

than Judah, but this does not mean that they were large and strong enough to be properly described in such terms as these. The words sound far more like a description of the oncoming of an Assyrian army with its contingents from many subject nations.

A second reason why this hardly seems to be a description of the Syro-Ephraimitic invasion is the suddenness of the deliverance. God did not give the Southern Kingdom such a sudden and marvelous deliverance from that attack as is described here. Actually the deliverance came through an attack in the rear by the forces of Tiglath-Pileser, resulting from Ahaz's wicked alliance with Assyria. In chapters 7 and 28 and elsewhere Isaiah rebukes Ahaz and the Judean nobles for this wicked alliance and declares that its results will in the end be harmful rather than beneficial.

A third interpretation considers verses 12-14 as a vivid picture of God's intervention to end the ultimate results of two "strange slips," i.e., of two wicked alliances with the ungodly. The wicked alliance of Israel with Syria had been met by king Ahaz by means of a wicked alliance with the Assyrian forces. The results of this, as Isaiah so vividly points out elsewhere, is that the Assyrian forces do not stop with their conquest of Israel but eventually roll on into Judah also, so that ultimately Sennacherib's invasion threatens the very existence of Jerusalem. The oncoming of the Assyrian forces is vividly and accurately described in verse 12 and the first third of verse 13. The rest of verse 13 and verse 14 vividly portray the way in which God ultimately delivered Jerusalem from the attack of the mighty Assyrian armies. At eventide there is trouble but "before the morning he is not." It parallels the picture in Isaiah 29-31 of many nations attacking Jerusalem but disappearing like a dream as a result of God's intervention. How this actually happened is described in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles and in Isaiah 37, where we read of the marvelous interposition of the angel of the Lord, who destroyed Sennacherib's army and thus compelled him to give up his attempt to conquer Jerusalem and made him return to his own land. "This is the portion of them that spoil us."

Thus "the burden of Damascus" is really the burden of Syria and Ephraim (the Northern Kingdom of Israel). It is