much blood is shed here, that it will appear the blood soaks the land.

Isaiah 34:8 "For [it is] the day of the LORD'S vengeance, [and] the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion."

"The day of vengeance of the LORD" is the same time as the wrath of the Lord, which is poured out on the wicked and unbelieving of the world. Notice the word "year" in the verse above that shows us the wrath will not be for a very long time.

The controversy of Zion is speaking of the rejection of God's people by these evil people. Edom is spoken of specifically, because they refused passage across their land to the children of Israel. God fights the battle for His people.

Verses 9-10: God's judgment is to reduce the nations to a state of perpetual volcanic waste.

Isaiah 34:9 "And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch."

Fire and brimstone from God rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah. The water turning to pitch, in the verse above, certainly indicates such a judgment on Edom. No one was left alive in Sodom and Gomorrah. It appears the same is the case here.

Isaiah 34:10 "It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever."

God's judgment is to reduce the nations to a state of perpetual volcanic waste.

In areas of such total destruction, there would be no reason to go there. In World War 2, the areas bombed by a nuclear bomb were said to be like this.

For hundreds of years, or even thousands of years they would be uninhabitable. This is speaking of this area becoming a waste land.

Verses 11-17: The desolation and depopulation of Idumea (Edom), is symbolic of God's judgment on the entire Gentile world. The depopulation of the world by God's judgment is emphasized by the words "confusion" and "emptiness" which are also used (in Genesis 1:2), to describe the earth as empty and lifeless.

Various forms of animal and bird life symbolize the depopulated condition into which the nations fall after God's judgment upon them (34:11-15; 14:23).

Verses 11-13; pelican ... owl ... raven ... ostriches": The presence of unclean birds was a sign of desolation and wilderness. Similar symbolism portrays the final state of Babylon in the future (Rev. 18:2; compare 13:21; Jer. 50:39; Zep. 2:13-14).

Thus, the great civilizations have been reduced to a "habitation of dragons" ("jackals" or "scavengers"). For "cormorant" read "pelican"; for "bittern" read "porcupine"; for "satyr" read "wild goat." The "book of the Lord" refers to God's inspired prophecies predicting that such a day will certainly come to pass.

Isaiah 34:11 "But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness."

Edom, in all of this, is really speaking to the ungodly world as well. Man, given enough time, will destroy himself and the planet. Just as Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt (world), the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior is leading us out of this chaotic world.

The 11th verse, above, is just describing a place where humans cannot survive. Only the scavengers of the world can make it here. They are loners, living off the destruction of others.

Isaiah 34:12 "They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none [shall be] there, and all her princes shall be nothing."

The princes shall be nothing, because they died in the wrath poured out. The place the kingdom was is still there, but it is uninhabitable.

Isaiah 34:13-15 "And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be a habitation of dragons, [and] a court for owls." "The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest." "There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow: there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate."

These vultures have come to clean up the dead carcasses. They live on dead carcasses. The fact that her mate is there shows there will be plenty to clean up the dead bodies. God Himself commanded the vultures to be there to clean up.

This means this place was unfit for anyone except the devil. We do see from the words "island" and "desert" that this is not a localized destruction.

Isaiah 34:16 "Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them."

The prophecies against the nation (in verses 1-15), were just as certain as God's sovereign command through His prophet.

This means that every prophecy that Isaiah gave shall come about, because Isaiah was speaking for God.

Isaiah 34:17 "And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line: they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein."

God had partitioned off Edom just as He once did Canaan (Num. 26:55-56; Joshua 18: 4-6), and allotted it to the wild animals listed (in verses 11-15).

God is the One who decides what land belongs to whom. God gave this desolate land to the vultures.

Isaiah Chapter 34 Questions

1. Who is verse 1 speaking to?
2. Who is the indignation of the Lord upon?
3. In verse 3, the author relates the stink of the carcasses to what?
4. The heavens shall be rolled up like what?
5. When did the author relate this time to?
6. The fig tree symbolizes whom?
7. What is very important to see in verse 5?
8. Where is Idumea?
9. Who are "the people of the curse"?
10. Where is Bozrah?
11. The great judgment on these people is like a _____ to God.
12. What are unicorns in verse 7?
13. Why does it appear the land is soaked with blood?
14. "The day of the LORD's vengeance" is the same as what time?
15. How do we know the wrath will not last long?
16. Why is Edom spoken of specifically in these judgments?
17. How does this destruction parallel with the destruction at Sodom and Gomorrah?
18. How long shall the smoke go up from the destruction?
19. How long shall the destroyed land lay waste?
20. What will inhabit this desolation?
21. What is Edom speaking of?
22. Why will there be no nobles?
23. What are some of the translations that could have been for owl?
24. The owl was an _____ bird.
25. Why will none of these prophecies fail?

26. What do these vultures feed upon?
27. Who allots land to someone or something?