

preliminary fulfillment, nor do we know exactly when it occurred.

Isaiah 17: The Burden of Damascus

This chapter is a distinct section, separate from what precedes and what follows. Its title is quite abbreviated. Actually it deals not merely with Damascus, the capital of Syria, but also with Ephraim, the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The greater part of the chapter deals with Israel rather than with Damascus.

This chapter was doubtless written at a much earlier time than the greater part of chapters 15-16. The beginning of chapter 16 deals with the time of the Assyrian invasion under Sennacherib, but the beginning of chapter 17 relates to the earlier crisis at the time of the Syro-Ephraimite invasion, which was very prominent in the beginning of Isaiah 7 and 8 and is also the background of Isaiah 28. It is the first great occasion on which Isaiah dealt prominently with the affairs of his nation. He declared that God would protect Judah from the wicked alliance of Syria and Israel which was attempting to destroy it. Ahaz had his own idea of how to secure protection. He sent to Tiglath-Pileser, the great Assyrian king, far across the desert, and offered to pay tribute if he would come and protect Judah from Syria and Israel. Isaiah declared that this alliance with Assyria was wicked and contrary to God's will. Isaiah declared that God would protect the land from Syria and Israel, but he said that the means that Ahaz was using for this end were wrong and would result in very grave danger.

Chapter 17 may be divided into four sections. The first of these, which includes verses 1-5, predicts destruction for Damascus and Ephraim. Verse 1 declares that the beautiful city of Damascus will become a heap of ruins. Verse 2 pictures the region across the Jordan, represented by two cities called Aroer. This region had belonged to the Northern Kingdom ever since the division of the kingdoms, but had frequently been under attack by Syria. Now it is predicted that it will become so desolate that nothing will hinder the sheep from wandering through the center of its towns.