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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Isaiah 17.

(2015)

The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises
But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

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Isaiah 17.

Topics.

- The cities of Israel will be destroyed and laid waste.
- The cities of Aroer are deserted; none will make them afraid.
- Ephraim, Damascus and the remnant of Syria will be like the glory of Israel.
- Jacob's glory will be as gleanings left on an olive tree that is beaten.
- Man will look to the holy one of Israel not to altars the work of his hands.
- Israel has forgotten God therefore the harvest will flee away in grief.
- The nations roar, but God will rebuke them and they will flee like chaff.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION: Isaiah is the exciting story of the Old Testament and the New Testament compacted into one book. It covers the wonder and splendour of Bible prophecy and echoes of the Lord Jesus Christ resound throughout Isaiah's visions and his messages. It teaches history as it affects God's people and constantly points to a future age when righteousness, justice, joy and peace will be established on earth. Isaiah prophesied about 740–700 B.C. He lived during the decline of Israel in the shadow of the powerful Assyrian Empire. He spoke the word of God to a people who were "deaf and blind" (Isaiah 6:10) who refused to listen to his warnings of looming disaster.

Isaiah warned the people of Judah's that their sin would bring God's judgment (i.e., seventy-years captivity) and declared that God is sovereign and would use Cyrus the Persian to return the people from exile. He spoke also of a servant and man of sorrows who would be wounded for our transgressions faithfully accomplishing God's purposes of salvation (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12). The final chapters give a beautiful description of a new creation in which Christ will rule as King, judging the wicked and establishing God's Kingdom on earth. Following are four points that will help the reader understand the book of Isaiah as they travel through it: -

1. The history of Israel and Judah. At this time in the story Assyria has taken the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria into captivity and marched up to Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) to destroy it, but failed. Later in the story Babylon attacks Jerusalem and conquers the city and takes the people of Judah into captivity. After this victory Babylon conquers Assyria which resulted in Israel and Judah being brought under the submission of Babylonian rule and the tribes being brought together during the seventy year Babylonian captivity.
2. Many of Isaiah's visions are written as though they have already taken place, but a majority of these visions are predicting future events that are about to happen during Isaiah's generation while others will come to pass in a future age. Though these visions are of future events Isaiah speaks them in the present tense, because he spoke them as they came to his mind and as he saw the events unfolding before him. They are often spoken in this manner because of the certainty of it and because God had ordained them and revealed them to his prophets who spoke them to His people so they must come to pass, because God cannot lie.(Titus 1:2).
3. Though Isaiah is primarily speaking to Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) much of what he says applies to Israel (the ten tribes in Samaria) because both Judah and Israel are in the same corrupt spiritual condition.

4. All the promises to Israel are now in Christ. God's promises to Israel now include the Jews and the Gentiles. This is because under the New Covenant God is building an entirely new nation made up of Jews and Gentiles of which Christ is the head. In this new nation that God is creating in the Lord Jesus Christ Jews have no advantage over Gentiles since all are one in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul wrote: Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (i.e., one nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:1-22). The practical application of what this means, is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel through Isaiah also apply to Gentiles who by faith belong to Christ.

The Cities of Israel will be Destroyed and Laid Waste.

Isaiah 17:1 ----- ¹An oracle concerning Damascus (the burden of Damascus in KJV). Behold, Damascus will cease to be a city and will become a heap of ruins.

Damascus: was a very ancient oasis Syrian city and the capital of Samaria (Isaiah 7:8) (the dwelling place of the ten tribes of Israel). It played an important part in biblical history. On his travels from Ur, Abraham found his steward Eliezer in Syria who was his presumptive heir until Isaac came (Gen. 15:2-3).

From the days when Abram liberated Lot (Gen. 14:13-16) there were repeated periods of peace and war among his descendants, many of them involving Damascus. Abraham took a wife for Isaac from Syria (Gen. 24) (Abraham was an Aramean (present-day western, southern and central Syria) (Deut. 26:5) which means that Israel is of Syrian ancestry. Jacob laboured long in Syria for Rachel (Gen. 29).

Ephraim: means double fruit. Their territory was north of the Dead Sea in Samaria. It included worship centers at Bethel and Shiloh. When Jeroboam 1, an Ephraimite (1 Kings 11:26) rebelled against Solomon's son Rehoboam, Ephraim became such a great leader in the new northern kingdom of Israel that in addition to its more common name Israel, the kingdom also became referred to as Ephraim (Isaiah 7:2, 5, 9, 17) (Hosea 9:3-16).

The burden of Damascus: (v1) the capital of Syria. The expression, "The burden of Damascus," indicates calamity and destruction and the expression, "Damascus is taken away," means it will be destroyed." This is a heavy and grievous prophecy, concerning the destruction of Damascus. Though the title of the prophecy is, "The burden of Damascus," its focus is also very much upon Ephraim (the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria), because they were in league together with Syria against Ahaz the king of Judah (seventh and eighth chapters of Isaiah).

Tiglath-pileser: Isaiah had foretold of the overthrow of Damascus by Assyria (Isaiah 7:1-16). Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria partially fulfilled this prophecy by making Damascus a ruinous heap and taking its inhabitants captives to Kir.

- The king of Assyria (Tiglath-pileser) (v7) listened to him (Ahaz king of Judah) (v7). The king of Assyria marched up against Damascus and took it, carrying its people captive to Kir, and he killed Rezin (king of Syria). (2 Kings 16:9).

However Damascus was rebuilt by those remaining in the land. Now in this chapter Isaiah sees in his vision a further fulfilment in the future which will more fully fulfil the prophecy in regard to Israel (the ten tribes) by the conquest of their kingdom in Samaria, and the captivity of the people. This came about a few years later in the sixth year of Hezekiah of Judah (the ninth year of Hoshea of Israel) by the armies of Shalmaneser king of Assyria who carried Israel away from Samaria to Assyria as the following verses show.

- Against him (Hoshea king of Samaria) (v1) came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria. And Hoshea became his vassal and paid him tribute. (2 Kings 17:3)
- In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria (Shalmaneser) (v1) captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. (2 Kings 17:6)
- In the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah, king of Israel, Shal-maneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it, ¹⁰and at the end of three years he took it. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. ¹¹The king of Assyria carried the Israelites away to Assyria and put them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes (2 Kings 18:9-11)

NOTE: Damascus was a Syrian city, but Israel subdued the Syrians so it became known as the capital city of Samaria in which the ten tribes of Israel dwelt. Though it was made a ruinous heap it was later rebuilt and again became a city of great fame prior to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon destroying it, but even after this it rose up again and was still existing in the time of the apostle's

- Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ. (Acts 9:22).
- At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me. (2 Cor. 11:32).

The Cities of Aroer are Deserted; None will Make them Afraid.

Isaiah 17:2 ----- ²The cities of Aroer are deserted; they will be for flocks, which will lie down, and none will make them afraid.

The cities of Aroer are forsaken: (v2) Aroer comes from the Hebrew word (*ʿArowʿer*) it literally means nudity of situation and carries the idea of being laid bare. It is the name of three places in or near Palestine. One of these cities were in the tribe of Reuben (Deut. 2:36) (Deut. 3:12) which was later in the possession of Moab (Jer. 48:19) and the other in the tribe of Gad near Rabbah of Ammon (Num. 32:34) (Josh. 13:25) (2 Sam. 24:5). These two cities maybe named because one or both of them were in alliance with Damascus or simply because they both shared its fate during the Assyrian invasion.

The cities of Aroer are pictured as being so deserted of inhabitants that flocks of animals can wander through the streets of the city without any fear of being harmed or chased away.

Ephraim, Damascus and the Remnant of Syria will be like the Glory of Israel.

Isaiah 17:3 ----- ³The fortress will disappear from Ephraim and the kingdom from Damascus; and the remnant of Syria will be like the glory of the children of Israel, declares the LORD of hosts.

The alliance of Syria and Israel is still prominent in Isaiah's vision. Here by the inspiration of God he sees the horrific downfall of both kingdoms. The Assyrian and Babylonian invasions will be so great that all the fortresses and strongholds in the land of Samaria will be utterly laid waste and its capital city will be brought to utter ruin.

The remnant of Syria will be like the glory of the children of Israel (v3) this does not mean that they will be renowned as Israel once was, but that they will be brought to utter ruin as the ten tribes of Israel have been. It means that those who have survived the previous invasions of Assyria will be destroyed and laid waste by the future invasions coming upon them (i.e., the armies of Assyria and Babylon).

Jacob's Glory will be as Gleanings Left on an Olive Tree that is Beaten.

Isaiah 17:4-6 ----- ⁴And in that day the glory of Jacob will be brought low, and the fat of his flesh will grow lean. ⁵And it shall be as when the reaper gathers standing grain and his arm harvests the

ears, and as when one gleans the ears of grain in the Valley of Rephaim. ⁶Gleanings will be left in it, as when an olive tree is beaten—two or three berries in the top of the highest bough, four or five on the branches of a fruit tree, declares the LORD God of Israel.

In that day: is not limited to a single day, but can refer to a number of days, months, years or too seasons of time, a period of time or to a particular age of time. In this context it can embrace all the Assyrian, Babylonian and Media Persian invasions since all these nations are being used by God to bring judgment upon the same group of people (i.e., Israel and ultimately Judah).

The glory of Jacob: refers to all the people of Israel in this context it specifically refers to the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria. They are not called the glory of Jacob because of any worth in themselves, but because they are God's chosen people and as such have brought the judgment of God upon themselves because of their rebellion, their worship of pagan gods and their corrupt ways. Though God is love He is also a God of justice which means He is not only forced to judge and punish the secular world for their wickedness, but also His own people.

The Valley of Rephaim: was a valley descending southwest from Jerusalem to the Valley of Elah below, it is an ancient roadway from the coastal plain to the Judean Hills (Josh. 15:8) (Josh. 18:16).

The fat of his flesh will grow lean: (v4) carries the idea that there is such a lack of food that the people will be in a permanent state of hunger.

The reaper gathers standing grain and his arm harvests the ears: (v4) after collecting the grain that was easy to reach to gather the reaper is pictured stretching out his arm to collect the grain furthest away. The idea here is that even those dwelling in the remotest parts of the land will not escape the fierce armies that are about to invade their cities and farms.

Gleanings will be left: (v6) carries the idea that the land will be so stripped of inhabitants that only a handful of survivors will be left remaining.

As when an olive tree is beaten: (v6) this pictures the farmer using a rod to beat the high branches so the olives will fall. It is a vivid picture that symbolises the cruelty that the warriors of the invading armies will have toward the people of Israel. They will attack without mercy or compassion (this is the horror of war).

Two or three berries in the top of the highest bough: (v6) means even the kings, the princes the noble and the priests will not escape the invading armies.

In this vision Isaiah sees in vivid clarity and amazing detail the looming and utter destruction about to come upon the remaining inhabitants of the city of Damascus and those dwelling in Samaria.

Man will look to the Holy One of Israel Not to Altars the Work of His Hands.

Isaiah 17:7-9 ----- ⁷In that day man will look to his Maker, and his eyes will look on the Holy One of Israel. ⁸He will not look to the altars, the work of his hands, and he will not look on what his own fingers have made, either the Asherim (groves in KJV) or the altars of incense. ⁹In that day their strong cities will be like the deserted places of the wooded heights and the hilltops, which they deserted because of the children of Israel, and there will be desolation.

In that day refers to the day Damascus and the cities of Ephraim are destroyed and there is great famine in the land (v4-6) the people will look to their Maker the Holy One of Israel. This was a common principal concerning Israel. When their king, the priests and the people did what was right God blessed and prospered the nation. But eventually they indulged themselves in luxury living and immoral lifestyles and forsook the LORD and their duties and service to Him and.

This in turn resulted in God bringing judgment upon them as He is now, which in turn brings about Israel's repentance and the people again turning to God in faithfulness. This cycle of God's judgment coming upon His people; the people turning to God; receiving His blessings; becoming complacent; forsaking the duties of God; indulging in worldly things and back to God's judgment coming upon His

people was the common pattern of Old Testament Israel. These verses shine a brilliant spotlight upon how far God's people had fallen from the LORD their God they were not only worshipping at altars and before idols, but also worshipping before the Asherim.

Asherim: (groves in KJV) (Asherim is the plural of Asherah) the name comes from the Hebrew word (*'asherah*) (*'ashar*) (*'Ashtoreth*) it literally means happy and refers to Asherah (or Astarte) a Phoenician goddess and to an image of the same name. The Hebrew word (*'ashar*) literally means to be straight, figuratively it carries the idea of being right, honest and blessed and to prosper, guide, go forward and relieve. The Hebrew word (*'Ashtoreth*) also refers to the Phoenician goddess of love (and increase).

Asherim was the name of the chief female deity worshiped in ancient Syria, Phoenicia, and Canaan. The Phoenicians called her Astarte, the Assyrians worshiped her as Ishtar, and the Philistines had a temple of Asherah (1 Sam. 31:10). Because Israel's did not drive out all the people of Canaan as originally commanded the worship of Asherah survived. It started as soon as Joshua was dead and continually plagued Israel. (Judges 2:13).

Asherah was represented by a limbless tree trunk planted in the ground. The trunk was usually carved into a symbolic representation of the goddess. It was because of the association with carved trees that the places of Asherah worship were commonly called groves. The Hebrew word asherim could refer to the goddess or to a grove of trees. One of King Manasseh's evil deeds was that he "took the carved Asherah pole he had made and put it in the temple.

- The carved image of Asherah that Manasseh had made he set in the house of which the LORD said to David and to Solomon his son, "In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever. (2 Kings 21:7).

Another translation of a carved Asherah pole is graven image of the grove (KJV). Asherah was considered to be the moon-goddess and is often presented as a wife or partner of Baal, the sun-god

- The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth (served Baalim and the groves in KJV). (Judges 3:7).
- The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth (Baalim, and Ashtaroth in KJV) the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines. And they forsook the LORD and did not serve him. (Judges 10:6).
- The people of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtaroth (Baalim and Ashtaroth in KJV), and they served the LORD only. (1 Sam. 7:4).
- They cried out to the LORD and said, 'We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD and have served the Baals and the Ashtaroth (Baalim and Ashtaroth in KJV). (1 Samuel 12:10).

Asherah was also worshiped as the goddess of love and war and was sometimes linked with Anath, another Canaanite goddess. Worship of Asherah was noted for its sensuality and involved ritual prostitution. The priests and priestesses of Asherah also practiced divination and fortune-telling.

God, through Moses, forbid the worship of Asherah. The Law specified that a grove of trees was not to be near the altar of the LORD (Deut. 16:21).

- You shall not plant any tree as an Asherah (a grove of any trees in KJV) beside the altar of the LORD your God that you shall make. (Deut. 16:21).

Despite God's clear instructions, Asherah-worship was a perennial problem in Israel. As Solomon slipped into idolatry, one of the pagan deities he brought into the kingdom was Asherah, called "the goddess of the Sidonians.

- Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. (1 Kings 11:5).
- They have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites, and they have not walked in my ways, doing what is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my rules, as David his father did. (1 Kings 11:33).

Later, Jezebel made Asherah-worship even more prevalent with 400 prophets of Asherah on the royal payroll.

- Send and gather all Israel to me (Elijah) at Mount Carmel, and the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table. (1 Kings 18:19).

At times, Israel did experience great revivals, and significant crusades against Asherah-worship which were led by Elijah, Gideon, Asa and Josiah.

Elijah: told Ahab king of Israel to gather the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah (prophets of the groves in KJV) at Mount Carmel. He then said to the people, "If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." Then the prophets of Baal and of Asherah offered an offering to their god and Elijah offered an offering to his God.

God consumed Elijah's offering with fire and nothing happened to the offering of the false prophet. When the people saw Elijah's offering being consumed they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God," and Elijah and the people seized the prophets of Baal and slaughtered them at the brook Kishon. (1 Kings 18:19-40).

Gideon: pulled down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah (the grove in KJV) that was beside it and used the wood of the Asherah as firewood to offer a bull as a burnt offering to the LORD. (Judges 6:25-30).

Asa: king of Judah removed Maacah his mother from being queen mother because she had made an abominable image for Asherah and cut down her image and burned it at the brook Kidron. (1 Kings 15:13).

Josiah: king of Judah had the priests the prophets, the elders and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem remove from the temple of the LORD all the vessels made for Baal and made for all the host of heaven and bring out the Asherah from the House of the LORD and burned them. He then removed the priests who the kings of Judah had ordained to make offerings in the high places and burnt incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon and the constellations and all the host of the heavens at the cities of Judah and around Jerusalem. (2 Kings 23:1-7).

Israel has Forgotten God therefore the Harvest will Flee away in Grief.

Isaiah 17:10-11 ----- ¹⁰For you have forgotten the God of your salvation, and have not remembered the Rock of your refuge; therefore, though you plant pleasant plants and sow the vine-branch of a stranger, ¹¹though you make them grow on the day that you plant them, and make them blossom in the morning that you sow, yet the harvest will flee away in a day of grief and incurable pain.

What a sad statement, "Israel has forgotten the God of their salvation." This is the nation that God spoke of saying: -

- Israel was his son who he called out of Egypt and he loved them when they were a child (Hosea 11:1).
- He gave birth to Israel and carried them from the womb even to their old age. (Isaiah 46:3-4).
- Israel is his allotted heritage (Deut. 32:9) and the apple of his eye (Deut. 32:10).
- Israel is a people holy to him (Deut. 7:6) and his treasured possession (Deut. 14:2).

And these people who God so longed to bless have not only forgotten Him but turned to worship pagan gods, idols and the creation rather than the creator. Because of this they will work and sow crops, vineyards, fruit trees and cultivate them, but will not harvest them, but instead will be taken from their land and suffer grief and incurable pain.

Pleasant plants and the vine-branch of a stranger: (v10) perhaps refer to foreign spices used for perfumes and herbs used for medicines and vines of fruit and grapes that are not native to their own land.

The Nations Roar, but God will Rebuke them and they will Flee like Chaff.

Isaiah 17:12-14 ----- ¹²Ah, the thunder of many peoples; they thunder like the thundering of the sea! Ah, the roar of nations; they roar like the roaring of mighty waters! ¹³The nations roar like the roaring of many waters, but he will rebuke them, and they will flee far away, chased like chaff on the mountains before the wind and whirling dust before the storm. ¹⁴At evening time, behold, terror! Before morning, they are no more! This is the portion of those who loot us, and the lot of those who plunder us.

The thunder and roar of many nations: (v12) refer to the Assyrian and Babylon nations and all other nations in league with them that gathered together to bring the city of Damascus and Israel to ruin.

Evening and morning: (v14) the expression, "In the evening (i.e., darkness) is terror, but in the morning when the sun shines and there is light, terror is no more," in the context of this prophecy, there is at least seventy years between evening and morning. Evening in this context embraces the nations that will come up against Israel and destroy their cities and lay them waste. It is called evening because it is a time of great darkness for Israel, but in the morning (seventy years later) when the light shines, the nations who came against Israel will be destroyed and Israel will be set free.

The local fulfillment of the expression, "In the evening is terror, but in the morning when the sun shines and there is light, terror is no more," refers to Israel being taken into captivity to Assyria and then Babylon (the darkness of the evening) for seventy years. At the end of the seventy years Babylon was destroyed by Cyrus king of Persia (also called the LORD'S anointed shepherd) (Isaiah 45:1) (Isaiah 45:2-3) and gave Israel written permission to return to Jerusalem.

Under Ezra and Nehemiah the people of Israel returned with triumphant joy and rejoicing to their homeland and their beloved city Jerusalem and in this way the light of morning came.

But the expression, "Evening and morning," also carries with it an echo of the Lord Jesus Christ when he returns in glory as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to destroy the antichrist and his kingdom and establish God's Kingdom on earth during his glorious millennial reign.

The dead in Christ (Old and New Testament) and the faithful, who are alive, will be gathered together in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6) to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth.

Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish.

The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce (Isaiah 65:17-25). All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's Name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God.

The book of Revelation states: -

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

In Revelation chapter five we are told that: -

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

The great prophet Isaiah wrote: -

- They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9).

At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev. 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory.

For further information see titles: -

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment.

In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Mercy covers judgment, but these prophecies shine a brilliant spotlight upon the truth that its covering is limited to the faithful remnant. Amongst Israel only a few here and there were left behind to return to God and give Him the glory due to His name. Israel by their sins had made themselves ready for ruin and all that they had spent their life building was quickly cut down and taken away.

The design of God's plans and purposes with Assyria and Babylon was to turn His people from their idols and their own sinful fancy and bring them to back as one united people to Himself. He did this during their seventy year Babylonian captivity. While in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar, Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods and come out as one united nation faithful to the LORD their God, they never turned to idols or pagan gods again.

Sadly Israel as a nation never recognised their Messiah the Christ when he came, but even this was in the LORD'S sovereign will. The prophet Zechariah tells us when, the Lord returns in glory: -

- God will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn (Zech. 12:10-14).

End.