

Text: Isaiah 14:24 - 15:9

Title: "What God's plans are like"

Time: 2/1/2026 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: Have you ever experienced a day when everything went according to plan? You woke up in the morning understanding what your goals for the day were, and you executed those goals without delays, interruptions, or unexpected circumstances? I am sure that few of us experienced a day like that this past week with the snow and cold we have dealt with.

One small example of a plan gone haywire from my week happened on Thursday. My wife's tire pressure light came on again in her car, so she took my car to work and left her car with me to put air in the tires. I made it to the air pump according to plan, but unexpected trouble awaited there.

First, when I set the air machine for 30 psi and began pumping, the reading on the machine kept jumping from a number below 30 to a number above 30, and then back down again. On two of the tires, I was able to get the machine to tell me that the tire had 30 psi, but on the other two I was left guessing.

Then when I went to put the little caps back on the stems, the last stem was shooting air out from the rear passenger-side tire. I put the cap on it to hold the air in as best I could, and then took an unplanned detour to Pete's Tire Barn on 101A in Amherst. That turned out to be a good move, because the young man at Pete's addressed my problem right away, replaced the leaky valve, made sure all the tires had 30 psi, and refused to let me pay him anything. Next time we need tires, we are going to Pete's Tire Barn.

Nearly every day of our lives is a day filled with surprises and challenges that we do not see coming. Mark shared quite a list from the farm on Wednesday morning. Four nations are dealt with in our passage – Assyria, Philistia, Moab, and Judah – and God’s prophecy for each one described a future that none of them were planning for themselves.

But more than these nations, the passage is about the way God’s plans are completely different from our plans and the plans of the nations of the world we live in. Isaiah describes that difference in our first verse (14:24). In other words, God plans without error, and He executes His plans flawlessly. They are never frustrated or surprised.

In addition, God’s plans are not merely local; they are universal (v. 26). His plans encompass the whole earth and every nation. No one is left out of His plans. Consequently, His plans include you and I, as much as they included Assyria, Philistia, Moab, and Judah. His plans are brilliantly conceived and unfailingly executed (v. 27).

So although this passage is about the judgment of three nations, that fact is incidental to its key message. Isaiah’s main point is that we need to understand better the perfectly wise and unfailingly powerful nature of God’s plans if we are going to know Him and trust Him for who He truly is. His word to the three nations, Assyria, Philistia, and Moab, teaches us three wonderful things about God’s plans.

I. Assyria: God’s plans are for the protection of His people (14:24-27).

Illustration: Governmental authorities are finding illegal immigration enforcement to be fraught with many unexpected challenges. Those opposing ICE action often refer to what they call the “stolen land” argument. The idea says that the United States has no right to expel illegal immigrants because

the U.S. stole this country from others who were here first. Johann Smith responded in the *Stanford Review* (April 4, 2025) that “if past conquest invalidates modern sovereignty, then no country today would have a legitimate claim to its land.” Smith is right about that.

Application: In our passage, Assyria has stolen some land, and they want to steal more. But the sovereign nation of Assyria no longer exists on any land today because of the truth of verse 25. God says that the land they claimed as their own was actually His land. The mountains they wanted were His mountains.

In fact, the land and mountains Assyria wanted were those God had allowed the Israelites to obtain by conquest over the Canaanites. And so when God broke up Assyria, Israel no longer had to wear the Assyrian yoke that had been put on them. When God trampled Assyria under foot, the Assyrian burden was lifted from the shoulders of His people. God’s plans are plans of protection for His people.

It is always God’s plan to protect His people, even when He allows them to experience suffering, and those plans never fail, even in times of persecution. Jesus spoke of the way this protection works for His disciples in Luke 21:15-18:

“For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish.” Ultimately, not even putting us to death can cause one of our hairs to perish.

The northern nation of Israel had been destroyed by Assyria, but Assyria’s yoke and burden would still be removed from any who truly trusted in Him.

As we encounter all the challenging unexpected vicissitudes of life, do we remember that it is always true that God's plan will ultimately unfailingly protect us as His people? Romans 8:28 makes this very clear. It does not say that all things we experience are good, but it does say, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." The purpose of God's planned protection is that we would become like Jesus so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers (v. 29). When our plans break down, remember God's plan is still being perfectly completed.

II. Philistia: God's plans are for the poor and needy (14:28-32).

Illustration: On January 3, U.S. forces executed a federal indictment against the Venezuelan President Nicholas Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores. Maduro has been charged with narco-terrorism and other crimes against our country. With Maduro gone, the Trump administration is hopeful this neighboring country, which was once the ally of communist dictators, would now become our ally instead.

Application: This is the kind of hope the nation of the Philistines had when Isaiah wrote this prophecy against them. He notes that he writes in the year that king Ahaz died (v. 28a). He writes with a burden of truth on his heart (v. 28b).

Note that verse 32 mentions a delegation of messengers. These messengers were Philistines, who had been restlessly under the thumb of Assyrian aggression for decades. The recently deceased King Ahaz of Judah was the wicked king who had allied Judah with Assyria, becoming little more than an idolatrous vassal state of this world power. Ahaz and his alliance with Assyria was the rod that Assyria used to smack the Philistines around with great force. When Ahaz died, that alliance died with him.

Understanding this to be the case, the Philistines saw in Ahaz's successor, Hezekiah, someone whom they might convince to join them in rebellion against Assyria. They probably had the promise of support from Egypt in this cause. They came with a great plan for an alliance that promised freedom. It is important to remember that many of Satan's best lies come in the form of promises of freedom. 2 Peter 2:19 describes these lies: "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."

Isaiah understood the truth that Peter understood. He warns Judah against the plans of the Philistines, because God had a different plan. According to God's plans, things were going to get worse for Philistia, not better (v. 29). Confident Philistia should not rejoice (v. 29), but they should howl and cry like those who are poor and needy (v. 31).

It is only when we have learned to howl and cry over the way we have followed our plans instead of God's plans that we are finally ready to be blessed by God's plans. God's plans are for the feeding and the safety of the firstborn of the poor and the needy, not the firstborn of the independently rich and powerful (v. 30). This is why the only answer for the messengers of Philistia that made sense was the answer Isaiah recommended: "That the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it" (32). Philistia, it is time to join the poor people who know their need for the Lord's plans for Zion. Can we say we are trusting in those plans?

Jesus put Isaiah's answer this way in His Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). Isaiah's Zion is Matthew's kingdom of heaven. Only the poor in spirit get in.

Jesus told of such a man, a publican, one of two who went up to the temple to pray (Luke 18:10). The publican was ashamed

to lift his eyes to heaven, and beating on his breast he prayed, "God be merciful to me the sinner." Jesus said that man went down to his house justified, and He told us why: "for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (v. 14). In the next verse Luke tells about the children brought to Jesus, who then said, pointing to them, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein" (v. 17).

Have we responded to God's plans with the humility of the poor and needy, with the simple faith of a child? Is the prayer of the repentant publican our prayer? Isaiah hoped for this response from the Philistines. His word still calls for the same humble response from us this morning.

III. Moab: God's plans come from a heart of love (15:1-9).

Application: This judgment on Moab comes not from a cosmic force, but from a heart of love. To read Isaiah 15 is once again to read a burden (v. 1). Isaiah has the same burden for Moab that Jesus expressed in His lament over Jerusalem, and the same burden Paul had for his fellow Jews.

A burdened Jesus said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" (Matt. 23:37). And a burdened Paul wrote, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:1).

God's word of judgment against sin is always this kind of burden. In verse 5, the Lord says, "My heart shall cry out for Moab." God's judgment certainly causes the wailing and the

crying of those who are judged (vv. 2-4), but those cries are accompanied by the cry of the Lord's heart too in the very next verse. He calls Moab a three-year-old heifer, meaning a healthy nation with great value and potential. He sees what they could be. But rejecting God's plans, they cry some more (v. 5b, 8), and all their abundance gives way to famine, exile, and war (vv. 6-7, 9).

We live in a nation that the Lord would describe with the Hebrew idiom, a *three-year-old heifer*. We have great abundance, great prospects, and great potential. But despite our blessings, many are not in church this morning giving thanks.

Illustration: This is my 18th year coaching basketball for our town, and over the last third or so of those years, every year, I go through a playoff dance with the league organizers, who always seem to schedule playoff games during church times on Sunday. On the whole, the league is great because all the games all season long are on Saturday, but for some reason someone has to put the playoff games on Sunday.

This year they did it again, but the dance was different. This time I actually had a dance partner with me on my side. It turns out that the coach of the team we are playing, the other New Boston team, will also be in church on Sunday morning and supported my request for a time adjustment. To her credit, our rec director did a lot of extra work to accommodate us both, for which I am truly thankful, but I am even more thankful that there was another coach who had to be at church and not the basketball floor on Sunday morning.

Conclusion: The United States of America is in the same category as Assyria, Philistia, and Moab according to 14:26. We answer to the same God they did. We are a superpower like Assyria, we are prone to trust the arm of flesh like Philistia, and we live our lives everyday in an abundance that was unimaginable to the well-off Moabites of Isaiah's day. This

explains why basketball gyms are more full than churches on Sunday morning. Like these ancient civilizations now long gone, we give little thought to God's plans.

But as God's people, we must be different. We must be like Ruth, the Moabitess, who trusted God's plans and found out that His plans truly are trustworthy and for the best. She found there to be unfailing protection in God's plans for her, and also a loving heart behind them.

Do we believe what Isaiah has said about God's plans for us each day? "Surely, as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand." Do we believe what Paul has promised? "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." Given this truth, we need daily to receive His plans for us as those who are poor and needy, trust in Him, and He shall take us safely to Zion.

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*