

BEHOLD MY SERVANT
A MESSIANIC STUDY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOK OF ISAIAH
CHAPTERS 28 to 35

Outline of Isaiah Chapters 28:1 – 35:10

F: Warnings, Woes and Wrath: Chapters 28-33

1. Woe to Wicked Leaders: 28:1-29
2. Warnings and Woes to Jerusalem 29:1-16
3. Rejoicing and Blessings to Jacob: 29: 17-24
4. Warnings to Judah: No safety in Egypt: 30:1-17
5. God's Graciousness to Jerusalem: 30:18-33
6. The Sons of Israel Need to Return to the Lord: 31: 1-9
7. Future Blessings on the Nation: 32:1-20
8. Prayer for Zion to take Refuge in the Lord: 33:1-24

G: Conclusion: Contrast of the Wrath and Blessings of God: Chapters 34-35

1. The Wrath of God on the nations: 34:1-17
2. The Blessing of the Future Kingdom: 35:1-10

Introduction to Chapters 28-33

Thomas Constable comments on Chapters 28-33:

“Chapters 28—35 are somewhat similar to chapters 13—27 in content and form. The same general pattern of argument unfolds, but the historical context is somewhat later. The historical context of chapters 13—27 was mainly Ahaz's reign, in which Judah faced temptation to trust in Assyria for her safety rather than in the Lord. As mentioned above, however, these chapters evidently contain a mosaic of prophecies that Isaiah delivered at various times during his ministry and then arranged in their canonical order for literary purposes. This theological arrangement of material marks the whole Book of Isaiah. Yet a general advance chronologically is also observable.

The historical context of chapters 28—35 was mainly Hezekiah's reign, in which Judah faced the temptation to trust in Egypt. The Judeans began looking more to Egypt for help while Assyria declined as a hope for Judah's salvation—as Ahaz had considered her—and instead became an increasing threat to the Southern Kingdom's security. Interest in alliance with Egypt was especially strong between the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. and Sennacherib's unsuccessful attack on Jerusalem in 701 B.C. Also different is the emphasis in chapters 13—27 on Yahweh's sovereignty over the nations compared with the emphasis in chapters 28—35 on Judah's choice to trust Him or not. This is a matter of emphasis, however, since both sections deal with both issues.

The first part of the present section, chapters 28—33, serves the same general function as chapters 13—23: they focus on the particular situation in Isaiah's day to warn Judah against trusting neighbour nations. The second part, chapters 34—35, like chapters 24—27, again project further into the future and deal more with Israel's eschatological hope.

The presence of six "woes" also marks off chapters 28—33 as a distinct unit of Isaiah's prophecy (28:1; 29:1, 15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1; cf. 5:8-10, 18-23; Matt. 23:13-39; Rev. 8:13; 9:12; 11:14; 12:12). Delitzsch referred to this section (chs. 28—33) as "the book of woes."³¹⁸ It is quite similar to the Book of Micah. Like chapters 13—27, his section is also divisible into three parts.

Chapters 28—29 paint the picture of Judah's foolish leaders concluding that something must be done at once, other than trusting God, to save the people from their enemy. Here the principles involved in Judah's situation emerge clearly. Chapters 30—31 focus on the *proposed* solution, trust in Egypt, and the folly of that option. Chapters 32—33 stress the *proper* solution, namely: acknowledgment of Israel's true King and trust in Him. In these last four chapters, the application of the principles in history and in the eschaton receive more attention. Note: 318: Delitzsch, 2:2." (Thomas Constable, *Isaiah*, page 127).

The structure of these six "woe" sections is highlighted by Isaiah's declaration of woe followed by a message of hope, preservation and salvation. (1) 28:1-4 and 28:5-6; (2) 29:1-4 and 29:5-8; (3) 29:15-16 and 29:17-24; (4) 30:1-17 and 30:18-26; (5) 31:1-5 and 31:6-9; (6) 33:1-4 and 33:5-24.

F: Warnings, Woes and Wrath: Chapters 28-33

1 Woe to Wicked Leaders: 28:1-29

Isaiah's overall emphasis, as recorded in chapter 28, is the pronouncement of woe on the evil leaders of Israel and Judah who have become drunk while boasting in their own designs and actions to save themselves from impending doom. Judah is specifically warned of God's judgment for their covenant with Egypt whom they think will be a strong ally to prevent the Assyrian armies from destroying their small country. It is likely that these messages of woe and wrath were declared by Isaiah just prior to the invasion of Israel by Assyria in 722 B.C. Both Israel and Judah refused to repent and seek God's forgiveness for their rejection of His divine leadership. Failure to trust in God completely for their protection led to their downfall. The leaders of Judah were just as impertinent to God as were their northern neighbors.

This is a suggested outline of chapter 28 of Isaiah:

A The moral failure of Israel's Political Leaders: 28:1-13

B The moral failure of Judah's Religious Leaders: 28:14-29

B 1: The Offer of God's Foundation Stone: 28:14-22

B 2: The Wisdom of God's Counsel: 28:23-29

A The moral failure of Israel's Political Leaders: 28:1-13

28:1 *Woe to the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim,
and to the fading flower of its glorious beauty,
located at the head of the fertile valley
of those overcome with wine!*

Isaiah often used the word “woe” as an introductory term for a message of warning and judgment. For other declarations of “woe” see Isaiah 3:9,11; 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22; 6:5; 10:1, 5; 24:16 (2x); 29:1, 15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1; 45:9, 10. The prophet’s woe in vs. 1 is directed at the pride of the people of Ephraim (Israel) described as drunkards wearing a wreath or a crown which represents the fading and diminishing glory of its capital city Samaria. See also Hosea 7:5 and Amos 4:1 and 6:6. This city sat on a hill and overlooked a fertile valley. Many scholars suggest that Isaiah had made this prophecy prior to 722 B.C. when the Assyrians had captured Israel and had taken many of its citizens captive. Isaiah may have inserted this prophetic message here as a warning to his intended audience, Judah to whom he would soon direct his attention in verses 14 and following. See also previous “woe” judgments on Israel: Isaiah 5:8-30.

28:2 *Look, the Lord has one who is mighty and strong;
like a hail storm or a destroying windstorm,
like a torrential rainstorm flooding,
he will throw their crown down to the earth with his hand.*

Isaiah declares that the Lord has one who is strong and mighty and is also described as a destructive storm coming down to earth from the hands of the Lord. It is evident from the fulfillment of this prophecy in 722-21 B.C. that it is the Assyrians who are God’s agent of destruction. The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim will be thrown down to the ground when the strong and mighty Assyrian army invades the northern kingdom of Israel. The people of Israel should not be surprised that the Lord is bringing judgment upon them. Isaiah, Hosea and Amos had declared prophetic messages warning of God’s coming judgment upon them. For example, Amos spoke about the Israelites who: “*lay down beside every altar upon clothes acquired from debt collateral, and drink wine in the house of their God funded by unjust fines.*” Amos 2:8. In 2:11-12, Amos declared the indictment of God on Israel: “*I raised up some of your sons to be prophets, and some of your young men to be Nazirites. Isn't this true, O people of Israel?*” says the LORD. ¹² *But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, 'Do not prophesy.'*” Hosea in 4:10-11, spoke against the sins of the northern kingdom including their harlotry and drinking: “*They will eat, and not have enough; they will play the harlot, and will not increase; because they have forsaken the LORD ¹¹ to devote themselves to prostitution with old wine and new that enslave the heart.*”

28:3-4 *The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim
will be trampled underfoot.
⁴ The fading flower of its glorious beauty,
which is at the head of the fertile valley,
will be like the first-ripe fig before the harvest;
whoever spots it,
gobbles it up soon as he can get his hand on it.*

Isaiah, after declaring the one (the Assyrians) who will bring God’s judgment to Israel (vs. 2), next reveals the awful results of this action. The once proud crown of the leaders of Ephraim (Israel) is now trodden under foot and what has been left of its agricultural bounty would soon be

devoured by this agent of God (the armies of Assyria). Isaiah uses a portrait of the ruin of Israel's agricultural resources as a description of the downfall of the people of the northern kingdom. The phrase "fertile valley" in vs. 4 is literally "valley of fatness."

28:5-6 *In that day the LORD of hosts will become a crown of glory,
and a beautiful diadem to the remnant of his people;
⁶ a spirit of justice to the one who sits in judgment,
and strength to those who repel the attack at the gate.*

Isaiah introduces a message of salvation in contrast to the oracle of woe declared in the first four verses of chapter 28. The LORD of hosts, which can be understood as the Lord of armies, "in that day", will become a "a crown of glory, and a beautiful diadem to the remnant of his people," vs. 5. Isaiah has been given a superlative prophecy about the latter days, "in that day", in which the Lord will reign gloriously on another hill, Zion in contrast to the hill of Samaria. Instead of drunken and depraved human leaders, the Lord Himself will be to His faithful remnant, a crown of glory and beautiful diadem. The Lord will also describe this faithful remnant with similar words as recorded in Isaiah 62:3: "You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God." The reference to diadems points to the returning Messiah who will come as a warrior King to rescue His people who have repented on their sin of rejecting Him during His first advent and have called upon Him to return (Hosea 5:15-6:3). When the Messiah returns to the earth, He will be wearing many diadems on His head (Revelation 19:12), signifying, not only that He is the LORD of Lords and KING of Kings, but also, He is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of 28:5. He will when He returns to rescue His people, in that day, be "a crown of glory and a beautiful diadem to the remnant of his people." Isaiah also in 28:5, returns to one of his favorite themes, the salvation of the faithful remnant of the Lord. Isaiah had earlier mentioned this remnant in 1:9, 10:20-22 and 11:11, 16 and will mention them again in 37:31-32 and 46:3.

Isaiah, as recorded in vs. 6, states two characteristics of the One who will reign as a beautiful crown and glorious diadem to the remnant of His people. First, the one who will sit in judgment will have a "spirit of justice" (or judgment) upon him. Isaiah's earlier prophecy, chapter 11:1-5, about the Spirit of the Lord resting on King Messiah is in view here and specifically 11:4:
*But he will judge the poor with righteousness,
and decide for the oppressed of the earth with equity.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips, he will kill the wicked.*

The Lord as judge is a very common theme of Scripture and this role will be one in which the Messiah will continue when He returns and when He reigns in the millennial kingdom. Refer to Isaiah 2:4; 11:3-4; 16:5; Joel 3:12; Micah 4:3; 2 Timothy 4:1, 8; Revelation 11:18; 19:11, and 20:12-13. The second characteristic, vs. 6, of the One who will reign is that He will be a: "strength to those who repel the attack at the gate." This is a reference to the time of the return of the Messiah when He will empower the faithful remnant to defeat their enemies. Isaiah would explain this statement in more detail in chapter 41:8-16 and in particular verses 15-16:

*15 Look, I will make you to be a new sharp threshing instrument
having many teeth.*

*You will thresh the mountains,
crush them and make the hills like chaff.*

*16 You will winnow them and the wind will carry them away,
and the whirlwind will scatter them.*

*Then you will rejoice in the LORD;
you will glory in the Holy One of Israel.*

It is critical to understand that Isaiah, as recorded in chapter 28:5-6, has been given a wonderful prophetic message about the ministry of the Lord when He returns to redeem His people who are called here, the “*remnant of His people*.” A further important aspect of this prophecy is that vs. 5 starts with the words, “in that day” which certainly must be understood as an end-times prophecy especially when coupled with the words, “*the remnant of His people*.” Some scholars try to force these words to be a message about the impending assault by the armies of Assyria because the overall message of chapters 28 to 33 is about this time period. However, interspersed in the dialogue Isaiah is having with the people of Israel and Judah, are specific prophetic messages of the salvation of the Lord and His dealings with the faithful remnant who will endure the days of the end-times tribulation and enter victoriously into His millennial kingdom.

28:7-8 *Even these reel from wine,
and stagger from strong drink;
the priest and the prophet reel from strong drink,
they are swallowed up because of wine,
they stagger with strong drink;
they teeter when seeing visions,
they stumble when offering judgments.*

⁸ *For all tables are full of filthy vomit,
there is nowhere that is clean.*

In verses 7-13, Isaiah concentrates his warning of woe on the priests and prophets of Israel. Some scholars suggest that Isaiah, beginning in vs. 7 is describing events in the southern kingdom of Judah. However, as is there is no direct indication in the text of such a change of location, it seems best to consider that Isaiah, as recorded in these verses, is completing his judgment declaration on the nation of Israel. The notes by John MacArthur in the NASB Study Bible also consider that verses 7-13 to refer to the nation of Israel.

These religious leaders, as recorded in verses 7-8, are so besotted with strong drink that they stagger and reel and are so besotted by the wine and strong drink they consumed, have no clean place to eat because of their vomit on the tables. In this confused and depraved condition, these religious leaders of Israel refuse to hear the warnings of Isaiah and scoff at his message. The Lord’s words to Aaron (Leviticus 10:8-10) were very clear that priests were not to drink wine or

strong drink when (while entering and prior to) coming into the “tent of meeting.” This was to be a perpetual statute throughout all of Aaron’s generations; (all priests in Aaron’s lineage). See also Hosea 4 and 5 for further pronouncements of judgment against Israel.

Victor Buksbazen comments on verses 7-8:

“There are few passages in the prophetic writings which express so vehemently Isaiah’s profound disgust with the nations depraved priests and prophets. Instead of being mediators between the people and their God, instead of teaching them the Word of their God, they are so degraded by their filthy orgies, and so overcome by alcohol that they reel, stagger and mumble, even while performing their prophetic and priestly functions.” (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, page 249).

28: 9-10 *They complain,*

"Who does he think he is trying to teach knowledge?

Who will he make to explain the message?

Those who are weaned from the milk,

those just taken from their mother's breasts?

¹⁰ *For he repeats the same precept on precept,*

precept on precept again and again;

line on line, line on line;

here a little, there a little."

Isaiah records the response of the priests and the prophets. They sarcastically respond to Isaiah by ridiculing his words as being those of an infant with babbling speech. Thomas Constable comments on these people:

They accused Isaiah of proclaiming elementary teaching and of speaking to them like small children (cf. 6:9-10). What Isaiah advocated was trust in the Lord rather than reliance on foreign alliances for national security. Isaiah built his hearers' knowledge bit by bit, adding a little here and a little there. This is, of course, the best method of teaching, but it has never appealed to proud intellectuals who consider themselves beyond the simplicity of God's truth. Similarly, today, many modern university professors of religion ridicule those who believe we should take the Bible at face value.

"There is no more hardened nor cynical person in the world than a religious leader who has seared his conscience. For them, tender appeals which would move anyone else become sources of amusement. They have learned how to debunk everything and to believe nothing (Heb. 10:26-31), all the while speaking loftily of matters of the spirit (Jas. 3:13-18)."325

"How odd that the more correction we need, the less we think we need it."326 [Note 325: Oswalt, p. 509. Note 326: Ibid., p. 511.] (Thomas Constable, *Isaiah*, pages 130-131).

28:11-13 *So with stammering lips and with foreign tongues
he will speak to this people;*

¹² *to whom he said,*

*"This is the rest, give rest to the one who is weary;"
and "This is a place of refreshment."*

Yet they would not listen.

¹³ *Therefore the word of the LORD will be to them*

precept repeated upon precept, precept upon precept;

line upon line, line upon line;

here a little, there a little;

so that they may go and fall over backward,

and be broken, snared, and taken captive.

God responds to these drunken leaders in verses 11-13. God will speak to them through “*stammering lips and with foreign tongues*” vs. 11, which is the language of the Assyrians whom they cannot understand. The Apostle Paul used this verse in his first letter to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 14:20-21, as a reference to emphasize that maturity is needed in the exercise of the gift of tongues. Isaiah would later refer to the speech of people of a stammering tongue which no one understands in a prophecy about the latter days during the millennial reign.

In Isaiah 33:19 the prophet states:

You will not see these fierce people,

a people whose obscure language you cannot comprehend,

whose stammering tongue you cannot understand.

In verses 12-13, the prophet’s words of mercy and rest for the weary for these religious leaders are spurned and these leaders would not listen to Isaiah. Therefore, in vs. 13 God responds to them that their instruction would be as though they were infants with teaching meted out in small measure, “*here a little, there a little.*” The result of their rejection of God’s warning is judgment as recorded at the end of vs. 13, they would: “*go and fall over backward, and be broken, snared and taken captive.*” The words of Isaiah would soon become reality for the people of Israel. The Assyrians who were the strong and mighty agent of God for this purpose assaulted the nation and took away captive all of its leaders and many of its inhabitants. Only defeat, demise and destruction remained. Those who scoff at God and His message will be severely judged. The Apostle Paul, as recorded in Galatians 6:7 would many centuries later write in his letter to the church in Galatia: “*Be not deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever a person sows, that will he also reap.*”

B The moral failure of Judah’s Religious Leaders: 28:14-29

In verses 14-29, Isaiah turns his attention to the rulers of Judah in Jerusalem. They also scoffed at the message of God, vs. 22. They refused to trust in God for protection and made a covenant

with Egypt for protection against the invasion of the Assyrians. God in response would do a strange and unusual work. He will turn against His chosen nation and bring upon them the destruction that He had promised to the enemies of His people. Yet He still offers hope in His wonderful counsel and wisdom if they would but listen to Him. Verses 14-29 can be further subdivided into two parts: (1) The Offer of God's Foundation Stone: 28:14-22 and (2): The Wisdom of God's Counsel: 28:23-29.

The Offer of God's Foundation Stone: 28:14-22

28:14 *Therefore hear the word of the LORD
you scoffers, who rule this people in Jerusalem:*

The prophet calls the rulers of Judah in Jerusalem "scoffers". This is a very harsh term for those who sin against God. God's judgment against scoffers is most severe as the words of 2 Chronicles 36:15-17 testify: "*The LORD, the God of their forefathers, sent warnings to them by his messengers repeatedly, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. 16 But they mocked the messengers of God, despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, to the point that there was no remedy. 17 Therefore he brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary. He did not spare a young man or virgin, old man or the infirm; he gave them all into his hand.*"

For a selected study on this word in Scriptures refer to: 2 Chronicles 36:15-17; Psalm 1:1, Proverbs 1:22, 9:12, 13:1, 14:6, 15:12, 19:29, 21:24, 22:10 and 24:9; Isaiah 28:14, 22 and Acts 13:41. God, however, in His divine temper scoffs at the wicked of the earth who mock Him: Psalm 2:4, 59:8 and Proverbs 3:34.

28:15 *because you have said,
"We have made a covenant with death,
and we have an agreement with Sheol;
when the overflowing whip passes through,
it will not come to us;
for we have made lies our refuge,
and hid ourselves under deception."*

Isaiah reveals the extent of the scoffing the rulers of Judah have committed. They bragged, as recorded in vs. 15, that they had made a legal agreement or covenant with the nether-world Sheol and this covenant would protect them from the attack of the Assyrians described as an overwhelming whip or scourge. Vs. 15 does not state with whom these evil rulers made this covenant. However, in chapter 30 verses 1-5, Isaiah states that the rulers of Judah, described as "*rebellious children*", had made an agreement with Egypt. These rulers would include king Hezekiah, to this point in time, was not listening to the warnings of Isaiah. Judah looked to Egypt for protection against the invading armies of Assyria. This would have been a foolish action as Isaiah has already warned of the folly of looking to Egypt as recorded in chapter 19 of his

prophecy. Also, the covenant people of God, had an everlasting covenant with their Creator promising among other things, blessings on their land: Genesis 12:1-3, 15:18-21, 17:1-21, 26:2-5 and 28:10-17. It was an extremely vile sin for the rulers of Judah to seek assistance from a weak, disgraced and pagan nation when the God of the Universe had already cut a covenant with them to bless them and keep them in their land. These rulers even mocked God by stating that they would be protected against the overwhelming scourge for they had “*made lies our refuge and hid ourselves under deception.*” vs. 15. God’s sure and swift punishment would come to them but perhaps in a way they might not have expected. God, who is rich in mercy, responds, in verses 16-17 to their wickedness with a stone!

There are some who may be tempted to interpret vs. 15 as a latter day prophecy regarding Israel’s trouble just prior to the period of tribulation. A covenant is mentioned in the context of this period in Daniel 9:27 when, one who is to come, will make a covenant and then break it by setting up an abomination. Jesus states, that this statement by Daniel the prophet, refers to this “abomination of desolation” who will stand in the holy place at a time in the future. Matthew 24:15. The Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 and the Apostle John in Revelation 13:14-15 wrote that this event would be for a time in the future.

So where does this leave the student of the Scriptures in determining the intent of verse 15? Is it (1) a prophecy only about the latter days, or is it (2) a poetic description of an agreement of protection the leaders of Judah have made with Egypt, or is it (3) a combination of the two where both interpretations are possible? In defense of the first option, F. C. Jennings states:

“The prophecy therefore must find its definite fulfilment in the future, when there shall again be a Jewish State so organized that it can make an alliance, or covenant; and whilst such a condition may be seen as approaching, it certainly has not yet fully developed.” (F. C. Jennings, *Studies in Isaiah: Notes on chapter 28, vs. 15*).

Most scholars defend the second option including the ones often referenced in this Messianic Study of Isaiah. Regarding the third option, other evangelical and conservative scholars, such as David C Cooper, understand that there is a law of “double reference” in the Scriptures and some passages have a dual fulfillment, such as Cooper’s understanding of Isaiah 7:14-16.

For purposes of this study, it seems best to understand that Isaiah is *first*, discussing the current threat against Judah and the wicked actions of the leaders of Judah which will result in God’s judgment against them. The reference by Isaiah to a “covenant of death” in the context of chapters 28-33 is a poetic description of their confidence in Egypt to protect them. However, *second*, this historical event in Isaiah’s day can be used as an application of the actions of the sinful people of God when future events are studied. In the case of the events leading up to the future tribulation period where a similar covenant with death will be made, the student can refer to Isaiah 28:15 as an example of how the Jewish people still have not learned to completely trust in God for protection. Refer also to Daniel 9: 24-27; Matthew 24:15-28; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 and Revelation 13:11-18.

28:16 *Therefore this is what the sovereign LORD says,
"Look, I am laying in Zion a foundation stone,
a tested stone,
a precious cornerstone,
a sure foundation.
One who believes will not panic.*

There is a definite change to the prophetic message in vs.16. The first word of vs. 16: "therefore" relates to the context of the preceding verses and also anticipates the response of God to those who have spurned His covenant and scoffed at His word. The response of God to these wicked people is both one of hope and judgment through a "tested stone."

David L. Cooper comments on vs. 16 and the verses that immediate follow:

"An examination of this prophecy shows that it related to the first coming of our Lord. It was impossible for those mockers who were ruling Jerusalem in Isaiah's day to recognize the Messiah, had He come in their day. Moreover, it was impossible for those of the same character of the first century to recognize the Messiah when He actually did make His appearance. But the one who believed God and who was following the light which he had would not be in haste but would trust the Messiah for his salvation and protection.

However in vs. 17, the prophet went forward in his vision and described the second coming of our Lord in the following words:

"And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place."

In order for one to see the real significance of this verse, he should read II Kings 21:1-15, especially verse 13. In the language of this historical account and this prophecy we see that the line of justice and the plummet of righteousness and their being used refer to God's destructive judgments which He will bring upon the nation in purging all the wicked from Israel. Since verse 16 refers to the events of the first coming of Messiah and verse 17 to those of His return, we know that the entire Christian Dispensation intervenes between the events of verses 16 and 17. The prophet very frequently blended descriptions of the two comings of our Lord into a single picture as he has done here.

The leaders of Israel in the end-time will enter a covenant with death and with Sheol will they be in agreement when they make the covenant with the Antichrist, to which fact the Prophet Daniel referred in Daniel 9:27. But that covenant will not protect the people of Israel of the future. It will be the occasion, on the other hand, of special judgments coming upon those who thus enter such an agreement with this future world dictator.

As often therefore as the scourge will pass through the land of Israel, it will bring desolation to the country. Israel's plight at that time will be indeed pitiable. Her situation is represented by a man who is endeavoring to rest on a bed that is too short and under cover that is too narrow. Thus the bed and the covering of the agreement with the Antichrist will be insufficient for the protection of those relying thereupon.

According to verse 21 God will bring a signal victory for the faithful remnant of Israel as He did in the past, when He intervened in her behalf (see II Sam. 5:17-21; Joshua 10:10-14). When Israel looks to the Messiah and pleads for Him to return, having confessed her national sin, He will come and bring this marvelous deliverance.

That the prophet is looking forward to the time of the Tribulation and God's universal judgments upon the earth is evident from verse 22, in which the prophet declared, "For a decree of destruction have I heard from the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, upon the whole earth." (D.L. Cooper, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Biblical Research Monthly- August, 1944).

Vs. 16, is clearly a prophecy about the first coming Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. God decrees that He is laying for a foundation that is firmly placed: "*a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone a sure foundation.*" The three mentions of this stone is an emphatic declaration of the certainty of God's decree prefaced with the beautiful Look, or "Behold, I am."

That this is a definite messianic prophecy is without doubt as later portions of Scripture testify including an earlier prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 8:14-15 and Psalm 118:22-23. Later references in the Old Testament include Zechariah 3:9 and 10:4. In the New Testament this reference to the Messiah as the cornerstone is recorded in: Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17-18; Acts 4:11-12; Romans 9:30-33, 10:11 (quoting Isaiah 28:16), Ephesians 2:19-22 and 1 Peter 2:4-8.

The great truth of this prophecy of the Messiah as the cornerstone is explained in Acts 4:11-12:

*Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, he has become the chief cornerstone.
12 There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven, given among humans, by which we must be saved.*

The costly cornerstone is a direct and emphatically clear reference to God's Son who, at the expense of His own life died for the sins of the world so that whoever believes in Him by faith will not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16. Luke, in Acts 4:12, links the importance of believing in the Jesus Christ by stating that: "*There is salvation in no one else.*"

The prophecy of God as a stone came early in the Scriptures. In Genesis 49:24, the patriarch Jacob stated: "*But his bow remained firm, and his arms were strengthened by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob, by the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel.*" The word Rock can also be translated as "Stone." Moses in his final song of praise, as recorded in Deuteronomy 32:4 stated:

*"He is the Rock, his work is perfect;
all his ways are just.
A faithful God who does nothing wrong,
Just and upright is he."*

The importance of this Rock is mentioned several times in this song of Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 32. The songbook of the ancient Israelites, the Psalms, mention this Rock so many times that it is a compelling argument for understanding the Psalms as a book of prophecy of the coming Messianic king. For an expanded explanation of the importance of this “stone” refer to Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Isaiah in the Expositors Bible Commentary*, 1986, pages 180-182.

Vs. 16 of Isaiah chapter 28 continues the decree by God: (the) *one who believes will not panic.*” The word “panic” is literally *to hasten* and has the understanding of patiently waiting on God. The sense of the meaning is expressed in Isaiah 25:9:

*It will be said in that day,
"Look, here is our God;
we have waited for him,
and he will save us.
This is the LORD;
we have waited for him,
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."*

The Apostle Paul quotes Isaiah 28:16 in Romans 10:11 in the context of one of the most important Biblical discussions on salvation. Paul had earlier quoted this statement in Romans 9:33. The Apostle Peter also quotes this statement as recorded in 1 Peter 2:6. The student of Scripture has every right to understand the words of Isaiah in vs. 16 as a salvation message. This precious (costly) and tested stone that God has established is a metaphor for the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who trust in Him for salvation will not be disappointed but receive eternal life. Those who refuse to trust in Him will be disappointed and forever doomed to an eternity of torment without the comforting presence of God and His Son.

28:17 *I will make justice the measuring line,
and righteousness the plum line.
Hail will sweep away the refuge of lies,
and the waters will overflow the hiding place.*

Isaiah provides further details about the just and righteous reign of the Messiah who is described in vs. 16 as the tested and precious “cornerstone” Who (Himself) will be the sure foundation for His reign which will be centered on Mount Zion. Continuing with the metaphor of construction, Isaiah describes this future reign as having justice as its measuring line and righteousness as its level. Changing metaphors in the second half of vs. 17, Isaiah describes the storm of hail and overflowing waters which will sweep away lies from their secret place of refuge. No place, no matter how secret or remote, will be allowed to harbor lies or sinfulness. The justice and righteousness of the Messiah’s reign will clean away all corruption. As David L. Cooper mentions above, vs. 17 is a reference to the second coming of the Messiah, thus the entire church age is contained within the scope of verses 16 and 17.

28:18-19 *Your covenant with death will be annulled,
and your agreement with Sheol will not last;
when the overflowing whip passes through,
you will be beaten down by it.
19 As often as it passes through, it will take you;
for morning by morning it will pass through,
by day and by night;"*
*when the message is understood,
it will cause sheer terror.*

The prophet, in verses 18 and following, returns to the immediate matter of the covenant that the rulers of Jerusalem have made with Egypt (vs. 15) for protection against the Assyrian armies. See notes above on vs. 15 and 30:1-5. The prophet states in vs. 18 of God's decision that the legal agreement or covenant they had made with Egypt will be cancelled (annulled) and their agreement with Sheol will also be terminated. Trusting in an agreement with Egypt, called a covenant with death and a pact with Sheol, will come to nothing. The nation of Judah, except for Jerusalem, would be trampled by the Assyrians in the near future.

The Assyrians will continually and repeatedly destroy the people of Judah in wave after wave of assault. The Assyrian armies will invade Judah in waves of destruction "morning after morning" and at any-time during the day or evening. The prophet adds (vs. 19) that for those who understand what will happen to them, the conquest by Assyria will be "sheer terror." Victor Buksbazen comments on these verses:

"Using the very terms previously used by the scoffers of Jerusalem, the prophet predicts that they will become the victims of death and Sheol and of the sweeping scourge (epidemic diseases), the companions of devastating war and will know the misery of exile. It shall be sheer terror to understand the meaning of the message, (in Hebrew "shemua," hearing or report, the same term which Isaiah used in 53:1).

The very report of the disaster will strike terror into the hearts of the believers." (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, page 251).

28:20 *For the bed is too short for one to stretch out on;
the blanket too narrow for one to wrap around oneself.*

In vs. 20, Isaiah records that no place will be safe, nor will there be any hiding place including one's bed which will not provide sufficient cover. This statement should be understood as being similar to a proverb and can be applied to any situation where the plight of people is hopeless and they are left without remedy.

28: 21-22 *For the LORD will rise up as he did on Mount Perazim,
he will stir himself up as he did in the valley of Gibeon;
so that he may perform his deed,
his extraordinary deed,
and bring to pass his work,
his unusual work.*

²² *Now therefore do not mock,
lest your bonds be made stronger;
for I have heard from the sovereign LORD of hosts
a decree of destruction against the whole earth.*

The mention in vs. 21 of Mount Perazim and the valley of Gibeon are references of past victories by the Lord over the Philistines at Mount Perazim as recorded in 2 Samuel 5:17-21. Verse 20 of 2 Samuel 5 states: “*Then David came to Baal-perazim, and defeated them there. He said, "The LORD has burst out on my enemies before me, like the burst of a flood before me." Therefore he called the name of that place Baal-perazim [the Lord burst out].*” The name given to Mount Perazim has the meaning of God being the “master of breakthrough” and the picture of this action is of waters breaking through a dam overwhelming everything in its destructive path. Isaiah also stated (vs. 21) that God will “*stir himself up as he did in the valley of Gibeon.*” This is a reference to the defeat of the Canaanites by the actions of God as recorded in Joshua 10:6-11. Verse 11 of Joshua 10 ends by stating: “*There were more who died from the hailstones than were killed by the Israelites' swords.*” The hailstones were sent from God. Just as God had done a strange work on behalf of Israel to defeat Israel’s enemies, Isaiah declared that God will take action. He will stir Himself up to do his unusual (strange) work and cause the defeat of His own chosen people who have scoffed at His word and turned away from His protection, (vs. 22).

Along with the declaration of coming judgment, Isaiah offered a hope of reprieve to the people of Judah (vs. 22) by requesting that they should not continue their sinful actions of scoffing at God. If they do continue, God will make their situation even worse: “*lest your bonds be made stronger.*” Isaiah also explained that these “bonds” (chains or shackles) would be a means of judgment on the entire earth. Not only would the nation of Judah face destruction but God, in the future, will bring a similar destruction on all the earth’s peoples who will scoff at His word and rebel against Him. This added prophetic word by Isaiah is a reminder of God’s present (during Isaiah’s day) and future plan for the wicked of the earth.

The Wisdom of God’s Counsel: 28:23-29

Verses 23-29 are a call by God to the rulers of Judah to listen to the wisdom of His counsel. God describes His words of wisdom in an agricultural setting as in the days of Isaiah almost all of the inhabitants of Judah were engaged in the raising of crops for their sustenance. The Lord reminds these leaders of the work of the farmer who performs the work of harrowing the ground, planting seed and harvesting the crop in methodical ways to produce the best results. The farmer does not perform one task all the time but varies the work as necessary so that the harvest is gained with the results that food is produced. Verse 26 states that it is God who instructs and teaches the

farmer how to properly perform these functions. Isaiah in vs. 29 completes this portrait of the works of the farmer who is guided by the great wisdom and wonderful counsel of God. See note below on vs. 29.

Thomas Constable comments on the implied meaning of these verses:

An implication of these two parables (vv. 24-25 and 27-28), not stated, is that God might deal differently with the Southern Kingdom than He dealt with the Northern Kingdom. The Jerusalemites should not conclude that because God would allow the Assyrians to defeat the Ephraimites, the same fate would necessarily befall them. A change of attitude could mitigate their judgment. So this whole "woe" ends with an implied offer of grace.

As things worked out, of course, God did allow an invading army to take the Judahites into captivity, after a different invading army had first taken the Israelites captive. But that did not happen at the same time. Sennacherib destroyed Samaria but not Jerusalem. God postponed Judah's judgment because He found a measure of repentance there. (Thomas Constable, *Isaiah*, page 134).

28:23-29 *Listen, and hear my voice.*

Pay attention and hear what I am saying.

²⁴ *Does one plowing in order to plant plow continually?*

Does one continually cultivate and break up his ground?

²⁵ *When he has leveled its surface,*

*does he not spread the seed of caraway,
and scatter the cumin,*

putting the wheat in rows,

*and the barley in its designated place,
and the spelt along its border?*

²⁶ *For his God correctly instructs him,*

and teaches him how.

²⁷ *For caraway is not threshed with a sledge,*

*nor is a cart wheel rolled over the cumin;
caraway is beaten out with a stick,
and the cumin with a rod.*

²⁸ *Grain for bread must be ground;*

one will not keep threshing it forever;

the wheel of one's cart rolls over it,

but one does not use horses to crush it.

²⁹ *This also comes from the LORD of hosts,*

who is wonderful in counsel,

and excellent in wisdom.

The prophet in verses 23-25 asks a series of rhetorical questions that can be likened to a parable regarding the method used by a farmer to cultivate the soil and plant different types of seeds that will yield their intended crop. In verses 26-29 Isaiah reveals that it is God who correctly instructs the farmer how to cultivate the land and plant his crop. A number of examples are used to illustrate this instruction including caraway, cumin, wheat, barley and spelt.

The implication of this parable is that, as a farmer would not cultivate and plow the ground continuously, nor would use improper methods and instruments for planting and threshing, God know how to properly tend and care for His chosen people whom the prophet has described as God's vineyard. In contrast to the ruinous results of the vineyard of God, Isaiah 5:1-7, the planting and tending by God to the crop of His people, will result in a fruitful harvest.

The final verse of chapter 28, vs. 29 is a statement of the greatness of God: *"This also comes from the LORD of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom."* The student of Scripture will immediately think of the descriptive words earlier declared by Isaiah regarding the name of the Messiah as "Wonderful Counselor" recorded in chapter 9 vs. 6. The Lord is reminding the people of Judah to consider Him, who is wonderful in counsel and great in wisdom. The people of Judah were asked to repent of their rebellious actions and consult Him alone for protection. To do otherwise would be foolish and would result in their destruction. In Isaiah's day, the Lord spared the city of Jerusalem when He answered the prayer of Hezekiah, Isaiah 37:14-38. Much later however, the people of Jerusalem including their kings had rebelled against and had defied and scorned the Lord to an extent that God's patience had finally run its course and God brought the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the army of Babylon under the leadership of king Nebuchadnezzar. (2 Kings chapters 24-25; Jeremiah chapters 39 and 52). In the future, the prediction by Isaiah of the complete destruction of the earth (Isaiah 28:22) will be realized during the days of the Tribulation (Revelation chapters 6-19). But even in the future days as in the present day, God's offer of salvation is open to all who would repent of their sins and by faith believe in His Son and in His sacrificial death and resurrection for atonement of their sins. God will declare righteous all who by faith believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Genesis 15:6, Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 3:21-26; 4:3-8).

Teaching Outline for Isaiah Chapter 28

A The moral failure of Israel's Political Leaders: 28:1-13

B The moral failure of Judah's Religious Leaders: 28:14-29

 B 1: The Offer of God's Foundation Stone: 28:14-22

 B 2: The Wisdom of God's Counsel: 28:23-29

2 Warnings and Woes to Jerusalem 29:1-16

Declaration of Woe: 29:1-4

Message of Salvation: 29:5-8

God's Explanation of Judgment: 29:9-14

Declaration of Woe: 29:15-16

Introduction

In chapter 29, Isaiah declares a prophetic message from God that best fits the time at the end of the Tribulation period when Jerusalem will be besieged and destroyed by the armies of the world during the battle of Armageddon and then into the millennial kingdom when the Messiah will reign from Mount Zion. Within the context of these verses, it is evident that Isaiah is not discussing the immediate threat to the city from the Assyrians. The Assyrians did not conquer the city or raze the city to the ground. The complete destruction of Jerusalem in which the city is brought to the ground and when the people of the city will speak as they lay prostrate in the dust will certainly be the days the prophet Zechariah prophesized about in chapters 12 to 14 of his prophecy. Other Scriptures that point to this latter-day destruction include Ezekiel chapter 38; Daniel 11:40-44; Revelation 9:13-21, 14:20 and 16:12-16.

Declaration of Woe: Isaiah 29:1-4

In four short verses, 29:1-4, Isaiah delivers a prophecy about the complete destruction of Jerusalem by enemies that God Himself will raise up.

29:1 *Woe to Ariel, Ariel, the city where David laid siege!
Year after year you celebrate the annual cycle of feasts.*

The prophet gives the city the name of Ariel which in the context of this passage has the meaning of “altar hearth” as expressed in Leviticus 6:9 and Ezekiel 43:15-16. See notes on Isaiah 33:14. Another meaning of this word is “lion of God” as first mentioned in Genesis 49:9 but refers to the Messiah and not to the city of Jerusalem. Ariel or Jerusalem is: “*the city where David once laid siege!*” “Lay siege” is a translation of the Hebrew word *chanah* and can also be translated as “camped.” Isaiah called Jerusalem the ‘city of David’ in 22:9. The story of the capture of Jerusalem by David and his men is recorded in 2 Samuel 5: 5-9. Upon sieging Jerusalem, David lived or camped in it and called Jerusalem the “city of David.” See also 2 Samuel 6:, 10, 12, 16 and many others where Jerusalem is referred to as the ‘city of David.’ It is this city of David where the Messiah to come would minister and from where, in this same city, the returning Messiah will reign over the entire earth from Mount Zion.

The prophet also declared (vs. 1) that the people of God would be continuing in their ritualistic practices of the annual cycle of feasts and other religious observances. They would be continuing these annual observances in form only as Isaiah notes in vs. 13, this people draw near with their words and honor God with their lips but not their hearts, for the fear or reverence of God consists only of human commands which they have learned by rote. Because of their heartless worship of Him, God describes their judgment in verses 2 to 4.

David L. Cooper comments on the beginning of chapter 29:

Chapter 29 constitutes the second woe. In our translation, however, appears the word "Ho" in the text but "woe" in the footnote. The same word in the original occurs here as appears in the other verses where it is translated "woe." It should be thus rendered here also. Although chapter 29

constitutes this second woe, the same word appears in verse 15 of the chapter, but it is simply a reiteration of the thought and does not start another oracle of judgment.

The Prophet Isaiah declared, "Woe to Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped!" What is the significance of "Ariel?" According to its derivation it means either the hearth of God or the lion of God. It is not likely that it means the lion of God here because city is feminine in the original and according to usage, had Isaiah this idea in mind, he would have said the "lioness" of God-- which thing he did not do. It is therefore not likely that he had that comparison in mind.

Since this same word occurs in Ezekiel 43:15 and refers to the top of the great altar in the Millennial Age and since in Isaiah 31:9 Jerusalem is represented as a furnace where the fires of God's wrath will burn, it is most likely that our prophet here thought of Jerusalem as the hearth of God. When the Jew thought of Jerusalem, he thought of the Temple first and of the great altar on which the sacrifices were offered to make atonement for them. Thus in the minds of the Hebrews the fire consuming their offerings stood out in bold relief. The transition from this idea to that of comparing the city to a furnace where the fire burns intensely was very easy. In fact, it is simply a play upon words. The fire upon the altar consumed the offerings, especially the whole burnt offerings. These were authorized by the Lord. With this thought as a background, the prophet's mind easily conceived of Jerusalem as a great altar upon which God would burn and consume the dross of the nation--the wicked--and would refine His people and bring them forth as pure gold. Malachi expressed this thought in 3:1-6.

This hearth of God is the city where David camped and where the feasts of Jehovah were observed. Shiloh was the place where the worship of God was conducted after Israel left the plains of Jericho. Finally in the days of David God selected Jerusalem out of all other places for placing His name there. (D. L. Cooper, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Biblical Research Monthly – August 1944).

29:2 *I will bring distress on Ariel,
there will be mourning and lamenting;
she will be to me like Ariel [an altar hearth].*

God declares through Isaiah, that the city will be a place of lamenting and mourning and will be "like an Ariel" to Him, for it will be a place of death just as the altar hearth is a place of death for animals sacrificed to the Lord. Lamenting and mourning are closely related in terms of meaning. The Hebrew word for mourning is *aniyyah* and the Hebrew word for lamenting is *taaniyyah*. They both stem from the root word *anah* meaning "to mourn." These words also occur in Lamentations 2:5 which is a commentary on verses 1-4 of Isaiah 29:

*The Lord has become like an enemy,
he has swallowed up Israel.
He has swallowed up all her palaces;
he has destroyed her strongholds.
He has multiplied mourning and lamentation
in the daughter of Judah.*

The people of Ariel will be mourning and lamenting because of the disaster that will come upon them during the days of the Tribulation. In verses 1-4 the Lord declares that it is He who bring this disaster upon them and they will be ones sacrificed on the “Ariel,” the Lord’s altar heath. The security the Israelites may feel in the future because they are living in Zion, the city of David will not last because they have made a covenant with death and Sheol, and they arrogantly declare that the “overwhelming scourge” will not affect them. Isaiah 28:15. Their dependency on a pagan dictator (the Antichrist) to help them and their heartless worship of God will bring on them the wrath and judgment of God. Living in “Ariel” will not protect them from the God of “Ariel.”

29.3-4 *I will lay siege against you all around.*

*I will besiege you with towers,
and I will raise siege works against you.*

⁴ *You will be brought down,*

*you will speak from the ground;
your speech will come from the dust where you lie.*

*Your voice will be like one who has a familiar spirit,
coming out of the ground,*

and your speech will whisper out of the dust.

God declared (vs.3) that even though armies will be encamped about the city and encircling it and will be laying siege-works and raising battle towers against it, it is really God who is their enemy and foreign armies are His agents doing His work of judgment. The result of the judgment of God (vs.4) will be total destruction and the city will be ground to dust. From the dust the people as they lay prostrate would speak to Him. Hosea 5:15- 6:3; Zechariah 12:10-14 and Matthew 23: 37-39 describe this day when they will speak to the Lord. Leviticus 26:40-42; Isaiah 53:1-9 and Jeremiah 3:11-18 describe the words they will speak as a confession of their national sin for the rejection of the Messiah when He first came to be among them. Arnold Fruchtenbaum describes these days in much greater detail in Footsteps of the Messiah, pages 331-339.

It should be noted that many very capable Biblical scholars understand verses 1-4 as referring to the siege of Jerusalem by the army of Assyria. Some add that it could also refer to the conquest of Jerusalem by Babylon and later Rome. But, as noted to the introduction to chapter 29, the Assyrians did not conquer Jerusalem or raze it to the ground. Also, the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem, as recorded in verses 5-8 of chapter 29 of Isaiah, does not fit either the Babylonian or Roman empires. Babylon and Rome continued for many centuries following their conquest of Jerusalem and neither of them were “blown away” in an instant as vs. 5 states. The context of verses 1-8 best fit the days of the Tribulation and the return of the Messiah who will defeat His and Israel’s enemies in a sudden tumultuous victory.

Message of Salvation: 29:5-8

Isaiah often follows a message of judgment with words of comfort and salvation. See above under the introduction to chapters 28-33. In verses 5-8, Isaiah brings a message of what the Lord will do to the enemies of Jerusalem (also called Ariel and Mount Zion) describing the intensity of the destruction of these enemy nations. Even though the Lord admits to being the cause or the motivator for Jerusalem's enemies to attack the city, He will not hold these ruthless Gentile nations harmless. In other passages Isaiah delivers God's response to those nations who assault His beloved city Jerusalem. This is a message from the Lord in the immediate context of this chapter in verses 7 and 8. It is also a major theme of the book of Isaiah: 2:12-16; 10:24-28; 14:26; 19:2, 12,17; 26:11; 34:1-2; 37:21-38; 42:13; 48:14; 54:17; 59:18; 66:6 and 14.

29:5 *But your foes will be as plentiful as dust,
and your many tyrants will be blown away like chaff;
it will happen suddenly, in an instant.*

The destruction of the Lord upon the "plentiful" enemies, of Jerusalem will be instant and sudden. This description of the destruction of the Lord's enemies (tyrants) will be during the last days of the Tribulation when the Lord will come to rescue the remnant of His people who have found themselves surrounded by the armies of the Gentile nations and who have pleaded for their Messiah to return. The Lord will come and suddenly and instantly destroy these armies and liberate the faithful remnant. Their pleading is stated in these passages: Psalm 79:1-13; 80:1-19; Isaiah 64:1-12. This is not an exhaustive listing of all passages relating to the pleading of the remnant for their Messiah to rescue them. Their rescue by the Messiah is stated in the following passages.

The location of the rescue is *first*, at Bozrah and continuing to the Valley of Jehoshaphat and then to Jerusalem: First at Bozrah: Isaiah 34:1-7; 63:1-6; Habakkuk 3:3 and Micah 2:12-13. The *second* location is at the Valley of Jehoshaphat: Joel 3:12-17 and the *third* location is at the city of Jerusalem: Zechariah 14:1-15 and Revelation 14:19-20. The description of the Messiah's rescue is stated in many passages: Psalm 18:8-16; Ezekiel 39:21-29; Habakkuk 3:1-19 and Revelation 19:11-21. For a full treatment of the Scripture passages relating to the return of the Messiah to rescue the remnant, refer to the publication by Arnold Fruchtenbaum, mentioned above.

29:6-8 *She will be punished by the LORD of hosts with thunder,
with earthquake and great noise,
with whirlwind and storm,
and the flame of a devouring fire.*

⁷ *It will be like a vanishing dream,
or a vision in the night;
the horde of all the nations will fight against Ariel,
all those who fight against her and her stronghold,
and those who distress her.*

⁸ *It will be like when a hungry person dreams,
and he eats,
but then he wakes up with an empty stomach.
Or like when a thirsty person dreams,
and he drinks;
but then he wakes up he is still faint from thirst.*

So it will be with the horde of all the nations,
that fight against Mount Zion.

The Lord will punish these nations with disasters of earthquakes, whirlwinds, storms, and fire accompanied by thunder (vs. 6). The attackers will all vanish as if it all were a bad dream in the night for the inhabitants of the city (vs. 7). Ariel's enemies will have nothing to show for their destructive intentions. It will be as they dreamed of food and water but awoke still hungry and thirsty (vs. 8). The intent of Isaiah's warning to these enemy nations is that their plans and actions to destroy Jerusalem will result in their own destruction. Some understand vs. 6 as a God appearing in a theophany of thunder, earthquake, whirlwind, storm and fire. See Psalm 83:13-18 for a close parallel to God's appearance to save His people and destroy His enemies.

The Reason for and the Declaration of the Judgment of God: 29:9-16

After describing the judgment of God, in the latter days, to come upon Jerusalem, described as Ariel in verses 1-4 and then the judgment upon those nations who have waged war against Jerusalem and Mount Zion, as recorded in verses 5-8; God now explains, in verses 9-16 the reason for His need to bring judgment. This section includes two parts: The Explanation of Judgment: 29:9-14 and The Declaration of Woe: 29:15-16

The Explanation of Judgment: 29:9-14

29:9-10 *Be shocked and awed.*

Blind yourself and be blind.

They are drunk,

but not from wine;

they stagger,

but not from strong drink.

¹⁰ *For the LORD has poured out on you a spirit of deep sleep,
and has closed your eyes, O prophets,
and covered your heads, O seers.*

God first describes the condition of the people of Jerusalem who have been the target of His judgment. They have become blind and drunk, not with wine or strong drink but with their own rebellion against God and therefore God has poured over them a spirit of deep sleep and has covered the eyes and the heads of the prophets and seers. Isaiah has heard this before. When he was commissioned by the Lord to prophesy to these people, the Lord told him, as recorded in Isaiah 6:9-10, to go and tell this people: "Go, and tell this people:

*Keep on listening, but do not understand;
keep on looking, but do not perceive.*
¹⁰ *Make the heart of this people insensitive,
and make their ears deaf,
and shut their eyes;
so that they may not see with their eyes,
and hear with their ears,
and understand with their heart,
and repent and be healed."*

Isaiah asked at the time of his commissioning, how long? (How long would he need to keep telling this message to a people who will not listen, hear or understand?). The Lord told him until no one is left in the land to hear the message. Yet the Lord gave Isaiah hope in that even among all these who will not respond, there will be a tenth, a remnant who will remain faithful as a holy seed. Isaiah 6:11-13. The Apostle Paul, in his great defense of God's care and ultimate preservation of the people of Israel (Romans chapters 9-11), quotes from Isaiah 29:10 in Romans 11:8.

29:11-12 *To you this entire vision is like the words of a sealed scroll, which is given to one who can read, saying, "Read this," but he replies, "I cannot, because it is sealed."*
¹² *Then the scroll is given to one who cannot read, saying, "Read this," but he replies, "I can't read."*

The prophet declares that his message described as the entire vision, would be to these people, like someone who can read but refuses and to others they would be illiterate and cannot read the vision. It is possible that Isaiah's reference to a sealed book in verses 11-12 is the extant Scriptures to Isaiah's day including the law or simply a reference to the words that Isaiah himself had written in a scroll. The point of verses 11-12 appears to be that those who are not faithful to God cannot discern the words of God for God has blinded them to His truth and given them over to the results of their sinful rebellion against God. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul describes this same idea as God's wrath against all ungodliness in Romans 1:18-32. Paul also speaks against "a natural man" who cannot understand things of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 2:14-15. See also Romans 11:8 where Paul quotes vs. 10 of Isaiah chapter 29.

29:13-14 *The Lord says,*

*These people draw near to me with their mouth
and with their lips they honor me,
but their heart is removed far from me,
and their fear of me is merely human commands
which they have been taught.*

¹⁴ *Therefore I will again do an astonishing work among this people,
a truly amazing work;
the wisdom of their wise will perish,
and the understanding of their prudent will disappear.*

These people, the Lord declares come to worship Him by meaningless words and action which are merely human commands likely taught to them by the priests. They are not whole heartedly devoted to Him and are simply going through the motions of religious activities without being engaged in truly worshipping the Lord. The Lord responds (vs. 14) to this heartless worship of Him in a way that would make others marvel. Those who were considered wise and discerning in Jerusalem will see their wisdom perish and their discernment concealed as to no effect. God will put an end to the entire works of those considered wise and those considered seers who have turned their hearts from God. The Apostle Paul describes a similar situation in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, quoting Isaiah 29:14 as a Scriptural reference. Vs. 13 from the LXX (Old Greek translation) is quoted by Matthew and Mark in the New Testament: Matthew 15:8-9 and Mark 7:6-7.

The Declaration of Woe: 29:15-16

29:15-16 *Woe to those who attempt to hide their plans from the LORD,
and whose deeds are done in the dark,
and who boast,*

*"Who can see us?"
and "Who knows what we're up to?"*

¹⁶ *You turn things upside down!
Should the potter be thought of as no better than the clay.
Should the thing made say to him who made it,
"He didn't make me."
Should the thing formed say of him who formed it,
"He has no understanding"?*

The prophet declares a separate message of woe on the people of his beloved city Jerusalem whom have made secret plans in darkness as to keep their plans hidden from the Lord. God describes them as having turned things around, vs. 16. They are described as being like clay pottery, "that which is made" which speaks to the potter, as if the things formed are equal with the one who shapes them. The "clay" speaks evil words saying, "He did not make me," and "He

has no understanding.” Isaiah would again mention this relationship between the potter and the clay in chapter 45:9-10 of his prophecy. The prophet Jeremiah in chapter 18 of his prophecy and the Apostle Paul in Romans 9:21 also refer to this relationship of the potter and the clay where the thing created mocks and scoffs against the one who created it. The point of all of these Scriptural references is that God is telling all who have been created by Him to worship, fear and reverence Him but if they rebel against Him they will face His fearful and deadly wrath. Their destruction is described by Isaiah just a few verses later in vs. 20 of chapter 29.

3 Rejoicing and Blessings to Jacob: 29: 17-24

Following the warnings of the Lord in the preceding verses, Isaiah now turns his attention to the future blessings of the Messiah during the days of the millennial kingdom. The pattern of judgment followed by blessing continues in the last half of chapter 29 of Isaiah. The Lord often blends mercy with wrath as He stands faithful to His covenant promises with His chosen people.

David L. Cooper comments on these verses:

“IN (vss. 17-21) the prophet looked through the centuries beyond the time of crisis of the Tribulation, through which Israel must pass, and he saw the dawn of the perfect day, the great Millennial Age. In comparison with eternity the time intervening between the prophet's day and that of the great Millennial Age is very short. Hence he asked: "Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?" During the present distresses time drags upon the souls of men. But in comparison with all eternity our little disappointment and sorrows fade into insignificance and time seems to be but a tiny speck of eternity.

When that era comes, the curse will be lifted and men's bodies will be perfect. "And in that day shall the deaf hear ... the eyes of the blind shall see ... the meek also shall increase their joy in Jehovah, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel" (29:18,19). At that time all oppression will cease. The "terrible ones" will have been rooted out of the earth and men of little minds and sinister motives will no longer exist.

IN THE final paragraph of our chapter (vss. 22-24) the prophet looked forward to the great Millennial Age and he saw Jacob in the kingdom of God. Surrounding him will be his children, the redeemed Israelites--those who have been saved through the centuries and those who will be living during the Millennial Age--who will be, according to promise, like the stars of heaven for multitude. This passage therefore presupposes the resurrection of the righteous and the increase of the nation according to promise.

Thus Israel in association with the patriarch of old, from whom the race sprang, will be "the work of my [Jehovah's] hands." God is overruling in the lives of all men. We are indeed the clay whereas He is the Divine Potter. If men will yield their hearts and lives to Him, He will make them into vessels of honor fit for the Master's use; if they do not yield completely, He will then make a less honorable vessel out of them; but, if they will not yield to Him at all and accept the salvation which He offers freely through the Lord Jesus Christ, then of course they will be banished from His presence and from the glory of His might forever.

When she is thus saved, according to verses 23 and 24, she -- all the saved of Israel -- "shall sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall stand in awe of the God of Israel." In that time they will never err in spirit nor misunderstand any situation. Great will be those days.

According to the signs of the times this present age is drawing rapidly to a close. The storm clouds of the Tribulation Period already are beginning to settle down upon the world. The "day of the Lord" will continue for seven years but will be followed by the marvelous Kingdom Age when the glory of God will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." (D. L. Cooper, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Biblical Research Monthly- August, 1944).

29:17 *In just a little while will Lebanon not be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field will be thought of as a forest?*

The promise that the forests of Lebanon will be in a short time (little while) turned in a fruitful field that will be considered as a forest is certainly a reference to the days of the coming messianic kingdom as best fits the remaining verses of chapter 29. In God's economy of time, a little while could be any period of years from just a few to a thousand or more. Lebanon, in the pages of Scripture is often described as a place in which towering cedars and cypress trees grow. These trees are Lebanon's glory: Psalm 72:16; 104:6, Isaiah 2:3; 35:2; 60:13 and Hosea 14:5-6. But Lebanon also was to have its time of destruction when its glory would be removed: Isaiah 10:34; 33:9; 37:24; Jeremiah 22:6, 23; Nahum 1:4 and Zechariah 11:1. In Isaiah 29:17, the prophet predicts a time when Lebanon will be a fertile field that will be considered a forest. Its glory will be restored. The time of this restoration is described in vs. 18 as "on that day" which is assuredly a reference to the great day of the Lord to come. For a discussion of the Scriptural passages regarding "in this day," or "on that day," refer to the notes in this study on Isaiah chapter 2.

29:18-19 *In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and the eyes of the blind will see out of their gloom and darkness.*
¹⁹ *The oppressed also will again rejoice in the LORD, and the poorest people will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.*

Isaiah continues the blessings of the messianic kingdom beginning with the key words, "in that day," vs. 18. Refer to notes on vs. 17 above and to the notes on Isaiah chapter 2. In the glorious days of this kingdom, the deaf will hear, the blind will see, the afflicted will be glad "*and the poorest people* (the most-needy of mankind) *will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.*" Some may want to see the fulfillment of verses 18-19 during the days when Jesus walked the soil of Israel but there is a more world-wide meaning to these words. The phrase in vs. 19 "*the needy of mankind*" must mean a future time not yet realized. This future time stated in vs. 18 as "on that day," would indicate a fulfillment during the time when there will be someone on the earth capable of bringing world-wide healing and help to the needy of all mankind. That someone will be the Messiah who is described in vs. 19 as "*the Holy One of Israel.*"

This name for God is a beloved description that Isaiah often uses in his prophecy: 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9 and 14. It is such a beloved and descriptive name Isaiah uses in so many chapters, that it helps to confirm the fact that Isaiah wrote the entire prophecy as recorded in the Holy Scriptures.

29:20-21 *For the tyrant will vanish,
and the scoffer will be gone,
and all those who are keen on doing wrong will be cut off,
²¹ those who convict a person based on a false testimony,
and lay a snare for him who reproves in the gate,
and denies justice to the innocent.*

Isaiah describes more about the days of the messianic kingdom. There will not be any ruthless ones nor scorners in this kingdom who will oppress or defraud those who are innocent with meaningless arguments. The “tyrant” maybe a reference to the Antichrist who be banished to the eternal lake of fire. This kingdom will be blessed with those who have righteous intentions. The New Testament gives evidence of the righteousness of the kingdom of God, Romans 14:17; and that the wicked and ungodly will not be present in it, 1 Corinthians 6:9.

29:22-24 *Therefore this is what the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, says about the house of Jacob:*

*Jacob will no longer be ashamed,
nor will his face grow pale.
²³ But when he sees his children,
the work of my hands among them,
they will sanctify my name;
yes, they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob,
and will stand in awe of the God of Israel.
²⁴ They also whose spirit goes astray will come to understanding,
and those who grumble will receive instruction.*

Isaiah turns his attention to the ethnic Jewish nation, the house of Jacob. Isaiah begins this discussion with the declaration that it was the Lord “*who redeemed Abraham*”. For an expanded discussion on the justification of Abraham based upon his faith, see Romans 4:1-22. Some may understand the redemption of Abraham as the work of God in calling Abraham from the pagan culture of the Chaldeans, Genesis 12:1-5, but it is perhaps best to understand this redemption as justification (reckoned or counted as righteousness), Genesis 15:6 and Romans 4:3, 9, 22; Galatians 3:26 and James 2:23.

According to verses 22-24, in the messianic kingdom to come, the house of Jacob, the ethnic believing remnant of the Jewish race, will have no cause for shame for they will be called the work of God’s hands and they will sanctify God’s name, which is described as the “Holy one of

Jacob.” Isaiah blends the names of Israel and Jacob in his description of the beloved name of the Lord as the Holy One. Compare vs. 19 with vs. 23. The shame of Jacob’s family will finally be removed and the faithful remnant of Jacob will, “on that day,” vs. 18, sanctify and stand in awe of the God of Israel. Isaiah is acknowledging the blessedness of God’s name and His special family relationship with His chosen people. To the redeemed family of Jacob, the Lord is the God of Israel, vs. 23; the Holy One of Israel, vs. 19; and the Holy One of Jacob, vs. 23. In Romans chapters 9-11, the Apostle Paul describes this special relationship between God and the believing remnant of the Jews. In Romans 11:2, Paul states, that: “*God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.*” (NKJV) There yet remains a remnant of His people as Paul describes them, “*at this present time, there is a remnant chosen by grace.*” Romans 11:5. In the future millennial kingdom, this remnant will finally without shame from past failures and sins, freely worship and adore the God of Israel.

In vs. 24, Isaiah concludes the magnificent prophecy of chapter 29 by declaring that the errant in mind will know God’s truth and those who grumble or criticize will receive or accept instruction. The faithful remnant of Jacob will “on that day”, vs. 18, be transformed by having their minds renewed and will be able to discern spiritual matters and accept instruction from the Lord. They will finally reach the day where the injunction against them as God told Isaiah, 6:8-13, will be removed. On that day, they will have eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart of understanding.

Teaching Outline for Isaiah Chapter 29

The Concern of the Lord: (warnings and woes) 29:1-16

The Comfort of the Lord: (restoration and redemption) 29:17-24

Chapter 30 Introduction

The statement of “woe” that begins chapter 30 links it to the next two chapters, 31 and 32 which together with chapter 30 comprise three messages or oracles of warning by the Lord. Although many outlines and section divisions are possible for chapter 30, this study will present two main sections for chapter 30: *first*, verses 1-17: Warnings to Judah: No Safety in Egypt; *second*, verses 18-33: God’s Graciousness to Jerusalem. Each of these main sections contain sub-sections.

30:1-17: Warnings to Judah: No Safety in Egypt

1-7: The Rebellious who seek help from Egypt

 The Sinful Plan: 30:1-2

 The Shameful People: 30:3-5

 The Sitting Protector: 30:6-7

8-17: The Rebellious who do not seek help from the Lord

 The People Refuse God’s Wisdom: 30:8-11

 The People Reject God’s Word: 30:12-14

 The People Reject God’s Will: 30:15-17

30:18-33 God's Graciousness to Jerusalem

18-26: God's Future Blessings

27-33: God's Present Blessing

4 Warnings to Judah: No safety in Egypt: 30:1-17

30:1-7: The Rebellious who seek help from Egypt

Isaiah, in chapter 30 of his prophecy, is dealing with those who have made an alliance with Egypt seeking safety and protection from the Egyptians, whom the Lord states, cannot help them or profit them. Verses 1-7 of this chapter are an oracle of woe on the folly of this alliance which is described in vs. 1 as compounding or adding sin to sin for they have not sought to align themselves with the Lord to seek His guidance and protection from the assault of the Assyrians.

30: 1 *"Woe to the rebellious children,"
declares the LORD,
"who execute plans that are not mine,
and who make alliances but not by my Spirit,
so compounding sin on sin;*

Isaiah declares an oracle of woe on "the rebellious children," which in the context of the preceding chapters, must refer to the leaders of Judah who have made an alliance with Egypt, 29:2, which is called in Isaiah 28:18, a "covenant with death." Although being completely fulfilled in the days of the Tribulation, this reference to the "covenant with death" also applies to the present historical day of Isaiah. In Exodus 13:17 and Deuteronomy 17:16, God warned His people not to return to Egypt. Earlier in his prophecy, in chapter 19, Isaiah had declared an oracle of warning against Egypt as a deterrent for Judah to seek any help from the Egyptians. Isaiah again warns Judah of the folly of trusting in Egypt for protection in chapter 30 and 31 and uses the message of the Assyrian spokesman, Rabshakeh in chapter 37 verses 4-10 to once again remind the leaders of Judah of the futility of seeking aid from Egypt.

These leaders had executed a plan with the leadership of Egypt without seeking direction from God's Spirit. This is one of many verses in the prophecy of Isaiah where God's Spirit is mentioned: 11:2; 32:15; 34:16; 40:13; 42:1; 44:3; 48:16; 59:21; 61:1 and 63:14. Isaiah mentions the Holy Spirit in 63:10 and 63:11. This mention of God's Spirit in vs.1 is not by itself a proof of the Trinitarian doctrine of the Godhead. However, the accumulation of references to God's Spirit in Isaiah and in Ezekiel form a developmental foundation for this doctrine as it is further unfolded in the Scriptures. It would not be out of place to say that the disciples of Jesus and others around Him during His first advent would have had a basic understanding of the plurality of the Godhead from their study of the Old Testament.

The Apostle Paul points to creation itself as being enough evidence for knowledge about God in Romans 1:20. Paul also stated in the preceding verse, that God has revealed sufficient knowledge about Himself in every human. When Paul combines the work of God in revealing Himself to mankind, His creation revealing details about His divine nature and the testimony of God's Word

about the plurality of the Godhead, it is little wonder that Paul can claim that mankind is without excuse for suppressing the truth about what they already know about God. Thus, those who were students of the Scriptures written before the first advent of Jesus Christ would certainly have had a good understanding of the plurality of the Godhead.

God declares through the prophet that those who have made this alliance and executed their plan without consulting Him have compounded or added sin to sin. It is a vile action to seek an alliance with a nation that God had previously denounced for their idolatry. But it is adding sin to sin for making this evil alliance, by turning from seeking God, and not wanting to even hear from God as Isaiah in vs. 11 of this chapter makes plain.

30:2-3 *who set out to go down to Egypt,
and have not asked for my guidance;
to find refuge under Pharaoh's protection,
and seek safety under Egypt's shade!*
³ *Therefore Pharaoh's protection will bring you shame,
and the safety of Egypt's shade will be your disgrace.*

God emphatically declares His indictment against the sin of the leaders of Judah who were seeking shelter in the shadow of Egypt without consulting Him for His guidance. God avows that this evil act of seeking the protection of a pagan ruler will only bring shame and disgrace to the people of Judah. The Lord, through the Psalmist as recorded in Psalm 91:1-2 states:

*He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High
will abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*
² *I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust."*

All of Psalm 91 stands in stark contrast to the actions of the leaders of Jerusalem who if they had sung this Psalm in the temple certainly would seem to have willingly turned from its counsel. It is only in Psalm 91:1 and Isaiah 30:2-3 where the words shelter and shadow found. In the Psalms, the godly person trusts in the Lord for shelter and shadow. As described in verses 2-3, the ungodly leaders of Judah trust in their deadly covenant with Egypt to seek a false sense of shelter and shadow for they have become their shame and humiliation.

30:4-5 *For their officials are at Zoan,
and their envoys have come to Hanes.*
⁵ *They will all be ashamed
because of a people who cannot benefit them,
who cannot give them help or profit,
but only shame and disgrace."*

The prophet states that the Judean princes and ambassadors have arrived at the Egyptian cities of Zoan and Hanes. This action points conclusively to the role of king Hezekiah in the evil plot to ignore God and seek aid from Egypt. In vs. 5, the prophet states that everyone and by implication, also the king of Judah, will be ashamed for seeking help from a people who will only bring them shame and reproach. It was only God's gracious mercy and love for His people and His faithfulness in keeping His covenant that He heard the words of king Hezekiah when the king requested prayer from God's servant Isaiah in the face of the assault by the armies of Assyria. Isaiah 37:1-4. Hezekiah's alliance with Egypt was a complete failure. It was only when Hezekiah was faced with certain death, did he deem it necessary to seek help from the Lord. God is a merciful Sovereign who in spite of the sins of His people, will keep His promises to preserve to Himself a faithful remnant and even in this instance, Isaiah chapters 36-37, keep His promises to preserve a sinful and rebellious city safe from destruction.

30:6 -7 *An oracle about the animals of the Negev.*

*Through the land of trouble and anguish,
of the lioness and roaring lion,
of the viper and fiery darting serpent,
they carry their riches on the backs of donkeys,
and their treasures upon the humps of camels,
to a people who cannot help.*

⁷ *For Egypt's help is worthless and futile.*

Therefore have I called her "Rahab-who-just-sits-there."

Isaiah declares an oracle on the "beasts of the Negev." This is a description of the route the princes and ambassadors from Judah had taken when they travelled from Jerusalem to Egypt. It was a dangerous journey, carrying rich treasure for the leaders of Egypt on the backs of donkeys and camels. They travelled "*through a land of trouble and anguish*" where they faced wild animals including lions and vipers and darting snakes and many other dangers which put their beasts of burden at risk. There is a two-fold irony in this story. *First*, these ambassadors and princes had taken a similar route, in the opposite direction, from the promised-land to Egypt, as their ancestors had taken many centuries earlier when escaping from Egypt. This return to Egypt was against the word of the Lord, Exodus 13:17 and Deuteronomy 17:16. *Second*, the risks of travel and the costs of the gifts to Egypt were not worth the effort as the gifts were given to a people who could not help or profit them.

Isaiah, in vs. 7 emphasizes the futility of taking this journey and the making of an agreement with Egypt whom the profit calls "Rahab." Other references in the Scriptures to Egypt be named Rahab are found in Psalm 87:4, 89:10 and Isaiah 51:9. Rahab has the meaning of arrogant-turbulence. Most scholars understand this word as referring to a sea monster as this is clearly the description in Isaiah 51:9. Isaiah as recorded in the NKJV calls Egypt, "*Rahab-Hem-Shebeth*" which has the meaning of "Rahab who sits idle." The NIV renders this phrase as "*Rahab the Do-Nothing*," and the KJV has "*Their strength is to sit still*." The point Isaiah makes about Egypt is a stinging rebuke to king Hezekiah and those he sent to Egypt. Their time, money, dangerous

journey and agreement were not only worthless but the whole exercise was also an exercise in rebellion against God as the following verses make plain.

Victor Buksbazen comments on verses 6-7:

“The prophet visualizes the caravan of the Judean ambassadors passing through the wild and eerie land of the Negev, inhabited by lions and all kinds of snakes. The fauna of the Negev, since the time of Isaiah, has changed considerably, but snakes still infest some parts of it. The caravan of camels and asses is loaded down with rich presents for the rulers of Egypt. However, all this will be of no avail since Egypt will not help Judah. Isaiah calls Egypt “The Reclining Sea-Monster” (*Rahab-hem-shabeth*), literally “the sitting Rahab.” *Rahab* (Sea-Monster) is the name applied to Egypt elsewhere (Isa. 51:0, Psa. 87:4, 89:10, etc.). (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, page 258).

**30:8-17: The Rebellious who do not seek help from the Lord
The People Refuse God’s Wisdom: 30:8-11**

30:8 *Now go, write it before them on a tablet,
and inscribe it on a scroll,
that it may be preserved as a witness for the future forever.*

The Lord requested that Isaiah write a message of warning against the people of Judah on both a tablet, for public viewing as the words “before them” indicate and on a scroll, likely for private viewing and also as a permanent record which would have formed this part of the book of Isaiah. The words on the tablet would have been more concise than those written on a scroll yet both of these writings were for an eternal witness of God’s warning. The words that God wanted recorded may be the very words of Isaiah chapter 30 verses 8-17. Isaiah does not disclose the exact words he wrote on the tablet and the scroll but he gives the reason for these inscriptions in the verses following vs. 8.

30:9 *For they are a rebellious people,
deceptive children,
children that will not obey the law of the LORD.*

God, as Isaiah stated in vs. 9 and following, gives His reason for requesting a permanent record of warning and judgment against His people. God’s people are rebellious and deceptive children who will not obey His law. This has been an all too familiar lament from the Lord about His chosen people. The word “law” in this verse is literally *torah* meaning the law of the Lord. The prophet Jeremiah often lamented on the refusal of God’s people to listen or obey the words of the Lord: Jeremiah 6:19; 9:13; 13:10; 26:4; 43:23 and 44:23. Daniel also prayed for forgiveness for his people who had transgressed the law of God and did not obey His voice. Daniel 9:11.

30:10-11 *They tell the seers, "Stop seeing visions,"
and to the prophets, "Stop prophesying to us about what is right,
tell us pleasantries, prophesy illusions.*

*Get out of the way,
turn aside from the path,
let us hear no more of the Holy One of Israel."*

Isaiah continues the declaration of Lord's rebuke of His people who have refused to listen to the seers and prophets (including Isaiah) who speak the words of the Lord. The people refuse to listen to what the Lord wants them to do and instead demand these prophets speak only pleasant words and words of illusion. The people further push away the prophets and demand to hear no more about the Holy One of Israel. Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, told Amos: "*O seer, go, flee to the land of Judah. Earn your bread and prophesy there.*"¹³ *Do not prophesy any more at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house.*" Amos 7:12-13. In many passages of Scripture, the sad testimony of God's people is recorded that they refused to listen to the prophets whom God had sent to them. See: 2 Chronicles 24:19; Jeremiah 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; Ezekiel 2:5; Daniel 9:6; Zechariah 1:4 and Luke 16:31.

30:12-14 *Therefore this is what the Holy One of Israel says,
"Because you despise this word,
and trust and rely on oppression and deception;*

¹³ *therefore this iniquity will be to you
like a cracked and bulging wall ready to fall,
that topples suddenly, in an instant.*

¹⁴ *He will smash it like a potter's clay pot,
shattering it into pieces without mercy;
so that not a shard of it can be found among its pieces
for taking fire from the hearth,
or to dipping up water out of a cistern."*

God's response to the refusal of His people to listen to Him or to His prophet and their rebellious acts of turning to a pagan nation for help instead of trusting in Him. The disaster, called by Isaiah, "*this iniquity*" to fall on them would be like the sudden collapse of a wall, vs. 13; or the smashing of a potter's jar in which the smashed shards of the vessel would be useless for any purpose, vs. 14. The comparison of the smashing of a potter's jar was a stinging rebuke for the attitude of these people who although they were but a vessel of clay, they considered themselves to be equal with the potter (God) and they spoke insolent words to their maker, (vs. 16).

Thomas Constable comments:

Consequently their iniquity would lead to disaster, similar to the sudden internal collapse of a high wall, and the severe external smashing of an earthenware jar. It would be complete, as when no useful pieces remain after the smashing of a pot. That judgment *had* not yet come was hardly grounds for concluding that it *would* not come (cf. Matt. 24:36-44; Mark 13:32-37; 2 Pet. 3:3-10).

"The interval from the first cracks until the actual collapse [of a wall] may be a long time, but when the collapse comes it is terribly sudden and irreversible. So it will be with this refusal to rely on God. Years may pass, but one day the Assyrians will stand at the door with all Judah in ruins behind them."³⁵¹

When God miraculously slew Sennacherib's besieging forces around Jerusalem in 701 B.C., the Assyrians had already destroyed much of Judah. [Note 351: G. A. Smith, *The Book of Isaiah*, 1:128] (Thomas Constable, *Isaiah*, page 143)

30:15 *For this is what the sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel says,
"In returning and rest you will be delivered;
quietness and trust will be your strength,
but you rejected it.*

God offers them salvation from their impending doom which in the context of chapters 28-33 is the invasion of Judah by the Assyrians. God asks them to simply repent. Resting quietly in the Lord and trusting in Him alone is the only way for the people of Judah to experience God's protection from their enemies. God's words to the people of Judah were the same as He delivered to King Ahaz a few years earlier: "*Be careful, be quiet, and don't be afraid,*" Isaiah 7:4. Just prior to this offer to the people of Judah, Isaiah had recorded in chapter 28:12:

*"This is the rest, give rest to the one who is weary;"
and "This is a place of refreshment."
Yet they would not listen.*

God also sums up this request, in vs. 15, by stating: "*but you rejected it.*" The people rejected God's offer of protection and instead of coming in quiet respect to God and resting in Him, they sought refuge in fleeing on horses from the Assyrian assault. Other passages in Isaiah speak of a day when God will provide rest for His faithful remnant: 11:10; 14:3; 32:17.

30:16-17 *You say, 'No, we will flee on horses;'
therefore you will flee.
and, 'We will ride on swift horses;'
therefore those who pursue you will be swift.
¹⁷ One thousand of you will flee at the threat of one of them;
at the threat of five all of you will flee,
until you are left as a lone flagpole on the top of a mountain,
and as a signal flag on a hill."*

The rebellious and obstinate people of God had rejected His guidance and protection and sought protection from the advancing Assyrians in the courts of Egypt. God rebuked His people and told them this strategy of seeking aid from the Egyptians would only result in shame and disgrace. The people of Judah and by implication, the court of Judah, including its leaders and king,

refused to listen to God's rebuke and mockingly claimed that they would flee from the Assyrians on swift horses. God simply responds that this would be a useless strategy because those who flee will be pursued by even swifter enemies who will over-take them. The people of Judah would be so in fear that they would flee at the sight of five or even one of the Assyrians and all that would be left of them would be an abandoned banner or flag on a lonely hill.

David L. Cooper comments:

The one who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek after Him. No one can please God without faith. The Lord delights to exercise our faith and our trust. If one trusts, he does not worry; if he worries, he does not trust. When Israel said that she would not trust God but would flee upon horses, the Lord declared that, since she had taken this attitude, they would have to flee. He assured them, however, that their pursuers and their persecutors would be swifter than they and that a great calamity would overcome them; for, "One thousand shall flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five shall ye flee: till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill" (vs. 17). Every sin and disobedience receives a just recompense of reward. God must deal with man according to the merits of his case.

The Lord is very much concerned about all His people. He never willingly afflicts the children of men. It grieves His heart to punish any of His children. Humanly speaking, the Lord is reluctant to punish them but endures with long-suffering until He cannot act otherwise than to bring summary judgment upon them.

He must wait very frequently in order that He might pour out the fullness of His blessings upon His people. This is true of the people of God today and is also correct with reference to Israel, for the prophet declared, "And therefore will Jehovah wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for Jehovah is a God of justice; blessed are all they that wait for him" (vs. 18). Nothing would delight the heart of God more than their letting him have full possession of their lives and working in and through them His plans and purposes in His effort to reach others. He longs to be gracious to everyone who has come to Him; but unfortunately most of His people by their lack of surrender will not allow Him to have His way in their lives. Such is the declaration found in this quotation. God has longed to be gracious to Israel, but He could not; He has wanted to have mercy upon her, but she would not allow Him to do so. These statements are in perfect accord with the declaration of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 23:37-39. In this passage He declared that He often wished to gather the Jewish people as a hen does her chickens under her wings but they would not. (D. L. Cooper, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Biblical Research Monthly – September 1944).

Teaching Outline for Isaiah 30:1-17

30:1-7: The Rebellious who seek help from Egypt

The Sinful Plan: 30:1-2

The Shameful People: 30:3-5

The Sitting Protector: 30:6-7

30:8-17: The Rebellious who do not seek help from the Lord
The People Refuse God's Wisdom: 30:8-11
The People Reject God's Word: 30:12-14
The People Reject God's Will: 30:15-17

5 God's Graciousness to Jerusalem: 30:18-33

God's Future Blessings: 30:18-26

The latter half of chapter 30 is a declaration by God of His gracious blessings on the people of Judah. This is the fourth of a series in chapters 28 to 33 of a message of woe (verses. 1-17) followed by a message of salvation and blessing (verses 18-33). Verses 18-33 of chapter 30 has two distinct parts: one in the future, where God bestows His blessings in the millennial kingdom, verses 18-26, and the second in the present with God's promise of His immediate help to the city of Jerusalem, verses 27-33.

30:18 *Therefore the LORD patiently waits,
so that he may be gracious to you.
Therefore he will rise up,
so that he may have mercy on you.
For the LORD is a God of justice.
Blessed are all those who wait for him.*

It is very significant that vs. 18 has a double "therefore" as they point to the ultimate response of God to the sinfulness and rebelliousness of Judah. God is faithful and keeps His promise to His chosen people. Therefore, in spite of their wickedness, and in spite of the fact that they have no patience to wait upon God, He will wait for them in His desire to have compassion on them. He longs to be gracious to them. He calls those who long for Him blessed, because He is a God of justice. God will not let their enemies go unpunished and He will not forget His beloved city of where His holy mountain sits.

The word "gracious" is the Hebrew word *chanan* which is perhaps best known in the Scriptures in the benediction or blessing of Aaron as recorded in Numbers 6:24-26:

²⁴ *"The LORD bless you and keep you;*
²⁵ *the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you.*
²⁶ *The LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace."*

Other important occurrences include Exodus 33:19 and many of the Psalms. The Prophet Amos also used this word in 5:14-15 of his prophecy: "*Seek good and not evil, that you may live; so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, just as you have claimed. 15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the city gate. It may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.*" See also: Isaiah 26:10; 27:11; 30:19 and 33:2.

The word “mercy” is often translated as “compassion” and is the Hebrew word *rachan*. It often occurs in Isaiah translated as mercy or compassion. Isaiah 9:17; 13:18; 14:1; 27:11; 30:18; 49:10, 13, 15; 54:8, 10; 55:7 and 60:10. The phrase “*God of justice*” occurs only in Isaiah 30:18 and Malachi 2:17 in the Scriptures. The word “justice” also translated as “judgment” occurs 40 times in Isaiah and is a major theme of the prophecy of Isaiah.

30:19 *For the people will dwell in Zion at Jerusalem;
you will weep no more.
He will surely be gracious to you
at the sound of your cry for help;
when he hears, he will answer you.*

Isaiah states that God will answer the cry of the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem. That this response by God in the future is evident by the content of verses 20-26. The weeping of the people of Jerusalem will be met by God’s gracious response. In the last days, when Jerusalem is surrounded by its enemies and hope seems lost, God will provide a way of escape for the faithful remnant who have cried out to Him. Zechariah 14:3-5. See above notes on Isaiah 29:5 for a brief explanation of the return of the Lord and His rescue of His people.

30:20 *Though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity
and the water of affliction,
yet your Teacher will not be hidden anymore,
but your eyes will see your Teacher.*

Isaiah explains that the Lord had punished them by giving them the “*bread of adversity and water of affliction*”. The Lord’s punishment was meant to be restorative and not punitive. He longs for fellowship with His people. As their Teacher, He will, in the blessed days to come, no longer hide Himself and their eyes will behold their Teacher. This verse is the only place in the Old Testament where God is called their Teacher. It will only be in the future when the people of Jerusalem will behold their Teacher with their eyes and worship Him as their Messiah. During His first advent, the Messiah was called a Rabbi (meaning teacher): John 1:49, 6:25; 11:8 and 20:16 but the people of Israel rejected their teacher. It will only be during the second advent of the Messiah, when the faithful remnant who have cried out to Him, will behold Him with their eyes and will worship Him as their Protector, Savior and Lord on Mount Zion.

Victor Buksbazen comments on vs.20:

“In the Qumran documents (The Habakkuk Commentary), “The Teacher of Righteousness” (*Moreh Tsedek*), a Messianic figure, is of paramount importance and may have some connection with Isaiah 30:20 and the Hebrew text of Joel 2:23 and Hosea 10:12.” (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, page 264).

In the blessed days of the millennial kingdom, the people will respond to the lesson of the teacher, *“This is the way, walk in it”*, vs. 21. They will also finally put away their graven images, their idols, plated with silver and gold, vs. 22. During the Tribulation period, idol worship will be prevalent among the ungodly and even in the midst of God’s judgment upon them they will not repent of their sins of idolatry. Revelation 9:20. It will only be after the people of God, who will be known as the faithful remnant, have repented of their past sin of rejecting their Messiah and have turned from their worship of idols, that their Messiah will return and they will behold Him with their eyes.

30:23-26 *Then he will give the rain for your seed,
which you sow in the ground.*

*Food from the produce of the ground
will be rich and plenteous.*

In that day your cattle will feed in large pastures.

²⁴ *The oxen and the donkeys that till the ground
will eat savory fodder*

which has been winnowed with the shovel and pitchfork.

²⁵ *There on every lofty mountain,
and on every high hill,*

*there will be brooks of flowing water,
in the day of the great slaughter,
when the towers fall.*

²⁶ *Moreover the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun,
and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter,
like the light of seven days,*

*in the day that the LORD binds up the injuries of his people
and heals the wound he has inflicted.*

These verses describe the bountiful blessings of the messianic kingdom. Some may wish to explain away these words as describing only the benefits of salvation in Christ. However, the plain reading of these words lead to an obvious conclusion that the Lord is describing how life will be like in the future days when the returning Teacher, the Messiah will reign over His kingdom on the earth. In verses 23-24, the Lord describes that, “on that day” there will be abundant rain and the soil will yield a rich and plenteous harvest. The livestock will graze in wide pastures and the beasts of burden, the oxen and donkeys will eat salted fodder. These verses indicate that not only will the people of God be restored but nature itself will finally be free of its futility and corruption when the Lord returns. Romans 8:19-21. In vs. 25, Isaiah explains that streams will run from every high hill and lofty mountain *“in the day of the great slaughter when the towers fall.”* This day of great slaughter is the day when the Messiah will return and defeat the enemies of His people. The words *“when the towers fall,”* are most likely a reference to the final fall of Babylon. Revelation 18:21-24.

“*In that day*”, when the Messiah will return and “*binds up the injuries of his people and heals the wound he has inflicted,*” vs. 26 will be days of great brilliance when the glory of the Lord will shine as if seven times brighter than the sun and will be like the light of seven days. See also Isaiah 60:19-20. The most important theological truth of vs. 26 is the fact that the Lord heals the bruise He has inflicted. The Lord will establish days of Tribulation in the future. These days are described in Jeremiah in 30:5-7:

5 *For this is what the LORD says:*

*"We have heard cries of terror,
fear, and not peace.*

6 *Ask now, and see:*

*Can a man give birth to a child?
Why do I see every man with his hands holding his stomach,
like a woman in labor,
and all faces have turned pale?*

7 *Alas, that day is so great that there has never been one like it.*

*It is the time of Jacob's trouble;
but he will be saved out of it."*

According to Revelation chapters 6-19, it is the Lord who sends the calamitous destruction on the earth during the Tribulation years. He does this to bring judgment on the wicked who will not repent and to bring His faithful remnant to repentance and safety. As indicated above on the notes concerning Isaiah 29:5, the Old Testament contains a great amount of detail regarding the days of the Tribulation period and the second coming of Christ.

Thomas Constable comments on verses 23-26:

30:23-24 There will be plenty of rain so the harvests will be bountiful. The agriculture of Palestine depended totally on rain.³⁵⁵ There will be such abundant pastureland for the cattle that they will eat the best food.

30:25-26 There will also be an abundance of water, even on the hilltops, when the Lord defeats His enemies (at Armageddon; cf. v. 19; 2:12-17; 25:1-5; Rev. 16:16; 19:17-21). Increased light and the healing of God's formerly broken and bruised people will also mark "that day" (cf. 24:23; Rom. 8:21). The point is that things will be much better than now. It may be impossible for life as we know it to exist if there were literally seven times as much light as there is now. Yet a renovation of nature as well as humankind is in view.

"Evidently [this is] a description of the glories of the Millennium (since this kind of prosperity has no appropriateness for a heavenly existence)." ³⁵⁶ [Note 356: Archer, p. 630. Cf. Delitzsch, 2:39] (Thomas Constable, *Isaiah*, page 145).

God's Present Blessings: 30:27-33

God promises to act on behalf of the doomed people of Jerusalem. The mighty God comes in burning and fierce anger, to destroy the Assyrians and to bring a final judgment on the Assyrian

king. These verses are a description of God and His actions that are among the most graphic in all of Scripture. Isaiah describes God in an anthropomorphic (human like) sense ascribing to God actions from His lips, tongue, breath, voice and arm. God is a spirit and He does not have the physical characteristics of a human. However, the Scriptures often describe God with human like attributes so that the meaning of His actions can be understood.

30:27a *Look, the name of the LORD comes from far away,*

In the opening words of vs. 27, Isaiah declares that it is the “name” of the LORD that comes from a remote or far-away location. God’s name has a holy and revered meaning in Scripture. God is jealous of His name and responds in wrath when His name is profaned. God often acts for the sake of His name even when His people rebel against Him. The student will derive much benefit from a study of what the Scriptures teach about the name of the Lord and what God has done and will do for His name’s sake.

Selected verses for a study on the name of the Lord: Exodus 3:15; 6:3; 15:3; 20:7 and 34:14; Leviticus 24:16; Deuteronomy 28:58; 2 Samuel 6:2; Psalms 8:1, 9; 29:2; 34:3; 86:9; 103:1 and 145:1, 21; Proverbs 18:10; Nehemiah 1:11; Job 1:21; Daniel 9:19; Micah 4:5; 5:4 and Zechariah 13:9 and 14:9. The importance of the name of the Lord and what He does for His own name’s sake is stated often in the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Verses to consider in Isaiah include: 12:4; 24:15; 25:1; 26:8; 42:8; 45:4; 47:4; 48:2, 9, 11; 50:10; 51:15; 54:5; 56:6; 59:19; 60:9 and 63:16.

The reference to “far away” in Isaiah 30:27 has the meaning of the heavenly realm, where God abides. It would be pure speculation to attempt to specify exactly where God has His throne. It is a place simply called from above: Isaiah 40:22; John 3:31, 8:23 and James 1:17. When Jesus was baptized by John and when He was speaking to Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration, God the Father spoke audibly from above: from heaven: Matthew 3:16-17 and from a cloud: Luke 9:34-35. Many days after His resurrection, Christ ascended up into heaven and it was said He will return from heaven, Acts 1:9-11. Isaiah calls heaven a far-away place and it is best to understand it that way. However, God is not far from us: Acts 17:27.

30:27b-30 *burning with his anger,
and in thick rising smoke.*

*His lips are full of fury,
and his tongue is like a consuming fire.*

²⁸ *His breath is like a flooding river,
that reaches even to one's neck.*

He shakes the nations in the sieve of destruction.

He puts a bridle in the jaws of the peoples to lead them to ruin.

²⁹ *You will sing a song as in the night when the holy feast is kept;
have gladness of heart, as when one goes with a flute
to come to the mountain of the LORD,
to the Rock of Israel.*

³⁰ *The LORD will cause his glorious voice to be heard,
and will show his arm swinging down,
with the fury of his anger,
and the flame of a consuming fire,
with a cloudburst, storm, and hailstones.*

The latter half of vs. 27 and verses 28 and 30 are an anthropomorphic (human like) depiction of God by Isaiah. God is described as having anger that burns; lips that are filled with fury (indignation); a tongue that is like a consuming fire and His breath, vs. 28 is like an overflowing river. In vs. 30, Isaiah further describes God as having a glorious voice and He will cause His arm to descend to be seen in fierce anger. These depictions of God with human like characteristics are Scriptural portraits that define the attributes and actions of God in ways that humans can understand them. God is a spiritual being who possess characteristics of a person. Scripture defines God as One who exists in three persons, each having individual characteristics or attributes. For an excellent study of the plurality of the Godhead see David L. Cooper, *The Plurality of the Divine Personalities*, chapter 2 of the *Messianic Series: Volume 1, The God of Israel*. (Biblical Research Studies Group). Other anthropomorphic (human like) Scriptural references to God include Exodus 24:9-11; Psalm 18:7-15; Ezekiel 1:26-28, Daniel 7:9-14; Nahum 1:1-8; and Habakkuk 3:3-15.

In vs. 29 the prophet describes the expected response of the people to whom God will rescue. They will be glad in their hearts and sing festival songs like those who would march in a festive parade up to the mountain of the Lord to Him who is called “the Rock of Israel”. Often in Scripture, God is defined as the Rock of His People providing refuge, safety and salvation. A few of the many references to God as rock include: Deuteronomy 32:4; 2 Samuel 22:2, 3, 32 and 37; Psalm 18:2, 46; 61:2; 89:26 and 95:1; Isaiah 17:10; 26:4; 30:29; and 44:8; and Habakkuk 1:12. Victor Buksbazu comments on vs. 29:

“We hear an echo of pilgrims marching to the Temple to the joyful tune of flutes. The festive mood of the pilgrims seems to fit in especially with the Feast of Tabernacles.” (Victor Buksbazu, *Isaiah*, page 263).

In the latter half of vs. 30, Isaiah returns to the literary device of theophany to describe God who will show Himself as a flame of a consuming fire and as a storm with a flooding rain and hailstones. The word “downburst” occurs in the Old Testament only in Isaiah 30:30. Similar words are cloudburst or flood which occur in Isaiah 8:7 (floodwaters); 17:12 (mighty waves); 17:13 (many waters); 28:2 (flooding) and 28:17 (overflow). Other descriptive words for the fury of God in the tempest are “storm” occurring also in Isaiah 4:6 (storm and rain); 25:4 (storm); 28:2 (storm); 32:2 (storm); 40:24 (whirlwind); 41:16 (whirlwind); and 54:11 (storm). The word

hail occurs in Isaiah 28:2, 17 and 32:19. The passage in the Old Testament with the most occurrences of hail is Exodus chapter 9 describing the plague of hail on the Egyptians.

30:31-33 *The Assyrians will be terrified at the voice of the LORD;
when he strikes them down with his rod.*

³² *Every stroke of the rod of punishment
which the LORD will lay on him,
will be to the sound of tambourines and harps;
in battles with the waving of his arm,
he will fight with them.*

³³ *For Topheth has been prepared for a long time;
yes, made ready for the king;
he has made its pyre deep and wide
with firewood piled high;
the breath of the LORD,
like a stream of burning sulfur, sets it on fire.*

In these verses the target of the Lord's fierce and burning anger is stated. The Assyrians will soon face the wrath of God as Isaiah will later describe in detail in chapters 36 and 37. When God strikes Assyria, the people of Jerusalem will rejoice with the music of tambourines and lyres. The blow of God's rod of punishment will strike Assyria and its king will be punished in a place called "Topheth" (vs.33), which literally means "a burning place of abomination or shame"

According to 2 Kings 23:10, Topheth was a valley of the son of Hinnom. It was a place where child sacrifices, in the form of burning, to the pagan god Molech were carried out. It was a most hideous act which God condemned, Jeremiah 7:31-32; 19:6 and 11. The reference to this burning valley in vs. 33 of Isaiah 30 is most likely a metaphor for Hell. The actual place of death for Sennacherib, the king of Assyria was in the place where he worshipped his god Nisroch, Isaiah 37:38. However, death is not the end of a human's existence. Those who have faith in the Messiah will live eternally with Him in peace. Those who rebel against God will be tormented in Hell and eventually forever in the lake of Fire, Revelation 20:14-15. The destination of this king upon his death was in Hell, which Isaiah describes as Topheth.

Teaching Outline for Isaiah 30:18-33

God's Promised Millennial Blessings: 30:18-26

God's Present Municipal Blessings: 30:27-33

6 The Sons of Israel Need to Return to the Lord: 31: 1-9

Isaiah chapter 31 introduces the **fifth woe** of chapters 28-33: (1) 28:1; (2) 29:1; (3) 29:15; (4) 30:1; (5) 31:1 and (6) 33:1. The imprecation of woe on those who oppose God is a major theme of Isaiah: 3:9, 11; 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22; 10:1, 5; 15:9; (six woes of chapters 28-33); 45:9, 10.

Isaiah also pronounced “woe” on himself twice when faced with overwhelming circumstances: 6:5 and 24:16. The declaration of woe was also a major theme of the prophet Jeremiah and of the message of Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry. The final “woes” of Scripture are recorded in the book of Revelation as a statement of God’s judgment against those who are ungodly during the days of the Tribulation.

Isaiah chapter 31 is a summary of the previous three chapters. It is a concise statement of God’s comparison of His wisdom and strength against that of the nations who are central to the unfolding drama facing Isaiah and the people of Judah. The main theme of this chapter and those preceding chapters is God’s lament over the failure of His people to trust in Him for protection and His offer of salvation if these people would repent and return to Him.

31:1 *Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help,
and rely on horses,
and trust in their many chariots,
and in horsemen because they are strong,
but they do not look to the Holy One of Israel,
or seek the LORD!*

The woe in vs. 1 is directed to the leadership of Judah who had made an agreement with Egypt, called a “covenant with death” in Isaiah 28:15, for protection against the Assyrians. The leadership of Judah had rejected the counsel of the Lord, 30:9-11, (compare 28:29). They had put their trust in horses whom they saw as strong and chariots whom they see as many. “*But they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek the LORD.*” They also had ignored the warnings of the Scriptures not to seek protection in Egypt against those who would war against them or trust in horses for victory over their enemies: Exodus 13:17; Deuteronomy 17:16; Psalm 20:7, 33:17 and Proverbs 21:31. They had long ago separated themselves from their once close relationship with the Lord. In the distant past, they consulted with God for His instructions before engaging an enemy: 1 Samuel 23:1-14 and 2 Samuel 5:17-25.

31:2 *Yet he too is wise, and will bring disaster,
and will not go back on his words.
He will rise against the house of the evildoers,
and against the helpers of those who do wrong.*

In biting sarcasm, the prophet, in vs. 2, declares that God “*also is wise*”. The leaders of Judah thought themselves to be wiser than the words of counsel from the Lord that Isaiah had declared to them. Isaiah had earlier pronounced a “woe” on these people: “*Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes.*” Isaiah 5:21. The leaders of Judah should have heeded the words of Moses written in the Torah, Deuteronomy 32:28-29. See also: Isaiah 29:14 which is quoted by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:19. The Book of Proverbs is a commentary on the need for God’s wisdom versus the folly of man’s wisdom. See specifically Proverbs 12:15 and 26:12. The Apostle Paul in Romans 1:21-22 rightly pronounced judgment on these leaders of Judah and on all who would forsake the Lord: “*For even though they knew God, they did not glorify him as*

God, or give thanks to him; but became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools.”

Isaiah declares further that this wise God, vs. 2, will bring disaster for He will oppose those who commit evil and do the work of iniquity. Isaiah had earlier, in his introductory address to the nation, (Isaiah 1:4), spoke about the people’s sinfulness:

*O sinful nation,
a people loaded down with iniquity,
an offspring of evildoers,
children who act corruptly!
They have forsaken the LORD;
they have despised the Holy One of Israel;
they have turned their backs on him.*

The people of God ignored Isaiah’s words when He first began his prophetic ministry and they still ignored his words even when faced with impending doom from the Assyrians. Following many declarations of woe and warning, recorded in his prophetic messages, Isaiah offered the hope of salvation. In his first address, Isaiah offered hope if the people would only listen to the reasonable words of God to obey Him. Isaiah 1:18-19. In chapter 31, Isaiah again offers hope if the rulers of Judah would only return to God. 31:6-7.

31:3 *Now the Egyptians are merely human, and not God;
their horses only flesh, and not spirit.
When the LORD will stretch out his hand,
both he who helps will stumble,
and he who is helped will fall.
They all will perish together.*

Isaiah reminds the leaders of Judah of the folly of trusting in the men and horses of Egypt. Both the Egyptians, those who are helping, and also those who are helped, the people of Judah, “*will all perish together*” because they are no match for the Lord who has to just stretch out His hand to bring destruction upon them. The world’s strongest armies and its technological might are useless before the strength of the Lord. He simply laughs at the hubris of mankind who rebel against Him, Psalm 2:1-4. See also: Deuteronomy 4:32-40, 7:17-19, 2 Chronicles 32:7-8: Psalm 107:40, Isaiah 40:21-26; Ezekiel 28:9. What power has flesh over the spirit of God? Zechariah 4:6 and John 4:24. The work of the Lord, described as His outstretched arm or hand, is a very common theme in the Old Testament. For example, Isaiah mentions it also in 5:25; 14:26-27; 23:11 and 45:12.

31:4-5 *For this is what the LORD says to me,
"When a lion or a young lion growls over its prey,
if a group of shepherds is called out against him,
will it not be frightened at their voice,*

or intimidated from their noise.

*So will the LORD of hosts come down to fight on Mount Zion,
and on its hill.*

⁵ *Like birds hovering overhead,
so the LORD of hosts will protect Jerusalem;
he will protect and deliver it,
he will pass over and rescue it.*

The prophet in vs. 4a, states that the Lord's actions is likened to a lion who growls over his prey and is not deterred by the presence or the voice of shepherds (defending the flock). The DASV has "*will it not be frightened*" which has the implication that the lion will be afraid of the voices and noise of the shepherds. The NKJV has "*He will not be afraid of their voice,*" which gives a better sense of the intention of the prophet in comparing the lion to the LORD of hosts who has no fear of His enemies.

In (vs. 4b) Isaiah states that "*so will the LORD of hosts come down to fight on Mount Zion and on its hill.*" In vs. 5, this action of the Lord is likened to flying birds protecting (their nests). The Lord's protection of Jerusalem, vs. 5 is declared by Isaiah in words which remind the prophet's audience of the past when the Lord brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt and rescued them from the captivity of the Egyptians: "*He will protect and deliver it; He will pass over and rescue it.*" The words "pass over" are both a reminder of the rescue accomplished by the Lord of His people as recorded in Exodus chapters 12-14 and the inauguration of the feast of Passover which forever commemorates this rescue. The people of the Lord in Isaiah's day would be reminded of the necessity to bring praises to the Lord when He came to rescue Jerusalem from the Assyrian armies. Isaiah 37:36. This rescue by the Lord also acts as a reminder of a future day when the Lord will once again come down to wage war on Mount Zion and on its hill during the terrible time described in Scripture as the "day of the Lord." Refer to the many notes on the day of the Lord in earlier installments of this study. Also, Gary V. Smith provides an expanded discussion on the portrayal of the Lord as a lion and a bird in his Isaiah Commentary, Vol. 1, on pages 532-534.

31:6-7 *Return to him from whom you have deeply rebelled,
O children of Israel.*

⁷ *For in that day each one of you will cast away your idols of silver,
and your idols of gold,
which your own hands have sinfully made for you.*

The prophet declares hope for the besieged people of Jerusalem. Vs. 6 is a call for repentance much like that of later chapters. For example, refer to Isaiah 44:22 and 55:7. See also, Jeremiah 3:6-25 and Ezekiel 18:30-32. No matter how desperate the situation or how long the continuance in sin, God offers hope for His people and for all peoples if they will but repent and turn in faith and trust to Him. In vs. 7, the prophet turns his gaze far into the future. In one of many "in that day" prophecies contained in the book of Isaiah, the sons of Israel in vs. 7 will finally cast away

their idols which for them to have made is a sin. God's longsuffering for His people is seen in this verse. God has been patient with His people and has repeatedly warned them about the worship of idols. From every pagan nation around them the sons of Israel have adopted the sinful ritual of idol worship. It will continue right up to the end of the Tribulation where they will finally abandon this rebellious practice. The Lord will only return to His people following their recognition of their great sin of rejecting their Messiah and in contrition and repentance ask the Lord to return to them. Hosea 5:15-6:3 and Zechariah 12:10. See above notes on Isaiah 29:2, 5.

31:8-9 *Assyrians will fall by the sword, but not a human one;
the sword, but not of humankind, will devour them.
They will flee from the sword,
and their young men will be forced into hard labor.
⁹ Their rock will pass away in terror,
and their officers will panic when they see the signal flag,"
says the LORD, whose fire is in Zion,
and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.*

The immediate circumstances of the attempted assault by Assyria on Jerusalem, is the topic of verses 8-9. God will cause the defeat of the Assyrian army. It will not be the sword of a man that brings about the Assyrian defeat. God is the mighty warrior who brings victory to His people living in Jerusalem. Isaiah frequently declared that this great victory is the work of the Lord: Isaiah 14:24-27; 29:5-8; 30:27-33 and 37:36. The reference to forced labor in vs. 8 is most assuredly the longer-term demise of the Assyrians after the Babylonians defeated them and took many of their young men captive. In vs. 9, Isaiah describes the failure and death of the Assyrian rock which is a description of the defeat of their stronghold or city fortress and the terror of seeing the standard or flag of their enemy (the Babylonians) being raised in victory. Some understand the words "*their rock*" as a reference to the king of Assyria as a counterpoint to the Rock of Israel in 32:9. Isaiah ends this passage with a reminder that the Lord is jealous for His City Jerusalem and His mountain Zion because His fire and furnace which is His great zeal for them is present there.

Teaching Outline for Isaiah Chapter 31
The Lord's Wisdom and Power: 31:1-3
The Lord's Wrath and Protection: 31:4-5
The Lord's Waiting and Patience: 31:6-7
The Lord's Work and Passion: 31:8-9

7 Future Blessings on the Nation: 32:1-20

Chapter 32 of Isaiah does not begin with a "Woe" warning as did the previous four chapters. However, chapter 33 does begin with an oracle of "woe". Many understand that Isaiah intended to have a distinct outline when he wrote the section we now know as chapters 28-33. Of course, when Isaiah wrote his prophecy there were no chapters and verses to separate thoughts and subject matter. If it is understood that Isaiah's intention was to have a separate message for each

section beginning with “woe”, then these chapters can be seen as having six sections: (1) 28:1-29; (2) 29:1-14; (3) 29:15-24; (4) 30:1-33; (5) 31:1-32:20 and (6) 33:1-24. Some may want to include chapters 34 and 35 in this sixth section. However, it seems best to keep these two chapters as a separate unit as will be further examined later in these notes.

Chapter 32 contains a prophecy of a righteous king. As there were no kings declared to be righteous over the nations of Judah or Israel prior to Isaiah’s day and no kings so designated following this prophet, it seems best to understand verses 1-8 and 15-20 of this chapter as relating to the millennial kingdom. This chapter has three distinct sections. Verses 1-8 contain details about this future reign. Verses 9-14 contain a current warning to the complacent women of Jerusalem and in verses 15-20 Isaiah again discusses matters of this future peaceful reign of the righteous king. It was not unusual for Isaiah to interject a message of current importance within a larger future prophetic passage.

32:1-8: The Future Reign of the Righteous King

32:1-2 *Look, a king will reign in righteousness,
and princes will rule in justice.*

² *Each of them will be like a hiding place from the wind,
and a shelter from the storm,
like streams in the desert,
like the shade of a great rock in a weary land.*

Isaiah begins this message with “*Look*” in the DASV. Other English versions translate the opening word as “behold” which is an emphatic declaration of astonishing news that will happen in the future. Isaiah often employed this declaration: Isaiah 12:2; 13:9; 17:1; 19:1; 21:9 and 24:1. See also: 1 Samuel 12:2; 18:22; 2 Samuel 19:9; 1 Kings 1:18 and Jeremiah 23:5. The important news that Isaiah is revealing is that “*a king will reign in righteousness and princes will rule in justice.*” This is indeed astonishing news for a people who have had a sad history of corrupt rulers. However, this righteous king will rule a kingdom far in the future. Isaiah is describing a grand contrast between what the people of God endure at the present time with what they will be blessed with in the future. The “king” can be no other than the promised Messianic ruler who will reign on Zion and who God describes in Psalm 2 as “My Son,” Psalm 2:6-7. Isaiah declared that this righteous king, who would be a son given to the people, would have the four two-fold names of: “*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father and Prince of Peace*” for the “*government will be upon His shoulders.*” Isaiah 9:6. It could rightly be stated that one of the grand themes of the prophecy of Isaiah is the coming rule of the righteous king who is the Lord of Salvation.

Isaiah has written much about the rule of this King, the Messiah will rule in righteousness and peace. See Isaiah 1:26; 5:16; 9:7; 11:4-5; 16:5; 24:16; 26:2, 9-10; 32:16-18; 33:5; 45:23-25; 51:6-8; 54:11-14; 58:8-12; 60:15-17; and 61:11; and will also rule with justice. See Isaiah 1:27; 5:16; 9:7; 28:6, 17; 30:18; 33:5; 51:4; and 61:8-11.

The DASV beings vs. 2 with the words, “*Each of them*” but the NKJV has “*A man*” which better translates the Hebrew. Who is this man? It is the righteous King of vs. 1, who will have the ministry that is described in vs. 2 as: *first*, a refuge or hiding place from the wind; *second*, a shelter from the storm; *third*, like streams in the desert and *fourth*, like the shade of a great rock in a parched or weary land. The New Testament provides a few details regarding the ministry of the Messiah during His millennial reign. However, as is the case for most of the “day of the Lord” prophecies, it is the Old Testament that fills in much detail of these days to come. The Princes who will rule in justice during the millennial reign of Christ are not identified and it would not be beneficial to speculate as to who they may be. They will, however, be much different than the princes or leaders who have had roles of responsibility during the days of Isaiah’s prophetic ministry. The current leaders of Judah are those who scoff at the Lord’s direction and seek alliances with pagan nations, Isaiah 28:14-15; they attempt to hide their evil schemes from God, Isaiah 29:15; and they corruptly deny justice to the innocent, Isaiah 29:21.

Study notes and comments about these days from recommended authors include: J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*; Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God*; Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*; Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*; Tony Garland, *A Testimony of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*.

32:3-4 *The eyes of those who see will not be closed,
and the ears of those who hear will listen.*

⁴ *The heart of the rash will be able to discern knowledge,
and the tongue of those who stutter
will be articulate and speak clearly.*

The results of and comments about the ministry of the righteous King and the ruling princes are declared by Isaiah in verses and following. These will be days when no one will be blind or deaf. The minds of the people will be able to discern truth and the tongues of the people will be able to speak without stammering. The mention in verses 3 and 4 of eyes that will not be blinded and ears that will listen and minds that will discern and tongues that will not stammer are a stunning contrast to Isaiah’s earlier indictment on the leaders of Judah: Isaiah 3:8-10; 5:20-24; 6:9-10; 28:7-13; 29:9-12 and 30:9-11. It will only be when a righteous king rules them and just princes oversee their government that their abilities to see, hear, discern and talk will be transformed to participate morally right and in a holy manner in the society of the coming kingdom.

32:5-8 *The fool will no longer be called noble,
nor the rascal considered honorable.*

⁶ *For a fool speaks folly,
and his heart plots wrongdoing,
They practice ungodliness
and speak error concerning the LORD,*

*to leave the soul of the hungry unsatisfied,
and to deprive the thirsty of water.*

⁷ *The rascal's schemes are evil;
he devises evil schemes to destroy the poor with lies,
even when the plea of needy is right.*

⁸ *But the noble plans noble actions;
by noble actions he stands secure.*

Isaiah provides editorial comment about this future kingdom. Fools will not be tolerated or called noble. Those who were rascals (rogues) will have no standing. It is only those who are noble, literally: majestic or glorious (KJV: “liberal”), who will see their plans honored by the Messiah, and their plans will glorify Him. The Messiah will protect the needy and they will speak just or righteous words. It is possible that the intent of the latter half of vs. 7 and vs. 8 is that the noble, by their righteous acts in the millennial kingdom, will stand up for the needy and meet their needs. It should also be noted that the millennial kingdom will have dishonest, scheming and foolish people living along-side those who are living righteous lives.

At the end of the millennial kingdom, we should not be surprised that there will be those who will align themselves with Satan after he is released. (Revelation 20:7-10). How could people who have lived on the earth, with full knowledge that Jesus the Messiah is ruling among them, rebel against Christ and see to overthrow Him and His rule? The answer is as old as Moses and yet older, as old as Adam. Adam and Eve knew God intimately yet rebelled against Him. The people of Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness with the presence of God before them day and night and yet rebelled against Him. Psalms 2 speaks to this rebellion in the last days when those who align themselves with Satan will seek to overthrow the Son of God in Zion. Why will God allow such rebellion even to the end of the age? The answer is that God is patient and loving and will wait even to the very end of days for those who will seek Him with their whole hearts.

32:9-14: Warning to the Complacent Women of Jerusalem

32: 9-14 *Get up, you women who are at ease;
hear my voice, you complacent daughters;
give ear to my speech.*

¹⁰ *For in just about a year you will shudder,
you complacent ones;
for the grape harvest will fail,
the fruit harvest will not come.*

¹¹ *Tremble, you women who are at ease;
shudder, you complacent ones;
strip down, and expose yourselves,
and put sackcloth on your waists.*

¹² *Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields,
for the fruitful vine.*

- ¹³ *For the land of my people will be overgrown
with thorns and thistles;
yes, over all the houses of joy in the city of carousing.*
- ¹⁴ *For the palace will be forsaken;
the populous city deserted;
the Ophel and the watchtower will be caves forever,
the joy of wild donkeys,
and a pasture for flocks;*

Isaiah directed his message to the women in Judah who have been living at ease and have become complacent during times of fruitful harvests and a false hope of trusting in Egypt for their protection. Isaiah tells them, in vs. 10, that these days of prosperity and safety will be coming to an end, “*for in just about a year,*” DASV or a better translation is: “*in little more than a year,*” ESV. This specific time reference most likely pinpoints when Isaiah declared the prophetic words of chapter 32. Jerusalem was attacked by the Assyrians in 701 BC. Thus, the time of Isaiah’s message to the women of Judah can be identified as 702 B.C. and not later than 703 B.C. Isaiah instructs these complacent women to dress in sackcloth which is a symbol of lament and mourning and to beat their breasts lamenting the end of their enjoyment of the fruit of the harvest described in vs. 12 as the fruitful vine. Again, Isaiah returns to a favorite theme of the relationship between God and His people, both in Isaiah’s time and in the future, described as a vineyard, and wine, the fruit of the vineyard. This common theme was certainly due to the fact that the Judeans were people of agriculture and they could easily understand why God would describe His relationship with them in this manner. References in the book of Isaiah: 1:8; 3:14; 5:1-30; 7:23-25; 22:13; 25:6; 27:2-6; 28:1-8; 37:30-32; 55:1; 56:12; 61:5; 62:8-9; 63:1-6; 65:8-11 and 21.

In verses 13 and 14, Isaiah extends the calamity that will soon come upon these women to their jubilant city and their joyful houses. Also, their palace will soon be abandoned. The hill and watch-tower will soon become caves and be suitable only for the enjoyment of donkeys and as pastures for the flocks. This further description of destruction and ruin extends the timing of God’s judgment beyond the siege in 701 B.C. of the City of Jerusalem by the Assyrians to the time of the complete devastation of the nation of Judah in 586 B.C. by a nation they have not yet seen as their oppressors, the Babylonians. Isaiah will direct his prophetic message to this menacing nation in the latter part of his writings.

Isaiah had earlier pronounced God’s judgment on the people of the city of Jerusalem for their indulgences when they should have been wearing sackcloth and lamenting over the coming assault of the Assyrians as recorded in verses 12-14 of chapter 22:

- ¹² *In that day the Lord, the LORD of hosts called
for weeping and mourning,
for heads to be shaved,
and for sackcloth to be put on.*

- ¹³ *But instead there was joy and gladness,
celebratory slaying of oxen and slaughtering of sheep,
eating meat and drinking wine.
"Let's eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," you exclaim.*
- ¹⁴ *The LORD of hosts revealed himself in my ears,
"Surely this iniquity will not be forgiven until you die,"
says the Lord, the LORD of hosts.*

32:15-20: A Time of Future Blessing

- 32:15-20** *until the Spirit is poured on us from on high,
and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field,
and the fruitful field considered a forest.*
- ¹⁶ *Then justice will dwell in the wilderness;
righteousness will reside in the fruitful field.*
- ¹⁷ *The produce of righteousness will be peace;
the result of righteousness,
quietness and confidence forever.*
- ¹⁸ *My people will live in peaceable dwellings,
in safe homes,
and in secure resting places.*
- ¹⁹ *Even if hail destroys the forest
and the city is totally leveled;*
- ²⁰ *blessed are you who plant beside every stream,
who let the feet of the ox and the donkey graze freely.*

After describing the destruction upon the nation of Judah and the city of Jerusalem in verses 9-14, Isaiah declares a message of future messianic blessings in the last section of chapter 32. The ultimate restoration of the nation will not occur until the Lord will come and accomplish a mighty work of restoration among His people. This restoration has not yet occurred in the history of Israel and will only occur, according to vs. 15, until "*the Spirit is poured on us from on high.*" Isaiah mentioned the Spirit of the Lord numerous times in his prophetic writings. The prophet's audience was not ignorant of the work of the Spirit in relation to God's creative work in the past, Genesis 1:2 and Psalm 104:30, and to His blessings for them in the future, Isaiah 11:1-10. The Spirit of God is mentioned in Isaiah: 11:2; 30:1; 32:15; 34:16; 40:13; 42:1; 44:3; 48:16; 50:21; 61:1; 63:10 (Holy Spirit); 63:11 (Holy Spirit) and 63:14. The only other reference to the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament is David's plea in Psalm 51:11. In the context of vs. 15, it is the mention of the future work of the Spirit that is being emphasized. See also Ezekiel 36:26-27; 39:29; Joel 2:28-28 and Zechariah 12:10.

The prophets of God were sent by the Spirit to declare the words and law of the Lord as Zechariah so graphically stated:

“They made their hearts as hard as rock, so they would not have to obey the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great wrath came from the LORD of hosts.” Zechariah 7:12.

The people of Zechariah’s day refused to hear the words of the Lord just as they had done during the ministry of Isaiah. Yet in spite of the rebellious actions and attitudes of His people, God will, because of His great love to His people and due to His faithfulness in keeping His covenant promises with them, restore them to the land with bountiful blessings in the future. These future days and blessings have not yet occurred. Yet it is these blessings that Isaiah declares to the people of God in the words recorded in verses 15-20 of Isaiah chapter 32. But before the arrival of these days of blessings, the Lord has and will again bring judgment on His people for their refusal to listen to Him through the words of His servants the prophets and by the words, life, death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

When God pours out His Spirit in the future, several blessings to the people of God will be realized. Isaiah stated, in vs. 15 that the Spirit would be poured out, *on us*, referring to those who are the covenant people of God. These blessings are stated in verses 15 – 20 as: (1) the wilderness will become a fruitful field; (2) the fruitful field will be considered a forest; (3) justice will dwell in the wilderness; (4) righteousness will reside in the fruitful field; (5) the work or produce of righteousness will be peace; (6) the result of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever; (7) God’s people will live in safe homes; (8) they will live in secure resting places; (9) they will live in resting places; (10) they will be blessed as they plant beside every stream; and (11) they will be blessed when they let the feet of the ox and the donkey graze freely. When students of the Scriptures examine these blessings, it becomes evident to them, that God is establishing a righteous and peaceful kingdom that will be ruled by His righteous king, (Isaiah 32:1). These prophetic words of Isaiah, chapter 32:1-8 and 15-20 are certainly one of the clearest statements in all of Scripture regarding the truth of the coming millennial kingdom which will be ruled by the Prince of Peace, the One who is the king of righteousness.

Verses 19 and 20 are a summary of this message. In vs. 19, Isaiah reminds his audience of the certain doom of the city which is Jerusalem which he discussed in verses 9 – 14. In vs. 20 he again declares how blessed the people of God will be who will live in the righteous kingdom to come which he discussed in verses 1-8 and 15-20. It is this repetition that emphasizes the impact of Isaiah’s message. God will bring judgment on those who refuse to repent of their sins against Him. He will also bring blessings in the future when they finally repent and seek Him to rescue them from their enemies.

Teaching Outline for Isaiah Chapter 32

A Righteous Potentate: 1-8

A Rebellious People: 9-14

A Restored Place: 15-20

8 Prayer for Zion to take Refuge in the Lord: 33:1-24

Chapter 33 of Isaiah contains the sixth and last “woe” of Isaiah chapters 28-33 and it is the only one of these woe oracles that is directed against a foreign nation. All of the others: (1) 28:1-29; (2) 29:1-14; (3) 29:15-24; (4) 30:1-33; and (5) 31:1-32:20 are addressed to the people and leaders of Judah. Chapter 33 contains messages from Isaiah that concern the immediate threat of the Assyrian siege and words of hope and blessings for a future day when the majestic One, the Lord, will be present and the future people of God will see the King in His beauty. The chapter has several possible divisions. For purposes of this study, an outline that seems best to fit the context of chapter 33 is suggested.

The Hope of the Hopeless: 33:1-6

33:1 *Woe to you who destroy,
but you have not been destroyed;
and you traitor,
but they have not betrayed you!
When you finish destroying,
you yourself will be destroyed.
When you have finished betraying,
they will betray you.*

The woe in vs. 1 is addressed to a destroyer who also deals treacherously. The context of the preceding chapters and the historical account of these days recorded in 2 Kings 18:13-19:37 indicate that this treacherous, betraying destroyer is the Assyrian armies led by king Sennacherib who are about to lay siege to Jerusalem. In the passage 2 Kings 18:13-17, Hezekiah had paid the king of Assyria three hundred talents (11 tons) of silver and thirty talents (1 ton) of gold for assurance that the Assyrians would not attack Jerusalem. In today’s currency this amount would be an enormous fortune. Sennacherib, however took the silver and gold and did not honor his word with king Hezekiah of Judah. The Assyrians kept to their strategy of destroying all in their path as their armies swept southward. 2 Kings 18:13 records the time and event: *Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah, and captured them.* Only Jerusalem was left unconquered and the Assyrians, the destroyers and treacherous ones, began their preparations for destroying the capital city of Judah. God’s oracle of woe on the Assyrians is blunt, “*When you finish destroying, you yourself will be destroyed. When you have finished betraying, they will betray you.*” In a very short time, perhaps less than 1 year, the Assyrian armies would be destroyed by an angel of God as recorded in Isaiah 37:36 and 2 Kings 19:35. The complete and final destruction of the Assyrian nation came through the assault of the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

33:2 O LORD, be gracious to us;
we have waited for you.
Be our strong arm every morning,
our salvation in the time of trouble.

As recorded in verses 2-6 Isaiah called upon the Lord in words of supplication and praise, perhaps as the Assyrians were at the doors of the City of Jerusalem. Hezekiah had asked the prophet to pray, Isaiah 37:4. Hezekiah himself also prayed to the Lord, 2 Kings 19:15-20. Isaiah's prayer identified himself with the people of Jerusalem, "*O LORD, be gracious to us,*" vs. 2. Earlier, Isaiah had recorded words of repentance: 6:5; 25:9; and 26:8. The prophet Daniel in a later day included himself with his people, in a prayer of repentance to the Lord, Daniel 9:5.

Isaiah's prayer in vs. 2 not only beseeches the Lord to be gracious to he and his people but declares that they have waited for the Lord. It is significant that these words are included. Twice in the earlier words of the prophet it is stated a waiting has or will occur. In chapter 8:17, Isaiah speaks for himself stating "*I will wait expectantly for the Lord.*" In chapter 25:9, Isaiah declares that in a far future day, "*It will be said in that day, Look, here is our God; we have waited for him.*" But nowhere in his prophecy up to this point, has Isaiah recorded that the people have waited for the Lord. They did not during the days of kings Uzziah, Jotham and Ahaz nor in the early days of the reign of Hezekiah. It was only when they could see the faces of the enemy, when the Assyrian armies were at their door laying siege-works to breach the walls and destroy the city and its inhabitants that they could now say, "*we have waited for you.*"

In past years when the vineyard produced bountiful yields of grapes from which they could make wine and during prosperous times the people saw no need to wait on the Lord. The prophet told them to trust in the Lord but they were not willing: Isaiah 30:12, 15. They did not heed the instruction of the Lord regarding seeking aid from Egypt: Isaiah 30:1-2 (Deuteronomy 17:16). They did not want to hear any more about God, the Holy One of Israel: Isaiah 30:11. So how can Isaiah now say the people of Jerusalem have waited for God? In years past their time was not measured in milliseconds but now when the enemy is just about to break the walls down, days seemed like months, and hours like days and minutes like hours. It was during the most intense hours of fear and terror that they could truthfully say we have prayed and waited for you. It is also likely that these were the dreadful hours when most of the people in Jerusalem turned in repentance to God. Their schemes and alliances with foreign pagan nations were now useless and they had no other hope except in turning to the Lord.

Isaiah continues in vs. 2 to state that this was indeed the situation as He invoked the Lord to be the strength (strong arm) of the people of God every morning and to be their salvation in the time of distress or trouble. Every morning must have seemed like an eternity. When would God deliver them? Hezekiah, was at the very end of his dependency on diplomacy and the hope that paying ransom would bring a peaceful solution to this situation. Isaiah 37:1-4 and 2 Kings 19:1-4. In desperation, king Hezekiah turns to the Lord in prayer, 2 Kings 19:15-20 and he also seeks the prayer of Isaiah, Isaiah 37:4. Waiting for the Lord to act may seem like a tortuous pastime, but all children of God must remember that His time of action does not need to nor does not necessarily have to coincide with our sense of time. God will act when He deems best to accomplish His plans and purposes. It is interesting that God responds to Hezekiah's prayer with these words: "*Because you have prayed to me against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, I have heard.*" 2 Kings 19:20, NKJV.

33:3-4 *At the roar of a crowd, the peoples flee;
when you rise up the nations scatter.
4 Your spoil is gathered like the caterpillar gathers;
like locusts leaping so they will leap on the loot.*

Isaiah declares that it is the Lord who will cause nations to disperse and flee at the sound of tumult. When the Lord grows the armies of the nations are dissolved into disarray and terror and are scattered. King David prayed: “*Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered.*” Psalm 68:1. Verses 3-4 are the answer to the prayer of Isaiah in 33:2. In a short time the enemy of the nation of Judah will be scattered when the Lord arises to destroy the army of Assyria and scatters its leaders. In a far future day the Lord will again “*come down to wage war on Mount Zion and on its hill.*” Isaiah 31:4. As recorded in Isaiah 33:4, the prophet praises the Lord’s complete victory over His enemies for the spoils of war will be gathered like the gathering of caterpillars and locusts.

33:5 *The LORD is exalted,
for he dwells on high.
He fills Zion with justice and righteousness.*

The prophet offers praise to God for His person: “*The LORD is exalted;*” for His place: “*He dwells on high;*” and for His Purpose: “*He fills Zion with justice and righteousness.*” Isaiah’s praise telescopes the sense of meaning from the immediate terror of the invading Assyrians to a day far in the future when He will reign on Mount Zion with justice and righteousness. This was a similar message that Isaiah had frequently declared: 1:26-27; 2:2-5; 4:1-6; 11:1-10; 24:23; 27:12-13; 28:5-6 and 32:15-30 and would again declare in this chapter 33:20 and in later times: 34:8; 35:10; 37:32; 46:13; 51:3, 11, 16; 52:1, 7; 59:20; 60:1, 14; 61:3; 62:1, 11; and 66:8.

33:6 *He will be stability in your times,
abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge.
The fear of the LORD produces this treasure.*

The praise of Isaiah to the Lord continues in vs. 6: “*He will be stability in your times.*” (DASV). This phrase may cause some confusion as stated in other versions. The NIV translates this phrase as: “*He will be the sure foundation of your times.*” The ESV has: “*And he will be the stability of your times.*” However, the KJV put the emphasis on the people who need to trust the Lord’s wisdom and knowledge. The KJV states: “*And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times and strength of salvation.*” This is similar to the NKJV. The intent of this phrase in vs. 6 is not to repeat the truth of Isaiah 28:16: “*I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation.*” It is however, a statement by Isaiah that only in the Lord is faithfulness, stability and security for the time at hand when the Assyria armies are at the door of Jerusalem.

Isaiah continues in vs. 6 reminding the people that the Lord is “*an abundance of salvation, wisdom and knowledge.*” This was a treasure of truth for the people of Isaiah’s day to grasp and perhaps it was the best time for the prophet to tell them when the great dread of the enemy is before them. They were finally ready to hear the wonderful truths of the Lord that Isaiah had been continually declaring to them for many years. Isaiah does not hold back and gives them much to digest. Isaiah was teaching them deep theological truth about the Lord which if they had been listening to him and studying their Scripture they would have already known. There is much to comment on about these wonderful truths. However, the space necessary would be beyond the scope of this study. A word study on the word *salvation* only in Isaiah would be very profitable for it occurs 26 times. This theme will be discussed in more detail in the sections in Isaiah on the Servant of the Lord and in particular Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 where the actual word *salvation* does not occur but the means of the Lord providing salvation is this sections great topic. The word *wisdom* occurs 5 times. A specific reference is to the Branch (the Messiah) in Isaiah 11:2 where it is stated a spirit of wisdom will rest on Him. The word *knowledge* occurs 11 times in Isaiah. A specific reference is within the above-mentioned Servant of the Lord section, Isaiah 53:11: “*As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see and be satisfied. By His knowledge my righteous servant, will justify many, and he will bear their sins.*” There will be much to comment upon this verse and others in this great section later in this study.

Finally, Isaiah concludes vs. 6 with another significant truth: “*The fear of the Lord produces this treasure.*” Or in the NKJV: “*The fear to the Lord is His treasure.*” For those who are now ready to listen to Isaiah, this last comment would be of immense value. It should have reminded the people of the great significance of their Scriptures and specifically the book of Proverbs from its first mention in the first chapter: 1:7 to its final mention in the last chapter: 31:30. It also should have brought Isaiah’s earlier mention of this treasure to them: 8:3 and 11:2-3. But Isaiah will later remind them of it: 50:10 and 59:19. With these words of treasure, Isaiah concludes his great theological lesson and now proceeds to discuss the devastation to the land due to the invasion of the Assyrians and the Lord’s response in verses 7-12.

The Crying City and the Consuming Creator: 33:7-12

The Assyrians were now at the very walls of Jerusalem and the once brave inhabitants of the city and the ambassadors of the king who had made an agreement with Sennacherib were weeping bitterly for their efforts to bring peace had failed. The neighboring lands were stripped of their crops and trees and no trade could be conducted. It was time for the Lord to act.

33:7-9 *Look, their heroes cry in the streets;
the ambassadors of peace weep bitterly.*

⁸ *The highways are vacant,
the travelers are gone.*

*The enemy has broken it treaties,
its witnesses are despised,
he respects no one.*

⁹ *The land mourns and withers;
Lebanon withers with shame.
The fertile plain of Sharon has become like a desert,
and Bashan and Carmel lose their rich foliage.*

Isaiah records the reaction of those who had once been brave (Hebrew *ereham* meaning valiant ones) and of those who were ambassadors of king Hezekiah who had made a covenant or agreement with king Sennacherib of Assyria. The city had been stripped of its silver and gold as a payment of peace to the king of Assyria. Diplomacy and costly agreements were of no avail.

Victor Buksbazen comments on verses 7-9 and provides his own translation of vs. 7:

“Behold the inhabitants of Ariel cry in the street, The messengers of peace weep bitterly.”

The Hebrew word “*ereham*” is translated in the KJV as “*the valiant ones*,” but it is apparently an allusion to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, which Isaiah (29:10 has previously call Ariel – “the hearth” or “the altar of God.”

It would appear from our text that after Sennacherib captured Lachish and many fortified cities in Judah – and according to Assyrian record, carried away over 200,000 prisoners – Hezekiah sent “messengers of peace” to negotiate terms. However, Sennacherib with his customary brutality insulted the ambassadors, who returned to Jerusalem humiliated and weeping (v. 7).

As a result of the Assyrian depredations, the whole land is desolate, the highways are deserted, the most fertile regions of the land (Lebanon, Sharon, Bashan, and Carmel) lie idle and untilled. (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, page 271).

The people of Jerusalem wept bitterly. In vs. 8, Isaiah describes the commercial devastation due to the advance of the Assyrians. No one could conduct any business due to the danger on the roads now that the Assyrian armies had conquered the lands surrounding Jerusalem. The words in vs. 8: “*The enemy has broken its treaties, its witnesses are despised, he respects no one.*” is a reference to king Sennacherib with whom the ambassadors of Judah had made a covenant or agreement. The Assyrian king had demanded a staggering amount of silver and gold as a result of the plea of peace made to him by Hezekiah. 2. Kings 18:13-16. But Sennacherib had no intention of keeping this covenant with Hezekiah and all the cities of Judah except Jerusalem had been conquered by the Assyrians. In vs. 9, Isaiah describes the destruction of the trees and foliage of the surrounding lands: Lebanon, Sharon, Bashan and Carmel. The besieged city of Jerusalem was left defenseless and the only possible help to them was from the Lord.

33:10 *"Now I will rise," says the LORD,
"now I will lift up myself,
now I will be exalted.*

When no other means of escape from destruction was available, the Lord took action. In vs. 10, the prophet records the reaction of the Holy One of Israel: “*Now, I will arise, now I will lift up myself, now I will be exalted.*” The repetition (three times) of “now”, Hebrew *attah*, is an emphatic and dynamic attestation by the Lord that, in contrast to the weak and futile efforts of the leaders of Jerusalem, He will act decisively and victoriously. These actions of the Lord are those He describes as arise, exalted and lifted up. Later Isaiah will describe the Servant of the Lord in similar words: “*Look, my servant will deal wisely; he will be exalted and lifted up and will be greatly exalted.*” Isaiah 52:13. In the New Testament this praise was also given to the Servant, who is the humble Son, Jesus Christ and the believers great High Priest: Philippians 2:9 and Hebrews 7:26. In the Old Testament this praise is attributed to the Lord: Exodus 15:1, 21; Numbers 24:7; Psalm 47:9 and 97:9 and Isaiah 57:15. The praise to the king in Numbers 24:7 is very important to understanding the messianic message of the Hebrews Scriptures. For a detailed explanation of the messianic importance of Numbers 24:7, see: Michael Rydelnik. *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic?* pages 38-39.

33:11-12 *You will conceive chaff,
you will give birth to stubble;
your breath is a fire that will devour you.*
¹² *The peoples will be completely burned to lime,
like thorns cut down, that are burned in the fire."*

God compares the blasphemous words and self-proclaimed might of the Assyrians, 2 Kings 18:19-35 and Isaiah 36:4-20; to works which will only conceive chaff and stubble. God’s works never fail and He will consume the Assyrians like fire from the breath (of His mouth). God describes the ultimate end of the Assyrians as peoples who “*will be burned to lime, like thorns cut down that are burned in the fire.*” vs. 12. This does not describe the means of their death but their ultimate destination. This was the Lord’s previously stated ultimate destination of the king of Assyria. See notes on Isaiah 30:33.

God’s Summary of His Work: Isaiah 33:13-16

In verses 13-16 of Isaiah chapter 33, Isaiah records the words of God in which he calls the distant people of the world and those in Judah itself (far away and near) as a witness to hear what He has to say about His mighty works of protection for His beloved Zion.

33:13 *Hear, you who are far off, what I have done;
you who are near, acknowledge my might.*

The Lord calls those “who are far away” to hear what He has done. See also Isaiah 1:2; 34:1; 41:1; 43:9; 49:1, and to those are in Judah: 28:23; 44:1; 46:3; 48:1; 48:12; 51:4; 51:7; 55:3. This is not an exhaustive list of all such references in Isaiah but is an indication of the Lord’s intent in calling both Judah and the Gentile nations to listen to God’s message or to acknowledge His might, for He has saved His people from the assault of the Assyrians.

33:14 *The sinners in Zion are afraid,
trembling has seized the godless, who say:
"Who among us can live with the consuming fire?
Who among us can live with everlasting burnings?"*

God asks the godless and terrified sinners in Zion: "*Who among us can live with the consuming fire? Who among us can live with continual burning?*" This is not a picture of the terrors of Topheth, Isaiah 30:33 or the valley of burning, 2 Kings 23:10, Jeremiah 19:6, which in later times was a reference to a fiery hell: Matthew 5:22: 18:9 James 3:6. The word "burning" is literally "altar hearth" and was used earlier by Isaiah to refer to the City of Jerusalem as "Ariel", Isaiah 29:1. The word originated in Leviticus 6:9: "*Command Aaron and his sons, This is the law of the burnt offering. The burnt offering must be left on the hearth of the altar all night until morning, and the fire of the altar must be kept burning.*" The meaning of burning in Isaiah 33:14 is that God Himself is a consuming fire: Hebrews 12:29, and who among the people of Judah or any people can live with God. See also Isaiah 4:4. For a similar set of questions by God and their answers see Psalms 15 and 24.

33:15-16 *The one who walks righteously and speaks straight;
who despises the profit from oppression,
whose hands wave away a bribe,
who plugs his ears from murderous plots,
and shuts his eyes from looking at evil.*

¹⁶ *This one will dwell on high,
his place of refuge will be the fortresses of rocks;
his food will be provided;
his water guaranteed.*

The answer that God raises in vs. 14 is answered by Himself in verses 15 and 16. Even though God compares His being to a burning altar hearth, He will allow those that are righteous to draw near to Him. These are people who: (1) walk righteously; (2) speaks straight (with sincerity); (3) despise profit from oppression (reject unjust gain); (4) have hands that wave away or hold no bribe; (5) will not listen to plots of murder; and (6) will not look on evil. Isaiah also mentions the walk of the righteous in 32:3-8 and 58:5-12. The result of this righteous living is the reward of living in a refuge that is likened to a "fortress of rocks" or stronghold on the heights where his food source will be secure. This call to righteous living and its rewards was delivered in a very timely manner when the people of Judah were left only with the hope of God and when they would have been most likely to not only hear the message but to obey it. See above notes on vs. 6. Verse 16 is directly connected to verses 13-15 and is a glorious climax to the message of the Lord about who may live with Him. This verse is also a beautiful bridge to the future during the reign of Messiah the King where there will be peace and the righteous, those described in verse 15, will live with the Prince of Peace for their eyes will see Him in His beauty.

The Place and Prince of Peace: 33:17-24

Isaiah easily transitions the Lord's message, from the present terrifying times, verses 1-16, to those of a "far distant land" when those who live righteously will see "*the king in His beauty*," verses 17-24. As mentioned above, the timing of this message was acutely critical. The people of Judah had just recently rejected the message of Isaiah and had wanted nothing to do with God, Isaiah 30:11. But, when faced with impending doom, their only hope is to trust fully in God.

Their ears and eyes may have finally opened to the truth of God that the prophet had been so faithfully declaring to them for several years. When they listen to God through the message of the prophet and they respond to His call to repent of their sins, have faith in Him and live righteously, then they will be among those who will personally live in a future place of wonderful peace and security. Verses 17-24 of Isaiah 33 are among the most poetic of all the descriptions in Scripture of the reign of the Messiah in the millennial kingdom.

In this section, Isaiah again uses the imagery of eyes, vs. 17, 19, and 20; heart, vs. 18; and a reference to ears (listening to speech) in vs. 19. The prophet often referred to the characteristics of his audience: eyes/ears/understanding from the first meeting Isaiah had with the Lord. 6:9-10 to his last message: 66:18. God often lamented that even though they had eyes, ears and a mind to understand Him they refused to do so. The righteous, however will use all their characteristics to live a holy life free from sin, vs. 15. In the future reign of the messianic king, the eyes, ears and heart (mind) of the redeemed will see, hear and understand the glories of this wondrous kingdom.

33: 17 *Your eyes will see the king in his beauty;
they will survey a land that stretches far away.*

This section begins, vs. 17 with a most beloved phrase: "*Your eyes will see the king in his beauty*." Who is the beautiful King? The Scriptures give the emphatic answer: He is the king of glory, Psalm 24:7-10; the Lord who is delightful, Psalm 27:4; a beautiful and glorious Branch, Isaiah 4:2; the Lord of hosts who is a beautiful crown and a glorious diadem, Isaiah 28:5; and the Lord their God is great in beauty (KJV), Zechariah 9:16-17. The first and greatest benefit stated by Isaiah of those who enter Zion in the future kingdom will be to see the King who is described as beautiful. This is the Mighty One the psalmist describes as having splendor and majesty. Psalm 45:3. Many are the glorious titles ascribed to the Lord who will reign in Zion in a future day and arguably, one of the loftiest is the word in vs. 17: beauty or beautiful.

The DASV in vs. 17, has the phrase "*a land that stretches far away*" for the place where the redeemed will see the king in His beauty. The most likely interpretation of this phrase is that it is "a far-stretching land". The land of Judah was small in area when Isaiah declared these words and the Scriptures prophesy of a time when the land during the millennial kingdom will have vastly wider boundaries, Ezekiel 47:13-23.

33: 18-19 Your heart will obsess about former terrors:

"Where is the sage?
Where is the one who weighs the tribute?
Where is the one who counts the towers?"

¹⁹ You will not see these fierce people,
a people whose obscure language you cannot comprehend,
whose stammering tongue you cannot understand.

At first glance, the words of the first phrase in vs. 18 may seem difficult to understand: "*Your heart will obsess about former terrors:*" The word "*obsess*" can be translated as "*meditate*" or "*ponder*." However, the remainder of vs. 18 and vs. 19 provides the solution. When the redeemed, the righteous remnant enter Immanuel's land they will be in wonder that there are no fierce people present in it. There will no longer be (vs. 18), any stern and cruel overlords who crush the people in demanding military service to a tyrant (the one who counts the towers) or demanding tribute payment (the one who weighs the tributes) or using the Lord's city as a military outpost (he who counts the towers). There will be no longer be, (vs. 19), a despotic foreign Gentile nation, a fierce people, who will rule over them with speech, literally "a deepness of lip" that is described as a stammering tongue, (Isaiah 28:11), that no one comprehends. It is these things that will be absent in the kingdom that the people will meditate upon when they enter the land.

33: 20 *Look on Zion, the city of our festivals;
your eyes will see Jerusalem,
a peaceful home,
a tent that will not be removed;
its stakes will never be pulled up,
neither will any of its ropes be broken.*

In stark contrast to verses 18 and 19, Isaiah turns the attention of those who will enter the millennial kingdom from what is not there to what is to be seen. Isaiah emphatically calls them to "*Look on Zion*". Zion is the beloved mount of the Lord. It is the place He has chosen and where He desires to stay forever. The Psalmist declared, in Psalm 132:13-14:

¹³ *For the LORD has chosen Zion,
he has desired it for his home.*
¹⁴ *"This is my resting place forever;
I will dwell here,
for it's what I wanted.*

The Lord's love for Zion is so great that He calls His people, the faithful remnant to desire it for He will build His future messianic kingdom around it. Zion, although a small mountain in size, is often referred to as the city of Jerusalem. It is the place where the people of God celebrated their appointed feasts. Three times each year, the males of the Jewish people were required to go

to Jerusalem to take part in the feasts of Passover, Pentecost (Weeks) and Tabernacles (Booths). Deuteronomy 16:1-16. During the feast of Tabernacles, the Lord required them to make booths for their habitation during the duration of the feast. Leviticus 23:42. The latter half of vs. 20 alludes to this practice but in the future, Jerusalem shall be “*a peaceful home, a tent which will not be removed.*” The tent which will not be folded is a reference to both the Feast of Tabernacles and the permanent dwelling (tabernacle, tent) of God among His people. The permanence of God’s dwelling is reinforced by the remaining words of vs. 20: “*Its stakes will never be pulled up, neither will any of its ropes be broken.*” The temporary and portable tabernacle of the wilderness had its stakes pulled up many times resulting in the tearing of its cords. The future “tent” in the messianic kingdom of God will be as permanent as God is for He Himself will be the tent.

A study of the meaning of “tabernacle” in the Scriptures will yield many wonderful truths. In the Old Testament, tabernacle has the meaning of a tent of meeting, a dwelling place and the tabernacle or tent of the testimony. Its most basic meaning is that it was a place of God’s presence. During their wilderness journeys, the Israelites were instructed by the Lord to build a structure called the tabernacle, a temporary place of worship and the focal point of their community where God would live among them. Exodus 25:8; 1 Kings 8:27. In the New Testament, tabernacle is most often the translation of the Greek word *skene* and its related words such as *skenoō*. The New Testament describes the dwelling place of God as the tabernacle and not the temple. The believers in Christ are themselves called the temple of God, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17. Tabernacle in the New Testament has a great significance. In John 1:14, the Apostle John wrote, “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt (skenoō) among us.*” Jesus lived with His people on the earth to accomplish His great task of redemption. God has never abandoned us and we will live with Him forever. Revelation 21:3 contains two references to the word “tabernacle”: “*Behold the tabernacle (skene) of God is among men and He will dwell (skenoō) among them.*” Hebrews chapter 9 contains a significant discussion comparing the old earthly tabernacle and the “greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands” through which Christ, as the believer’s High Priest, entered.

33:21 *But there the LORD will be with us in splendor.*

*It will be a place of broad rivers and streams,
where no galley of warships with oars may enter,
nor will splendid ships sail through.*

Isaiah introduces more splendid truths about this future kingdom. “*But there the LORD will be with us in splendor.*” God will no longer fight against His people. See notes on Isaiah 28:21. The LORD who is the Majestic One will be on the side of His people and will belong to them. The context of Isaiah 63:1-6 identifies the returning Lord as the person coming from Edom with garments of glowing colors (crimson) from Bozrah. The description of the one in 63:1 as the one who is wearing splendid (majestic) apparel, should leave no doubt as to His identification. This is the same one who is described as “*in splendor*” or better the majestic One, Isaiah 33:21, who will be among His people and will stand with them and for them forever.

The description of this future place in vs. 21 as a place of broad rivers and streams or wide canals, is a beautiful portrayal of the difference between the Zion of Isaiah's day and the Zion of the future messianic kingdom. Judah and specifically Jerusalem was and still remains a place of hills and more rugged terrain. It is most unlike most capital cities of the world for it is not situated on or near any water course. The closest water is the salt saturated and evaporating Dead Sea. However, in the future God will transform Zion, Isaiah 2:2 and it will have magnificent water courses upon which boats and ships will not be allowed to pass. Other cities in the ancient near east were built on rivers and canals, such as Babylon. It was a place of great beauty yet it was due to the proximity of the river that became the means for its downfall when the Medes and Persians used its water courses to enter the city and conquer it. The future Zion will be safe from any attack.

33:22 *For the LORD is our judge,
the LORD is our lawgiver,
the LORD is our king;
he will save us.*

Verses 22 is a most poetic and glorious tribute to the Lord. When any significant word is stated twice in a sentence it is often for emphasis. When such a word is stated three times, those who hear the sentence or read it are called to attention! There is something extremely important being said. In Isaiah 6:3, the words: *Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts* is a statement of this great attribute of the Lord. Isaiah had twice in the past few verses, 10 and 18 repeated a significant word three times: "now" in verse 10 and 'where' in verse 18. These were used for poetic emphasis. However, in vs. 22, the repetition of "the Lord" is a major declarative statement meant to attest how the Lord leads His people in the roles of judge, lawgiver and king: in past days, in these days, and in the future. The verse concludes: "*he will save us.*" The Lord is the savior both in Isaiah's day from the Assyrian assault and in the future day where no enemy ship can attack the stronghold of Zion. Therefore, the people of God can have absolute trust in their God.

33:23 *Your rigging is loosed;
they could not secure their mast,
they could not spread the sail.
Then the prey of a great spoil will be divided;
even the lame will haul the plunder away.*

Isaiah, in vs. 23, may be making a reference to the Assyrians who are likened to a disabled sailing craft and is comparing this to the future kingdom when no ship or boat will assault the people of God. The reference to the dividing of the spoil may point to the plundering of the Assyrian camp after the angel of the Lord had brought about the death of the entire Assyrian army that had surrounded Jerusalem. However, vs. 23 is best understood as having a future fulfillment (see note on vs. 24), referring to the days just prior to the establishment of the messianic kingdom when Israel will plunder the spoils of the nations. Isaiah 60:16; Ezekiel 39:9-10; Zephaniah 2:9;

33:24 *The resident of Zion will not say,
"I am sick."*

The people who live there will have their sin forgiven.

Isaiah describes more of the benefits of the future messianic kingdom. The residents of Zion will not suffer sickness and they will have their sins forgiven. As this verse, in most English versions, starts with the conjunction "and", it is an indication that both verses 23 and 24 refer to the future kingdom. The days of this future kingdom will witness a time of unprecedented health for its inhabitants. Isaiah 65:20. It will also be a kingdom which will begin with those who live righteously and have been forgiven of their sins. King David, as recorded in Psalm 103:2-3, declares:

² *Praise the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits--*
³ *who forgives all your iniquities;
who heals all your diseases;*

See also Exodus 23:25. Even the cooking pots in Jerusalem in this future kingdom will be like bowls before the altar and will be holy to the Lord. Zechariah 14:20-21.

Teaching Outline for Isaiah Chapter 33

The Redemption of the Lord: 33:1-6

The Response of the Lord: 33:7-12

The Refuge of the Lord: 33:13-16

The Reward of the Lord: 33:17-24

G: Conclusion: Contrast of the Wrath and Blessings of God: Chapters 34-35

1. The Wrath of God on the nations: 34:1-17

2. The Blessing of the Future Kingdom: 35:1-10

The final two chapters are a grand conclusion to the message of the prophet in the greater section, 28-35. They are a superlative contrast between the judgment of the Lord on ungodly nations (chapter 34) and the blessing of the Lord on His future messianic kingdom, (chapter 35). These two chapters are clearly latter day prophecies as their contents reveal.

1 The Wrath of God on the Nations: 34:1-17

The Lord's Indignation: His Vengeance: 34:1-15

The Lord's Instruction: His Validation: 34:15-16

The Lord's Indignation: His Vengeance: 34:1-15

Within this larger section of chapter 34, four shorter parts are evident from the context of the message. After the introduction of vs. 1, the three remaining parts are introduced by the word "for" which introduce cumulative actions of God against the nations and specifically against Edom, of which Isaiah may have named as representing the evil nations of the world.

Introduction: Vs. 1

Against the Nations: Verses 2-4:

Against Edom (1): Verses 5-7

Against Edom (2): Vs. 8-15

34:1 *Come near, O nations, to hear;*

listen, O peoples.

Let the earth and everything in it hear,

the world and all things that come from it.

The prophet calls upon the entire world including all nations and all peoples to hear the message of the Lord. It is similar in tone to the opening of the book of Isaiah, 1:2, where the heavens and the earth are called to listen to the indictment of the Lord against His people. In 34:1, the peoples of the world are called to listen to the indignation of the Lord against the very people whom the Lord calls to listen to Him. See also Isaiah 28:23 and 33:13 for a similar indictment.

Against the Nations: Verses 2-4

34:2 *For the LORD is angry against all the nations,*

and furious against all their armies.

He will totally destroy them,

he has delivered them up to slaughter.

Isaiah begins this message with a statement of the anger or indignation of the Lord against all nations of the earth. In Isaiah 13:5 the nations themselves were the instruments of God's indignation against Babylon. Later in chapter 13, verses 6-16, the Lord turns His wrath against these very nations and others in the coming "day of the Lord" for they were evil, wicked, sinful, arrogant, ruthless, and full of pride. The sobering message of Lord in chapter 13 was that even if the Lord uses a nation as a means of judgment on another nation or upon His people, He does not hold them harmless for their own evil actions and rebellion against Him. See also Isaiah 24:1-6. The nations had been earlier warned by the prophet about God's impending judgment and now it is announced. The word "angry" in vs. 2 is *qesep* in the Hebrew and can also be translated as "indignation" which seems to give a nuanced perspective of the feelings of God towards the unrepentant nations of the world.

The words regarding the armies of the nations (vs. 2): "*He will totally destroy them, he has delivered them up to slaughter.*" are an announcement of the certainty of a future action. The army of a single nation nor the amassed armies of all the nations can do nothing against the plan and will of God. His attitude towards them is described in Psalm 2:4 and in Isaiah 40:15-17. The word slaughter in vs. 2 has the meaning of a brutal killing. It is also the word used in Isaiah 53:7: "*He was oppressed yet when he was treated harshly he did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep before its shearers is silent.*" God would not spare the armies of the world for they will be brutally killed in the latter days. God also would not spare

His Son. He was pleased to crush Him. Isaiah 53:10. See Isaiah 34:6 and 65:12 for other contexts of this most descriptive word for death. Also, the notes on chapters 52 and 53 of Isaiah will contain an expanded explanation of the brutal death of the Servant of the Lord

Thomas Constable comments on vs. 2:

“The first reason (cf. vv. 5, 6, 8) everyone should listen is that the Lord is very angry with the nations. He has determined to devote them to destruction, to put them under the ban (Heb. *herem*; cf. 11:15; Josh. 6:21; 1 Sam. 15:3).

"In the Hebrew setting at least two implications [of the ban] are significant: spoils are devoted to God to show that God alone has won a battle (Jericho); when a nation has deliberately blocked the flow of God's love to the world, it forfeits itself into God's hands (Amalek)." 387

What humankind must hear, then, is a sentence of judgment on the whole earth (cf. Ps. 2:9).” [Note 387: Oswalt, p. 608.] (Thomas Constable, *Isaiah*, page 157).

34:3 *Their slain will be cast out,
and the stench of their corpses will stink;
the mountains will flow with their blood.*

The prophet continues the description of the latter-day slaughter of the armies of the nations by God. The corpses of the slain will be thrown out and will smell (stench) “*and the mountains will flow with their blood.*” This is a graphic description of the brutal killing of the armies of the nations by God. The following passages refer to a latter-day destruction of the armies of the nations: Jeremiah 25:33-34; Ezekiel 35:6; 38:22; 39:1-24; Joel 2:10; Revelation 16:16 and 19:19. The timing of God’s slaughter of the armies of the world may be during the battle of Armageddon near the end of the Tribulation. Some scholars, however, view the Ezekiel 38-39 prophecy as an attack on Israel prior to the Tribulation period. See Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, Ariel Ministries, 2004, page 121.

34:4 *All the host of heaven will be dissolved,
and the heavens will be rolled up like a scroll;
all their hosts will fall,
like a withered leaf from a vine,
or like a shriveled fig from a fig tree.*

Isaiah expands his description of the days of God’s destruction of the armies of the nations to include the upheaval in the cosmos. The celestial objects will be dissolved and the heavens will be closed or perhaps will vanish. Isaiah had earlier described such as day as recorded in 2:10-22 and 13:6-13. Other Scriptural references to this cataclysmic day include: Joel 2:30-31; Matthew 24:29; 2 Peter 3:10; and Revelation 6:12-14. Should verses 1-4 be understood as a description of a single unified event or a series of events over a period of time during the times known as the greater day of the Lord?

David L. Cooper understand the events of these verses as being literal and occurring in the days of the Tribulation period. He comments on vs. 4:

“Isaiah, in verse, 4, foretold the dissolution of the heavenly bodies during this time when God punishes the nations of earth--in the Tribulation Period. He therefore declared, "And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fade away, as the leaf fadeth from off the vine, and as a fading leaf from the fig tree." This language is to be taken at its face value because there is nothing in the context to-indicate a departure from the literal meaning. This theme the Apostle Peter discussed in the third chapter of II Peter. An examination of its context shows that the apostle was speaking of the events of the day of Jehovah. At that time, according to his prediction, the heavenly bodies will be dissolved and pass away with a great noise and the earth will burn with intense fire. There will be volcanic eruptions here and there on the earth. The smoldering fires that are deposited in the earth will burst forth into mighty conflagrations. Since Peter gave that description in reply to the mockers who question the second Coming of Christ, it is evident that he was talking about the Tribulation and what will occur at that time. All the facts of the context point in that direction. It is, however, unfortunate that many Bible commentators have overlooked the time element of both the Isaiah passage and the one in II Peter and have applied them to the events connected with the conclusion of the Millennium.” (D.L. Cooper, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Biblical Research Monthly-November 1944).

Against Edom (1): Verses 5-7

34:5-7 *For my sword has drunk its fill in heaven;
look, it will come down on Edom,
and on the people doomed to destruction.*

⁶ *The sword of the LORD is filled with blood;
it is covered with fat,
with the blood of lambs and goats,
with the fat of the kidneys of rams.
For the LORD has made a sacrifice in Bozrah,
and a great slaughter in the land of Edom.*

⁷ *The wild oxen will fall with them,
and young bulls with the mighty bulls;
their land will be soaked with blood,
and their soil made fertile with fat.*

Isaiah in verses 5-7, declares God’s judgment on the nation of Edom. Was this a specific addition to the passage about the destruction of the armies of the nations to discuss the small nation Edom’s destruction or was Isaiah’s mention of Edom intended as a representative of all the ungodly nations of the world? Against the idea of verses 5-7 being a literal reference to just Edom alone, Thomas Constable comments:

A second reason for God's worldwide judgment is that when His sword, a symbol of His judgment (cf. Deut. 32:41-43; Josh. 5:13; Judg. 7:20), has done all it can do to the heavenly host, it will fall on the nations represented by Edom. That the literal destruction of Edom is not in view should be clear from two facts. A judgment on the heavenly hosts has not yet happened. Edom did not experience such a destruction as this passage presents during her history. Edom ceased to exist as a nation long ago, so a future destruction of Edom is not possible.

Humans must pay. Everyone belongs to God. If human beings do not submit to Him voluntarily, He will force them to do so against their wills. This will be God's judgment on the world for rebelling against Him. (Thomas Constable, *Isaiah*, page 158).

Edom was a unique nation among those that were neighbors of Judah and Israel. Its people were descendants of Esau, the older brother of Jacob. Although very closely related to the Jewish people, the people of Edom would not come to the aid of the people of Israel when they sought to pass through Edom on the way to the promised land. Numbers 20:14-21. The Edomites were bitter enemies of Israel during the days of Saul. David managed to subdue them, however they rebelled against Solomon and remained hostile to Israel and Judah for centuries. They gloated over the downfall of Judah and Israel and plundered the city of Jerusalem after its destruction by the Babylonians. Psalm 137:7 and Obadiah vs. 10-14. John MacArthur, NASB, page 1330, has an extended note on the meaning that God loved Jacob; but hated Esau. (Malachi 1:2-3). See also J. Alec Moyter, *Isaiah*, pages 215-16 for a Biblical study on the animosity between Edom and the people of Israel (Jacob).

Because of this unique and bitter relationship over centuries between the people of Jacob and the people of Esau, and the amount of Biblical attention to their conflicts, and God's continual warnings of judgment on Edom, it seems best to understand the reference to Edom in Isaiah 34 as literal Edom. However, it would not be amiss to see how the destruction allotted to Edom is as an example of how God will deal in judgment on the ungodly nations of the world prior to the days of the millennial kingdom. This is not to say that Isaiah intended Edom to represent these nations but all nations should learn a lesson from Edom's judgment. Even though Edom as a nation ceased to exist about 500 B.C., the lands once occupied by Edom, now modern Jordan, will certainly face the devastation Isaiah declares in chapter 34. It is possible that for God, these lands will always have the title of Edom no matter the name that humans will allot to them.

It is quite a subjective exercise to point to any passage of Scripture and state categorically that, even though a person or nation is named, the passage should be understood as figurative and not a literal reference to that person or nation. Unless the passage itself is an obvious simile or a metaphor or another grammatical format, the student of the Scriptures should keep to a consistent standard of interpretation. Suggestions regarding the literalness or figurativeness of a Scriptural passage based upon conjecture, subjective criteria, theological leaning, etc. should be avoided even when the passage may point to a conclusion that seems on the surface to be difficult to understand if taken literally. For further reference, the following resource is recommended: Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, Published by, David C. Cook. 1991.

The judgment of God as recorded in verses 5-7 is filled with graphic pictures of His sword filled with blood not only of the people of Edom whom God had “*devoted to destruction.*” ESV vs. 5, but also upon the animals of the land of Edom. In vs. 6, the Lord states His reason for including the slaughter of the animals: “*For the LORD has made a sacrifice in Bozrah and a great slaughter in the land of Edom.*”

In a later message, Isaiah would again mention Edom and Bozrah in the context of a judgment with blood. Isaiah 63:1-6. Along with the passage in Isaiah 63:1-6, Isaiah, in chapter 34, is definitely declaring a future prophecy about the return of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is remarkable how Isaiah 34:5-7 and 63:1-6 compare in its vivid portrayal of the judgment on Edom being brought about by the pouring out of blood due to the slaughter of its people. Jesus Christ, the Messiah will return as a warrior King to exact judgment on those who will desire to completely destroy the people of God. The returning King will destroy the destroyers.

David L. Cooper comments:

“The sword of God especially comes to Bozrah as we see in verse 6. This was one of the leading cities of Edom. When the Lord Jesus returns in flaming fire at the conclusion of the Tribulation, He will first appear in Bozrah. Isaiah, in chapter 63, verses 1-6, gives us this information. Habakkuk likewise in the third chapter of his prophecy sees the Messiah after He has struck His terrific blow in the land of Edom. “(D. L. Cooper, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Biblical Research Monthly, November 1944.).

Arnold Fruchtenbaum also links these verses with Isaiah 63:1-6. Under the title of: *The Place of the Second Coming*, Fruchtenbaum states that there are four key passages and another possible passage that pinpoint the place of the Second Coming at Bozrah: Isaiah 34:17; Isaiah 63:1-6; Habakkuk 3:3; Micah 2:12-13; and a possible reference in Judges 5:4-5. (Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah*, Ariel Ministries, 2004, Pages 339-342.).

Victor Buksbazen has an alternate suggestion as to the meaning of verses 5-7:

“The wrath of God is directed in particular against Edom for her relentless hatred against her brother Israel. The sword of the Lord is obviously the same “heavy, great and strong sword” previously mentioned by the prophet (27:1). It will descend in full fury upon Edom.

Some commentators have attempted to substitute for “Edom” the word “*adam*” (man), spelled in Hebrew with the same consonants, but with different vowel signs (Duhm, Kissane). However, the context, and the mention of Bozzrah, an Edomite City, does not favor such a reading. We find that the accepted Hebrew text is almost invariably to be preferred to dubious textual speculations and corrections.

The smaller sacrificial animals – lambs and goats, - represent the smaller nations such as Edom and Moab, while the larger beasts – oxen, bulls and bullocks – symbolize the powerful nations such as Assyria, Babylon and Egypt.” (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, page 277).

Against Edom (2): Vs. 8-15

34:8 *For the LORD has a day of vengeance,
a year of pay back for the cause of Zion.*

The slaughter of the people and animals of Edom is explained by the Lord in vs. 8. The Lord will take vengeance against the evil actions of Edom as a retribution for His people described as Zion. Isaiah, in his prophecy often declared a prophecy about the vengeance of the Lord: Isaiah 35:4; 47:3; 59:17-18; 61:2 and 63:4. It is also a common theme of Scripture: Deuteronomy 32:35, 41, 43; Psalm 58:10; 79:10 and 149:7; Jeremiah 46:10 and 50:15; Ezekiel 25:14, 17; Micah 5:15; Nahum 1:2; and Luke 21:22. The Tribulation period is the meaning of the time frame “day” and “year” in vs. 8. The Lord exacts vengeance and recompense on those nations who have opposed or attacked His beloved Zion and its people. The prophet Ezekiel also records the words of the Lord regarding the vengeance to be wrought upon Edom for its actions against the house of Judah. Ezekiel 25:12-14. Because the Lord is jealous for Zion, Zechariah 1:14 and 8:2, He will act with wrath and take vengeance and recompense on His enemies. See also Genesis 12:3.

34:9 *The streams of Edom will be turned into pitch,
and its dust into sulfur,
and its land will become burning pitch.*

In verses, 9-15, Isaiah describes the devastation of the land of Edom. The word “its” and “it” in verses 10-13 must certainly refer to the single nation Edom and not generally to many unnamed nations. The land once occupied by Edom will be a place of burning pitch and brimstone (vs. 9). This is a description also of the type of judgment God had brought upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Isaiah had earlier discussed the destruction of Babylon in similar terms, Isaiah 13:19-22. Many other Scriptures refer to the fiery destruction that God brought on Sodom and Gomorrah in the past and upon the wicked nations in the future: Genesis 19:24-28; Deuteronomy 29:23; Psalm 11:6; Jeremiah 49:18; Luke 17:29-30; Jude vs. 7. Revelation 14:10-11.

34:10 *It will not be extinguished day or night;
its smoke will go up forever;
from generation to generation it will lie waste;
no one will pass through it forever and ever.*

Isaiah declares in vs. 10, that the burning pitch (vs.9) “*will not be extinguished day or night; its smoke will go up forever.*” This is on the surface a difficult verse to understand literally. However, it will do an injustice to Scripture to attempt to allegorize the intent of Isaiah’s words to say it is meant only as a figurative statement meaning a long time. Also, it should not be understood as a grammatical function of hyperbole in which the writer uses inflated language to dramatically emphasize his intention. It is best to let the statement stand as it is particularly in light of other Scriptural references such as Isaiah 66:24 and Revelation 19:3.

A likely meaning of this passage is that the burning will be present all during the one thousand years of the millennial kingdom and then continue forever in the burning lake of brimstone (sulfur), Revelation 14:10-11; 19: 3, 20; 20:10, 14-15; and 21:8. When faced with this much Scriptural evidence for the eternal burning mentioned first by Isaiah in vs. 10 and then in the passages listed above, the best method of interpretation is to let Scripture explain itself.

34:11-15 *But the desert owl and the screech owl will possess it;
the owl and the raven will live there.*

*He will stretch over it the measuring line of chaos,
and the plum line of emptiness.*

¹² *Her nobles will have nothing to call a kingdom,
all its princes will be gone.*

¹³ *Thorns will come up in its palaces,
nettles and thistles in its fortresses.*

*It will become a home of jackals,
a haunt of owls.*

¹⁴ *The wild beasts of the desert will meet with the hyenas,
and the wild goats will bleat to one another;
yes, the night creatures will settle there,
and find there a place of rest.*

¹⁵ *There the owl will make her nest,
and lay eggs, hatch, and protect them;
yes, there the buzzards will be gathered,
each one with her mate.*

Isaiah describes the complete ruin of the lands once occupied by the descendants of Esau. This land will only be inhabited by wild animals and will be unfit for human occupation. The Hebrew words for many of the animals listed in these verses are difficult to interpret and many suggestions are given by scholars. One of the most difficult words is translated “*night creature*” in vs. 14.

Victor Buksbazen, suggests the following possible interpretation:

“Among the gruesome creatures dwelling in deserted Edom, Lilith the night monster, or night ghost, is mentioned. In later rabbinical literature, Lilith was considered a female demon who sought to harm children, especially newborn babies.” (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, page 278).

Thomas Constable and Herbert M. Wolf also mention this possibility. (Thomas Constable, *Isaiah*, page 159. Herbert M. Wolf, *Interpreting Isaiah*, page 167). Gary V. Smith, however, does not see the need to understand these creatures as demonic beings. (Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah*, Vol. 1, page 575). Whatever was meant by Isaiah, either animal or demonic, it will be a place no human would want to live in or visit.

Wedge between two descriptions of the creatures who will inhabit this desolate land, verses 11 and 13-15, Isaiah interjects a comment about the claim to the land by any person, especially any of noble origin. Isaiah states in vs. 12 that the land will be devoid of any nobles or princes and specifically any of these who would be proclaimed king. It will be a land called “*no one there.*” This poetic title for this land is reminiscent of the title that Isaiah had earlier ascribed to Egypt in chapter 30 vs. 7 where he called Egypt, “*Rahab who has been exterminated.*”

The Lord’s Instruction: His Validation: 34:16-17

34:16-17 *Seek out and read of the scroll of the LORD:*

*Not one of these animals will be missing,
not one will lack a mate,*

*for the mouth of the LORD has commanded it,
and his Spirit has gathered them.*

¹⁷ *He has cast the lot for them,*

and his hand has split it up to them with a measuring line.

They will possess it forever;

from generation to generation they will settle there.

Isaiah calls upon the nations (vs. 16) to “*Seek out and read from the scroll of the LORD:*” What is the book or scroll of the Lord that Isaiah has mentioned in vs. 16? Many different books are mentioned in Scripture but none of them have the words Isaiah has stated in verses 16 and 17. Therefore it must be Isaiah’s own writing that he entitles, “the book of the Lord.” Isaiah records that in this book, those who read it or hear it will know that what God has stated about animals inhabiting the land of Edom will happen just as God said it would, “*for the mouth of the LORD has commanded it, and His Spirit has gathered them.*” vs. 16. In vs. 17 this book declares that God has assigned the place of the animals, “*He has cast the lot for them, and His hand has split it up to them with a measuring line*” just as the apportionment of the promised land was accomplished for the people of Israel. Numbers 26:52-56; Deuteronomy 32:8 and Joshua 18:1-10. The animals shall possess this land in accordance with God’s command forever, (as long as the land shall last) from generation to generation.

Teaching Outline for Isaiah chapter 34

The Wrath of God on the nations:

The Lord’s Indignation: His Vengeance: 34:1-15

The Lord’s Instruction: His Validation: 34:15-16

2 The Blessing of the Future Kingdom: 35:1-10

(Teaching Outline for Isaiah chapter 35)

The Blossoming of the Desert: 35:1-2 and 6b-7

The Healing of the Remnant: 35:3-6a

The Return of the Ransomed: 35:8-10

In vivid contrast to devastation of the land of Edom and slaughter of the armies of the nations at the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ in chapter 34, Isaiah in chapter 35 declares a glorious prophecy of the healing both of the land and the remnant people of God and the return of the remnant (the ransomed of the Lord) as they march joyfully to Zion at the beginning of the millennial kingdom. This is one of the loftiest chapters not only in Isaiah but in the Old Testament. It is a portrayal of restoration, return and rejoicing for the faithful remnant of the Lord who have endured the fiery trials of tribulation and enemy assault. The King has returned to rescue His people and lead them to glorious Zion, His holy hill.

David L. Cooper provides an overview of chapter 35:

VII. WORLD BLESSING-MILLENNIUM (35:1-10)

It is fitting that the Book of Woes should end with a vivid picture of the glorious millennial reign of our Lord. In 35:1,2 we have a marvelous description of the transformation which will take place in the desert. Personally I have been out on the Arabian Desert and have traveled through the desolate country in Moab and Edom. I have also passed through the desert which separates Palestine from Egypt. Likewise I have been out on the great Sahara Desert. Of course I have crossed the great western deserts in America. Whenever I see these great wastelands, as a rule I think of this marvelous prediction which is found in Isaiah 35:1,2:

"The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. 2 It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of Jehovah, the excellency of our God."

This passage means exactly what it says, namely, that there will be a transformation that will come upon the desert. In the prophet's speaking of this great change, he does use some figures of speech. But anyone can recognize that which is literal and that which is figurative. When due consideration is paid to the figures used and when they are properly interpreted, one sees that Edenic conditions are here promised for deserts and wastelands of this earth. The desolations that are observable upon the earth are due to the curse which fell upon the world when Adam sinned. When the Lord Jesus returns He will of course lift the curse and Edenic conditions will be restored, in fulfillment of this and many other predictions.

Isaiah urged his contemporaries to strengthen those who were weak in faith and doubting: "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees." That he was not talking about infirmities of the flesh but rather that of a hesitating and doubting mind is seen from the following statement: "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; he will come and save you."

Before the Old Testament saints the prophets held up constantly the glorious visible coming of Jehovah to earth, to set up His reign of righteousness. They were therefore urged to wait patiently for His appearance. King David said that he would have fainted if he had not been buoyed up by the hope of seeing Jehovah in the land of the living (Psa. 27:13,14). In Psalm 37 the writer urged his readers to wait for Jehovah's appearance.

The appearance of the Lord mentioned in Isaiah 35:4 is His second coming. The proof of this position is seen in the fact that the coming referred to is with vengeance and with the recompense of God. When the Lord came the first time, He was the very embodiment of grace, mercy, and truth. When He returns, He will come with vengeance and will reward His servants and will recompense the evildoers according to their ways. It is therefore clear that the coming to which Isaiah in our passage refers is none other than the second coming of Jesus, who will come and save the faithful remnant.

In this connection let us remember that there are passages in the Word which speak only of the first coming. The facts of each context in such cases indicate this interpretation. There are others that refer only to the second coming, such as this one. There are still other prophecies which speak of the entire redemptive career of King Messiah, consisting of the two comings and the Christian Dispensation separating those two events. (For a full discussion of this point, see my volume, *The World's Greatest Library Graphically Illustrated*.)

According to Isaiah 35:5,6 the infirmities which now characterize man will pass away. The "eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing." This is but another echo of the predictions which forecast the lifting of the curse and the restoration of primitive Edenic conditions to man.

In the latter part of verse 6 and in verse 7 appear references to the changes that will take place in the physical realm. In the wilderness there will burst forth refreshing waters and streams. The same thing will be true in those places that are now desert wastes. There will be no swampy, untillable land, but it will all be productive.

There will be a great highway for the redeemed to return to Zion. This is mentioned in verse 8. "And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for the redeemed: the wayfaring men, yea fools, shall not err therein." No ravenous beast shall be seen there. In Isaiah, chapter 19, there is likewise a prediction that there will be a great highway running from Assyria through Palestine down into Egypt in order that there may be rapid and convenient transportation between the three nations which God at that time will call His special people--Israel, Egypt, and Assyria. When the passage in 35:8 is compared with the one in Isaiah, chapter 19, it becomes apparent that probably the prophet in these two places was speaking of the same highway.

This highway has by some commentators been understood to be a prediction of the gospel and its conditions of salvation. Thus we are told that the gospel is so very plain and clear that the "wayfaring men, yea fools, shall not err therein." I admit that the gospel plan of salvation is very clear and anyone, even with subnormal intelligence, can comprehend it and can accept the Lord Jesus Christ and enjoy His salvation. About this proposition there can be no question. But when Isaiah 35:8 and the highway mentioned there are studied in the light of the facts of Isaiah 19 and parallel statements, one sees that Isaiah was not speaking of the gospel at all but was talking of a literal highway that will connect Assyria and Egypt in the Millennial Age. This position becomes more abundantly apparent when we recognize that in verses 5-10 of this chapter the prophet was speaking of things out beyond the second coming of our Lord. Thus one does violence to the Scriptures, when one interprets this passage as a reference to the gospel.

On this great international highway of the Millennial Age the redeemed people of Jehovah "shall return, and come with singing unto Zion," praising God; then "everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy," which will be the order of the day, "and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Great will be the blessings which await the faithful remnant of Israel--together with all the saved of this age! (D. L. Cooper, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Biblical Research Monthly-November 1944).

The Blossoming of the Desert: 35:1-2 and 6b-7

35:1-2 *The wilderness and the dry land will be glad;
the desert will rejoice,
and blossom like the crocus.*

² *It will blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing;
the glory of Lebanon will be given to it,
the splendor of Mount Carmel and the Sharon plain.
They will see the glory of the LORD,
the splendor of our God.*

Isaiah proclaims a prophecy on the condition of the wilderness and the desert. The wilderness and the desert describe barren, desolate, parched and solitary places that will become devastated during the Tribulation period. The location of these places is not stated and they may be in the general vicinity of Judah and Israel as the geographical references to Lebanon, Carmel and Sharon in vs. 2 seem to indicate. Only the lands of Edom in the local area will be exempt. Isaiah 34:5-17. The prophet states that these once desert lands will be glad and rejoice and blossom like the crocus (rose in the KJV). A new world order will be the foundation of the millennial kingdom and not only will the people of God be transformed but also the lands of the kingdom will themselves be transformed. Isaiah's use of anthropomorphism to describe a human reaction: gladness and rejoicing, and ascribing this reaction to a desert is a poetic device that emphasizes the dramatic turn of events from the end of the Tribulation to the beginning of the peaceful days and abundance of life that will characterize the millennial kingdom. See also vs. 2; Psalm 89:5; 96:12; 97:1; 98:8; 148:3-4, 7; Isaiah 49:13; 52:9; 55:12; Luke 19:40.

The prophet states in vs. 1, that the desert, "*will rejoice.*" In vs. 2 Isaiah states the desert will "*rejoice with joy.*" As before, Isaiah in verses 1-2 repeats a word (word group) three times to emphasize its impact. See Isaiah 6:3; 33:10, 18 and 22. Also in vs. 2, glory and splendor (majesty) are repeated twice. The words rejoice, splendor (majesty) and glory are used by the prophet to heighten the magnificence of the beauty of the transformed desert. The mention of Lebanon, Mount Carmel and the Sharon plain are used by Isaiah as indicators of the glory and majesty to be given to the desert is a striking counterpoint to their mention in Isaiah 33:9 where they are seen in disgrace. Once bareness disfigured the landscape now beauty and majesty will be its hallmark. The point of this beauty is to bring majesty and glory to God for it is His work and His creativity that is on display. See also Isaiah 29:17.

The Healing of the Remnant: 35:3-6a

In verses 3-6a Isaiah directs his discussion of the beginnings of the millennial kingdom to its people. The faithful remnant will have endured much suffering during the horrifying days of the Tribulation. In Isaiah's prophecy, these days have passed and the people of God are still wary of what is ahead and weary from what is now behind them. Isaiah declares a message of encouragement and hope to these faithful saints.

35:3-4 *Strengthen the weak hands,
and steady the shaky knees.*

⁴ *Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
"Be strong, do not be afraid.*

*Look, your God will come with vengeance,
and with the avenging recompense of God;
he will come and save you."*

Isaiah, (vs. 3), calls for the exhausted and feeble to be encouraged and strengthened. In vs. 4, he calls for those who are anxious to have no fear and take courage for their God will be a savior to them and will come with vengeance and recompense (on their enemies). This call by Isaiah repeats his earlier declaration as recorded in 34:8: "*For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of pay back for the cause of Zion.*" The words "pay back" can better be translated as "recompense." The Lord is near unto His faithful remnant and they will no longer fear their enemies. The timing of vs. 4 may be positioned in step 5 of the following sequence of events.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum explains the sequence of events during the time of the second coming of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. The following briefly summarizes Fruchtenbaum's chapter 14, in *The Footsteps of the Messiah*. This chapter is entitled: *The Campaign of Armageddon and The Second Coming of Jesus the Messiah*. In this chapter the campaign of Armageddon is described as an eight-stage event and not just one battle. The Messiah will return after the faithful remnant have repented of the national sin of the Jewish people of rejecting Him during His first coming to earth to live among His people. As stated, the remnant will then call upon their Messiah to return and rescue them from their enemies who have surrounded them at Bozrah.

The eight stages of the campaign of Armageddon are: (1) The world's armies are assembled at the Valley of Megiddo under the leadership of the Antichrist. (2) While the combined armies of the Antichrist are assembling in the Valley of Megiddo, the Lord sends His forces comprised of those faithful to Him to destroy Babylon, the stronghold of the Antichrist. (3) Antichrist and his combined armies fall upon Jerusalem and conquer it. (4) After conquering Jerusalem, the armies of Antichrist then proceed to Bozrah where the faithful remnant of God's people have been sheltered. (5) It is just as the armies of Antichrist surround Bozrah that the faithful remnant repent of the national sin of Israel and call upon their Messiah to come back and rescue them. (6) The Messiah returns to earth with wrath and vengeance. (7) The battle of Bozrah begins and proceeds from Bozrah to the Valley of Jehosaphat where Antichrist will be slain by the Messiah.

(8) The Messiah then proceeds to Zion where He will stand upon the Mount of Olives causing it to split into two parts and provide a way for escape for those people of God still awaiting rescue. The great earthquake mentioned in Revelation 16:17-21 occurs at this time. Reference: Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah*, Ariel Ministries, 2004, Chapter 14, pages 308 – 357.

35:5-6a: *Then the eyes of the blind will be opened,
and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.*

⁶ *Then the lame will leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute will sing for joy;*

The prophet describes a later time than recorded in vs. 4. The victory has been won by the Messiah and not only is the desert being transformed but the people of God are being healed. Isaiah states that blind eyes will see; deaf ears will hear; lame legs will leap; and mute tongues will sing for joy. This transformation of the people of God brings to an end God's lament about His hardhearted, blind and deaf people recorded in Isaiah 6:9-10. They will finally be healed. Isaiah had asked how long until they will be healed, Isaiah 6:11. The Lord's response, 6:11-13 is a summary of Isaiah chapters 34-35. It is the stump, the holy seed who will finally be healed during the beginning days of the millennial kingdom. See also Isaiah 29: 18-19.

35:6b-7 *for in the wilderness waters will gush forth,
and streams in the desert.*

⁷ *The scorched land will become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water.
In the lairs of jackals,
will be a marsh with grass, reeds and papyrus.*

Isaiah returns to the description of the restoration of the desert. The lands once scorched will be abundant with water. Resting places will be provided for those traveling through the desert lands and where once there was only grass, now reeds and rushes, which need a steady source of water, will be found. See also Isaiah 41:18; 43:19-20; 44:3-4; and Ezekiel 47:1-12.

Victor Buksbazen comments on the first sentence of vs. 7:

7 The desert mirage (*sharab*) shall become a pool...

The shimmering desert heat, which so often produces the illusion of abundant water, will now become a real pool of water, the deserted place a green pasture with peacefully reclining herds of domestic animals. As always, Isaiah sees nature participating in the destiny of man, which was once cursed for his sins, but blessed again through his redemption. (Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah*, page 280).

The Return of the Ransomed: 35:8-10

35:8-10 *A highway will be there,
and it will be called "The Way of Holiness;"
the unclean will not travel on it;
but it will be reserved for those who walk that way;
fools will never stray onto it.*

⁹ *No lion will be there,
nor will any ravenous beast go up on it;
they will not be found there;
but the redeemed will walk there.*

¹⁰ *Those ransomed by the LORD will return,
and come with singing to Zion;
everlasting joy will crown their heads.
They will find joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing will flee away.*

Isaiah, in his glorious message of restoration during the beginning of the days of the millennial kingdom, now discusses the highway in the desert. The location of the highway is the desert due to the word “there” in the first phrase of vs. 8, which points back to verses 6b-7 in which Isaiah is describing the transformation of the desert. The purpose of the highway is for the faithful remnant, the ransomed of the Lord who will walk upon it as they return to Zion, the glorious capital of the millennial kingdom.

Isaiah concludes his prophecy about the transformation of the desert at the beginning of the millennial kingdom by discussing a highway. In vs. 8a, the prophet states, “*A highway will be there, and it will be called the Way of Holiness.*” Isaiah had earlier revealed details about this highway in 11:16 and 19:23. He would continue to reveal more about it: 40:3; 49:11; 62:10. He alludes to it in 30:21 and 51:11 (a repeat of vs. 10). The name of this highway is Highway of Holiness.

In verses 8b- 9a, Isaiah contrasts those who will not and those who will walk on this highway. The unclean and fools will not walk on it. The lion or any “vicious beast” will not go up on the highway. However, it will be a way for those who “walks that way,” vs. 8b. Who are those who “walk that way”? Isaiah declares that those who will walk on this raised holy way will be the redeemed, vs. 9. This is the first mention in the book of Isaiah of the most precious word, redeemed, *ge’ulim* in the Hebrew.

The redeemed have a Redeemer, *ga’al* in the Hebrew, and has the meaning of “kinsmen redeemer” and is the great theme of the book of Ruth where it is mentioned five times in two verses: Ruth 4:4 (3 times) and Ruth 4:6 (2 times). Its meaning is explained in detail in Leviticus 25:23-55 and in Leviticus 27:12-33. Other Old Testament references are: Exodus 6:6; 15:13; Job 19:25; Psalms 19:14; 69:18; 72:14; 74:2; 77:15; 78:35; 103:4; 106:10; 107:2; Proverbs 23:11;

Lamentations 3:58; Hosea 13:14 and Micah 4:10. It is a major theme in Isaiah. Following the first mention in 35:9, it is found in: 41:14; 43:1, 14; 44:6, 22, 23, 24; 47:4; 48:17, 20; 49:7, 26; 51:10; 52:3, 9; 54:5, 8; 59:20; 60:16; 62:12; 63:4, 9; and 63:16. In Isaiah 35:9 and the references mentioned above, the redeemed are people who have by faith trusted in their Messiah who is their great kinsmen redeemer and has loosed them from their bondage to sin by paying a price. The price paid was the agony of the cross where their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ bore their sins as a guilt offering and satisfied the great wrath of God on behalf of the people He loved. This act of redemption is wondrously explained by Isaiah in 52:13-53:12.

In the New Testament, a few Greek words are used: (1) Redemption (apolutrosis) meaning to be loose (away) from: Luke 21:28; Romans 3:24; 8:23; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:7, 14; Colossians 1:14; and Hebrews 9:12. (2) Redemption (lutrosis) meaning to be loosed from: Luke 2:38 and Hebrews 9:12. (3) Redeem (agorazo) meaning to acquire at: Revelation 5:9; and 14: 3, 4. (4) Redeem (exagorazo) meaning to acquire out of: Galatians 3:13; 4:5; Ephesians 5:16; and Colossians 4:5. (5) Redeemed (lutroo) meaning to be loosed by a price: Luke 24:21; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18 and (lutrosin) Luke 1:68. The NT Greek words *lutroo* and *lutrosin* have the closest meaning to ga'al in the OT. A similar word in the NT is ransom: (lutron) Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45. Also (antilutron): 1Timothy 2:6.

Isaiah in 35:10 brings to a close the entire first section of his prophecy from 1:1 to 35:10. The redeemed of vs. 9 are called the ransomed in vs. 10, the Hebrew word is *pedu 'ye* which has the meaning to set free or ransom. Isaiah states: "*Those ransomed by the LORD will return and come with singing to Zion; everlasting joy will crown their heads. They will find joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.*" This climatic verse is repeated by Isaiah in 51:11. The entire message of the prophecy of Isaiah can be seen in this one verse. The people of God in the past were laden with sin (chapters 1-6), and refused to trust and obey the Lord (chapters 7-33) will in the future kingdom of the Messiah be released from the curse of the law and from the penalty of sin and walk joyfully to the capital of the Kingdom, Zion. The Lord has redeemed them and brought them great comfort and a reason to shout with joy (chapters 40-66). The reason the redeemed are returning to Zion along the Highway of Holiness is because God is bringing them to Himself. Isaiah 49:1-26 and Ezekiel 36:22-38. They had been scattered among the nations of the world and had suffered greatly due to their unbelief and rebellion against God. In the millennial kingdom, they will be free of past pain and sorrow and will walk righteously with their Messiah. Micah 2:12-13 is a wonderful picture of this walk to Zion with the Lord leading them:

¹² *I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob;
I will surely gather the remnant of Israel;
I will put them together as the sheep
in the midst of a pasture;
it will be noisy because there will be so many people.*

¹³ *The leader who breaks out will go up before them,
they will break out and pass on through the gate,
and leave.
Their king will pass on before them,
and the LORD will be at their head."*

Gary V. Smith comments on the last three verses of chapter 35:

The content of 35:8–10 is unified around the repeated reference to what will be “there” (šām, used three times, drawing a contrast to the parallel in 34:15–16) and what will “not” (lō, used five times) be there. A “highway” (maslul) is a major graded road, as opposed to a small path, and usually refers to a state-constructed road that supports economic or military operations. Not every use of the highway concept in Isaiah refers to the same road or event. There is the metaphorical highway God uses to come to Jerusalem (40:1–11), which is different from the highway that the Assyrian exiles will use (11:16). The highway in 35:8 is an eschatological highway used by the people of God as they return to Zion to praise God in the distant future (cf. 62:9–12). This highway has the unique name, “Way of Holiness” (derek haqqôdeš), a title based on the fact that only holy people will walk on it. The unclean person, the fool, the lion, and the wild beast will not walk on this road, for it will be reserved for God’s redeemed people. The unclean are not allowed to enter a holy place, and the fools cannot travel there because they walk in ways that are contrary to the will of God. Neither group is morally or ritually qualified to come before God when he comes in his glory. Those who joyfully enter Zion to fellowship and praise God are the redeemed (gē’ûlim) and ransomed (pědû’yē). The term “redeemed” is used when a person delivers a blood relative from some obligation (legal, financial, social), thus those who come to Zion are pictured as the covenant relatives that God has redeemed. “Ransom” comes from the legal practice of making a payment to deliver someone from a debt, obligation, or punishment, though the payment idea is seldom emphasized when referring to God’s theological ransoming of his people. Both terms emphasize that the people’s status as the redeemed or ransomed is based on an act of divine grace to free them from the bondage of an earlier obligation. This indebtedness is broader than the bondage to a personal sin; it includes all the effects of sin on the world. These acts of God will remove the curse on man and the world and inaugurate the holy kingdom of God. Those who “will return” (šām) to God will experience “everlasting joy,” (šām), they will be overtaken with gladness, and all sorrow will end (cf. 25:8; 65:19). Certainly, these words would have created hope in those who heard the prophet speak. They can put their trust in a God who will do these things for his people. (Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah*, Vol. 1, pages 580-581).

Chapter 35 is a fitting ending to all preceding chapters of Isaiah as it brings those who have listened to or read the prophecies of Isaiah to a glorious roadway that leads to Mount Zion during the beginning of the Messiah’s millennial kingdom. The terrors of the Tribulation are not past and the faithful remnant of the people of God are with their Redeemer who has rescued them from the threat of annihilation by their enemies (Isaiah 63:1-6). Their Messianic Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel who is at the front of the procession as they sing joyfully and with gladness during their journey up to Mount Zion. It is there where they will enjoy the benefits of the just and peaceful reign of the Messiah and live with Him, first for a period of one thousand years, where all of the yet unfulfilled prophecies of the Scriptures will gloriously be fulfilled and then will live forever with the great triune God who will “tabernacle” with them. (Revelation 21:3).