

# **ISAIAH**

## **Volume II**

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**BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK SERIES**

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**ISAIAH**

**Volume II**

**by**

**Paul T. Butler**

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College Press**

THIS VOLUME

IS

DEDICATED

TO

**The Joybells**

Carolyn Kern

Cyndi Key Wertenberger

Deanna Streeter

Jeanette Stewart Woods

Linda Hord

for the

fun and joy we had together

serving Christ

“on the road.”

I love them dearly.



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## IV. JUDAH AND JUDGMENT - CHAPTERS 24 - 27

### A. JUDGMENT ON JUDAH'S ENEMIES, CHAPTER 24

#### 1. JUDGMENT IS SURE

TEXT: 24:1-6

- 1 Behold, Jehovah maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.
- 2 And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer; so with the seller; as with the creditor, so with the debtor; as with the taker of interest, so with the giver of interest to him.
- 3 The earth shall be utterly emptied, and utterly laid waste; for Jehovah hath spoken this word.
- 4 The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the lofty people of the earth do languish.
- 5 The earth also is polluted under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant.
- 6 Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are found guilty; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.

#### QUERIES

- a. Is verse 1 to be understood literally or hyperbolically?
- b. Why mention all the vocations in verse 2?
- c. How was the earth polluted?

#### PARAPHRASE

Behold, the Lord is about to bring into judgment the whole world of worldliness. Human governments and institutions which have attempted to thwart God's redemptive program

and usurp His sovereign reign over man will be utterly emptied of their hold upon man. They will be made a vast wasteland of emptiness compared to His kingdom. Human potentates and human schemes, high and low, rich and poor, powerful and weak will all be dealt with. God is no respecter of persons. God is going to deal a death blow to man's attempt to take over the world. The Lord has spoken this word, and it shall be so! The world and its worldly rulers mourn at their demise. They suffer! They refuse to believe and therefore do not understand. The earth is profaned and polluted through the rebellion and sin of these people. Laws are violated and fear of God is scorned. The structures of society collapse, and all that is good is defiled. This curse of God's moral judgment has devoured man's carnal scheme to usurp Him. The downfall of their schemes proves their guilt. Such a judgment consumes multitudes. Only a few men of faith shall escape it.

## COMMENTS

V. 1-3 EXTENT OF JUDGMENT: These chapters (24-27) form a close connection with the preceding prophecies against the nations (13-23). They are a climactic conclusion to those prophecies. Isaiah is now uniting into one, as it were, all those enemies of God's people which he had previously (13-23) discussed individually. Judah will also be included because many of her people have rebelled against God's sovereign rule. After this widespread judgment upon man's worldly attempts to rebel against God (and incidentally, the same picture is found in Isa. 2:12ff), there will come a world-embracing salvation (25:6-8; 26:9, 21; 27:1, 6), with the result that the remnant saved from the four corners of the earth will praise the glory and majesty of God, and many will come from the ends of the earth to worship the Lord in Zion (24:15-16; 27:13).

Verse 1 reminds us of God's scattering mankind at the Tower of Babel. There man sought to unite all his worldly

power to build a tower and assault the gates of heaven. It was a rebellious attack upon the sovereignty of God. After that mankind attempted to unite itself in world-empire status, usurp the Creator's directions and rule, and take over the creation to exploit it for its own selfish purposes. One empire after another attempted this—Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. But God triumphed over this scheme of man to wrest the rule of mankind from Him. He did so by establishing His own kingdom among men. It was when this kingdom was established that "the ruler of this world was cast out" (Jn. 12:31; Jn. 16:11) and that God "triumphed over them" in Christ (Col. 2:15). Our comments in the Introduction to *Isaiah*, Vol. I, and *Daniel*, chapters 2, 7, 8, 9, are relevant to this section of Isaiah. We believe the judgments predicted in these chapters (Isa. 24-27) are the same judgments pronounced in Daniel against world-empire rule, and thus their fulfillments began when the church was established. They will have their consummation when Christ returns at His Second Coming, but man's attempt (actually the devil is behind it all) to take over the world and usurp God's rule was judged and defeated at the cross and the empty tomb. God "scattered" that attempt. He "knocked" that image down, ground it to dust and blew it away (cf. Dan. 2). And He did it in the days of the fourth world empire by establishing His eternal kingdom, the Church.

As verse 2 points out, human stature and rank makes no difference to God. All those involved in the great human rebellion will be defeated. All will be judged according to their response to the Sovereign Creator and His program of redemption. Human rulers and the ruled alike must submit to Jehovah. No pillar of humanly conceived society or culture will be able to save man. All man's structures are vulnerable to the inevitable judgments of moral rebellion.

The judgment is inevitable because Jehovah is a God of Absolute Holiness and Justice. He is absolutely Moral. His creation is moral and is morally structured. His word is Absolute Truth. When that word is disobeyed, profaned and

rejected, the inevitable consequences are falsehood and moral disintegration. God has spoken! It will come to pass!

V. 4-6 CAUSE OF JUDGMENT: The cause of the judgment is moral rebellion and disobedience. The judgment takes the form of moral pollution and disintegration of societal structure. The word *pollution* is a translation of the Hebrew word *khanepah*. It is used to denote defiling, profaning, or exploiting something until destroyed. To *languish* is to lose strength or vitality and to droop, wither and fade. Isaiah predicts that the "lofty" people of the earth will languish when God's judgment falls upon human schemes to usurp His rule. The "lofty" people are those pagan rulers and nations (Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander the Great, Caesar and their modern-day counterparts) who think to dethrone God, thwart His redemptive work and accomplish through carnal resources what they have decided man needs.

The earth is pictured as mourning and fading away as a flower fades away. Wars, pestilences, famines, diseases are results of the sins of the people and are causing this wasting away. The sinfulness of men has polluted the earth. Falsehood brings moral disobedience. Moral disobedience inevitably brings social disintegration (cf. Rom. 1:18-32). This moral malady of man has been transferred to the earth itself so that it is also polluted. Injustice pollutes society (cf. Num. 35:29-34). Murder cannot go unpunished (nor other injustices) without polluting society! When man (who has been made lord of creation by the Creator) deliberately chooses falsehood and moral anarchy, he communicates to the creation beneath him the pollution of his own moral failure, with the result that the polluted earth reacts in judgment upon him to his own destruction.

When man selfishly exploits, wastes, profanes and spoils what God has created to be good, he eventually finds he has perverted and cursed himself. He suddenly awakens to the fact that he is the guilty culprit. This discovery repeats itself nearly every 200-300 years. Man in greed and pride perverts animate and inanimate creation until he destroys his culture

and societal structure. He realizes that good men and good things are in the minority. He realizes that he is responsible for his own predicament. But where does he turn? Still, men will not repent! (cf. Rev. 9:20-21).

## QUIZ

1. What connection is there between chapters 24-27 to 13-23?
2. Why did God "scatter" the inhabitants of the earth?
3. When did God "scatter" them?
4. Who did God "scatter"?
5. How was the earth and mankind "polluted"?
6. What connection does the pollution have to the "curse" devouring the earth?

## 2. JUDGMENT IS BITTER

TEXT: 24:7-16

- 7 The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merryhearted do sigh.
- 8 The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth.
- 9 They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it.
- 10 The waste city is broken down; every house is shut up, that no man may come in.
- 11 There is a crying in the streets because of the wine; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone.
- 12 In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction.
- 13 For thus shall it be in the midst of the earth among the peoples, as the shaking of an olive-tree, as the gleanings when the vintage is done.

- 14 These shall lift up their voice, they shall shout; for the majesty of Jehovah they cry aloud from the sea.
- 15 Wherefore glorify ye Jehovah in the east, even the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel, in the isles of the sea.
- 16 From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs: Glory to the righteous. But I said, I pine away, I pine away, woe is me! the treacherous have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous have dealt very treacherously.

### QUERIES

- a. Why so much emphasis on "wine"?
- b. Why are houses shut up within the city?
- c. Who is going to glorify Jehovah?

### PARAPHRASE

The juice of the grape will be sorry, the grape vine will lose its vitality, and all those who were glad and merry will be turned to mournful sighing. The gay music of tambourines and harps will cease when the people are turned to weeping. Singing while drinking wine will no longer be going on; drinking for the mere sake of intoxication will grow, but it will only bring bitterness to the drunkards. Cities shall become moral wastelands—jungles of crime—where every house has to be locked against thieves and murderers. The streets of the cities shall echo with the cries of wantonness and debauchery. They shall be filled with pessimism, gloom and despair. The great centers of population are filled with desolation and their bulwarks crumble into ruin. This is the way it shall be among all the nations of mankind. Man in rebellion will destroy himself until very little of real value can be found in him—just like an olive tree shaken until few olives are left. But that valuable "little" that is left of every nation will lift its voice in loud shouting, giving praise to the name of



Jehovah, the God of Israel. From east to west, from the uttermost part of the earth, a remnant of believers will sing, Glory to the righteous. But my heart is still heavy with grief, for evil still prevails and treachery is everywhere. Multitudes remain impenitent and positive reactions to God's judgments are hasty, superficial, and soon erased.

## COMMENTS

v. 7-12 SORROW IN THE CITIES: The Hebrew word translated "new wine" in verse 7 is *theeroush* and means literally, "the juice of the grape." The prophet is apparently trying to portray the idea that the very means by which men had falsely sought for joy would become occasions of despair and bitterness. There would be no more happiness when the juice of the grape was harvested. All the festivities associated with harvesting the grape, pressing it into juice, singing and drinking, would end among the enemies of God, for He is going to demonstrate once and for all the folly of all that. All the tambourines and harps of the world will play mournful music. Merryhearted singing while drinking wine will cease. Strong drink, *shaikhor* in Hebrew, will be consumed bitterly and in despair. This is a graphic description of unbelieving man's predicament in every generation. The things of the world hold no hope. Ever since God demonstrated in history through Jesus Christ the sharp distinction between spiritual things and carnal things, the line of demarkation has been drawn vividly (Jn. 9:39-41). The folly of sin and carnality is much more in evidence and the blessing of faith and righteousness is much more in evidence since the work of Christ has been accomplished (Jn. 16:7-11). And it is interesting, in the light of this passage from Isaiah, that the songs of unbelieving man graphically portray his despair and disillusionment while the songs of believing man are exceedingly happy and filled with hope.

In the great cities of the nations arrayed against God there is moral, spiritual and economic confusion. They become vast

wastelands of human decadence. People must shut their doors and bolt and lock them against thieves, murderers and other lawless men. In the streets echo the cries of wantonness and debauchery. The streets of the cities are filled with cynical, pessimistic, frustrated people rushing to and fro like sheep without a shepherd. These huge cities, monuments to man's vain illusion that he can create his own utopia, are really concrete jungles of desolation. This prophetic picture of Isaiah applies not only to God's enemies of the prophet's day, Assyria and Babylon, but to all of man's rebellious attempts to structure his own benevolent society and create his own heaven. It could apply to Greece and Rome; to England and Germany and America and Russia; to monarchies, dictatorships and republics. All of man's attempts to govern himself are inadequate at best and destructive at worst. They all are to be supplanted by the just, holy, righteous kingdom of God, the church. That is a "bitter pill" for rebellious and unbelieving man to swallow! In his pride, man does not want to acknowledge that he is unable to transform himself and his society and save himself. So the judgment of God upon man's schemes brings about all the bitterness Isaiah has described here. The surrender of man to God's way is never easy and gentle. Man must struggle violently with his own pride and selfishness if he is to surrender to the will of God and enter God's kingdom.

V. 13-16 SHOUTING IN THE COAST-LANDS: As Isaiah takes in this universal scene of chaos he sees a gleam of light and hears a song of hope coming from the uttermost parts of the earth. It is the Remnant. This Remnant is from among the "peoples," that is, the gentile nations which God has judged. This is probably one of those veiled Messianic prophecies concerning the defeat of God's enemies and the institution of His kingdom which originated at the cross of Christ and the day of Pentecost (cf. Jn. 12:31; Jn. 16:11; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14-15; Luke 1:67-75, etc.). A very small remnant, a tiny minority of righteous and faithful believers will survive God's judgments and form the nucleus of the church. They will be so few they will be like that which is left when the olive tree is shaken and like the

left-overs when the grapes are harvested.

The Hebrew word *meyom* is translated "sea" in verse 14. It usually means "toward the west." The Great Sea was always "west" in Palestine. The glorification of Jehovah which Isaiah foresees is from "east to west," in the "isles of the sea" and to "the uttermost part of the earth." When Jehovah is glorified, so is His "righteous" remnant. The prophet sees in this remnant salvation brought out of judgment to the isles of the sea and the coasts of the nations.

But this note of hope gives way immediately to a declaration of sorrow and caution. It is as though the prophet says, "Do not soon become too optimistic about how men react. Many of the seemingly positive reactions to God's redemptive works are hasty, superficial, and soon erased." It is as though the prophet sees sinners so deeply involved in wrong conduct they will go on, in spite of all the judgments and redemptions God manifests toward them (cf. Acts 13:44-47; 28:23-28; Rev. 9:20-21, etc.). Jesus faced the world realistically. He insisted that discipleship was costly (Luke 14:25-33). "Many are called but few are chosen," said Jesus. Isaiah was the same kind of realist. Many of the covenant people in his day fell away from faith. They rejected God's signs; Ahaz had gone on in his stubborn sullen way; they were still looking to alliances with heathen nations. They dealt in treachery. God had warned Isaiah of almost total lack of "success" from his preaching (Isa. 6:9-13). He would preserve only a small "remnant" by his preaching. Christians may as well face reality—the Bible teaches they will be a minority until the Lord comes again. The Lord is interested in a faithful minority more than He is in a lukewarm, half-hearted and doubleminded majority. The Lord's standards of success and the world's standards of success are very much different.

## QUIZ

1. What is "new wine"?

2. Why has all "mirth" ceased?
3. What predicament of sinful man does Isaiah portray here?
4. How does Isaiah pictorialize the great centers of population, the cities?
5. What does the shaking of the olive tree symbolize?
6. Where will Jehovah be glorified?
7. Why does Isaiah "pine away"?

### 3. JUDGMENT IS FROM JEHOVAH

TEXT: 24:17-23

- 17 Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth.
- 18 And it shall come to pass that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows on high are opened, and the foundations of the earth tremble.
- 19 The earth is utterly broken, the earth is rent asunder, the earth is shaken violently.
- 20 The earth shall stagger like a drunken man, and shall sway to and fro like a hammock; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall, and not rise again.
- 21 And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah will punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.
- 22 And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison; and after many days shall they be visited.
- 23 Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed; for Jehovah of hosts will reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem; and before his elders shall be glory.

## QUERIES

- a. Why open "the windows on high"?
- b. Who are the "high ones on high" to be punished?
- c. When will Jehovah "reign" in mount Zion?

## PARAPHRASE

When God executes His judgments upon the present world order, man will be confounded like the wild animal who fears its pursuers and falls into the pit; if it avoids the pit, it is taken by the snare. From heaven God is going to overwhelm man's rebellion like the great flood; He is going to shake the very foundations of man's utopian schemes like an earthquake brings down great edifices. Earthly systems and worldly schemes will be utterly broken, rent asunder and shaken violently. Those forces and philosophies of man which have arrayed themselves against God's rule will be caused to stagger and reel under the defeat God brings upon them—they shall sway like a watchman's hut in a blowing storm. The futility of their rebellion and the guilt of their sin will be such a weight upon them they will fall never to regain complete dominance of the world again. On that day the Lord will make a visitation of judgment upon the principalities and powers in the heavenly places who have rebelled against Him as well as those rulers on the earth who have joined with these wicked spiritual beings. God will triumph over them all. He will gather these forces together in their greatest concentration of power, and He shall defeat them and take them captive like prisoners and He shall imprison them. And after a long period of time the Lord will visit all these imprisoned beings with final judgment. Such will be the glory of Jehovah when this is accomplished the brightness of the sun and moon will seem to fade away. The glorious reign of Jehovah will, at that time, be established among men in the form of His kingdom on earth, the church. And His faithful covenant people

will be brought to glory with Him.

### COMMENTS

v. 17-20 VICTORY: Admittedly these verses are difficult to interpret. Many want to make them apply to the Second Advent of Christ and the end of the world. It is our view that the prophets spoke almost entirely of Christ's First Advent, and in view of New Testament passages which seem to appropriate these figures of Isaiah, we believe these verses and those following apply to Christ's first coming and the establishment of the church.

These verses are a continuation of the idea begun in the first verse of this chapter. Human efforts to take over God's work of redeeming man are doomed to failure and defeat. There is no escape for man's rebellious attempts to usurp God's sovereignty. God's defeat of rebellion is inevitable! This same figure of inescapability is used in Amos 5:18-20 (see our comments in *Minor Prophets* there). The Lord's judgments are inescapable. His power to defeat man's rebellion is overwhelming and inundating like when He opened the windows of heaven and poured out the flood in Genesis 6. God is going to open the windows on high and send down His Son to defeat Satan and all those powers Satan has to hold men captive (cf. Jn. 12:31; 16:11; Heb. 2:14-15; Col. 2:15; Mt. 12:28-30). His Son will establish the kingdom of God on earth, the rule of God in men's hearts, and ascend to the right hand of the Father taking captivity captive (Eph. 4:8).

In all this we hear the crash and roar of falling governments and crashing empires. God's judgments are upon them. He brings them to naught. His divine judgments will cause rebellious man to reel and stagger. Assyria fell to Babylon. Babylon fell to Medo-Persia; Medo-Persia crumbled before Alexander the Great; Greece was broken and overrun by Rome. Even Judaism will be "shaken" (cf. Heb. 12:25-29)

and "removed" so that what cannot be shaken (the kingdom of God, the church) may remain. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar, "And in the days of those kings (the Roman empire) the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever;" (Dan. 2:44). Isaiah is not picturing the final great judgment here but the overthrow of the worldliness of the world. The destructiveness of rebellion and sin will bring about the downfall of all earthly systems trying to save men. If Daniel's prediction is correct, and we believe it is, world-wide rule by human empires or kingdoms is never to rise again! The "fourth" kingdom of Daniel 2 was the last universal, human empire. That was the Roman empire. The church is now, and ever shall be, the only universal kingdom. Isaiah, in this passage (v. 20), is agreeing with Daniel (see our comments in *Daniel*, College Press).

v. 21-22 VANQUISHING: When God defeats the world of human rebellion and world-government usurpation, He will *visit* the "host of the high ones on high," and the kings of the earth upon the earth, to imprison them. The Hebrew word translated *punish* in verse 21 is *pokad* which is usually translated *visit* (as in verse 22). At the accomplishment of the redemption of man — at the death and resurrection of Christ — the god of this world, Satan, was "cast out" (Jn. 12:31; 16:11). Satan was "bound" (Mt. 12:28-30; Rev. 20:1-3). Satan's power was "destroyed" (Heb. 2:14-15). The New Testament also indicates (as well as Dan. 10:13, 20) the devil had "angels" or "princes" of the abyss to help him lead sinful men in rebellion (II Cor. 11:14; Eph. 6:10-18, etc.). But these rebellious angels have been vanquished to a prison house of God (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6) awaiting final punishment. Christ triumphed over all principalities and powers (Col. 2:15; Eph. 1:20-21; Col. 1:16), and He led captivity captive (Eph. 4:8). Many days after Isaiah penned his 24th chapter, God *visited* the earth in His Son and vanquished the principalities and powers arrayed against His rule over man, freed man from their

power, and bound the rebel Satan and his helpers — whether “hosts on high” or “kings on the earth.” Those who sat in darkness have seen a great light (cf. Isa. 9:1-7). Captives have been liberated (Isa. 61:1-4; Luke 1:68-75; Luke 4:16-30).

v. 23 VINDICATION: The great planets and heavenly bodies are used by the prophets time and again to symbolize cataclysmic changes or portents to be experienced by man during the progress of history. See our comments in *Minor Prophets*, College Press, on Joel 2:31; 3:15. See also Isaiah’s use of the same terminology in connection with the downfall of babylon, Isaiah 13:9-10, and the symbolic language of the Revelation, chapters 6:12 and 8:12.

Here in 24:23, Isaiah portrays God’s triumph over the world at the accomplishment of redemption in Christ as so exceedingly glorious the sun and moon will pale into insignificant shame in comparison with His glory! No created thing in this universe, no matter how magnificent or majestic, can ever be compared with the glory of redemption’s accomplishment and the reign of God in His kingdom finally established. As C. S. Lewis once said, Even the glory of the future heavens and earth will not compare with the glory that is in us. It is not changed circumstances that will so much constitute a glorified existence as changed people. And when Jehovah reigns in Zion (the church, Heb. 12:22ff) people are changed and glorified! Of course, changed people eagerly long for changed circumstances where they, in their changed natures, may serve the Lord without pain, frustration, and death. But right now those who are overcoming the world by their faith and are “beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another”; (II Cor. 3:18). God reigning in Zion is a Messianic term (see our comments in *Minor Prophets*, College Press, Obadiah, verse 17). God is going to reign in Jerusalem when the ark of the covenant is no longer “remembered or missed” (Jer. 3:15-18). That must be when the New Covenant is instituted!



## QUIZ

1. How are these verses a continuation of the ideas in the beginning of the 24th chapter?
2. Why is God going to open the windows on high?
3. How do these verses portray the inescapability of God's judgments?
4. What is probably meant by the "violent shaking" of the earth?
5. What other O.T. prophet may be used in comparison here?
6. When did God "visit" the "host on high" and shut them up in prison?
7. How are heavenly bodies used symbolically by the prophets?

## B. JUBILEE BY JUDAH, CHAPTER 25

## 1. JUBILATION FOR JEHOVAH'S POWER

TEXT: 25:1-5

- 1 O Jehovah, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things, even counsels of old, in faithfulness and truth.
- 2 For thou hast made of a city a heap, of a fortified city a ruin, a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built.
- 3 Therefore shall a strong people glorify thee; a city of terrible nations shall fear thee.
- 4 For thou has been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.
- 5 As the heat in a dry place wilt thou bring down the noise of strangers; as the heat by the shade of a cloud, the song of the terrible shall be brought low.

## QUERIES

- a. What "counsels of old" has God done?
- b. Who are the "strong people" to glorify Jehovah?
- c. Why the figure of "storm" and "shade"?

## PARAPHRASE

O Covenant-God, Thou art my Lord. I will extol and celebrate with thanksgiving Your Name. You have done wonderful things; Your plans formed long ago have been faithfully and absolutely fulfilled. You turn a mighty city into a heap of rubble. Strong fortresses You make into ruins. The castle of aliens You make to disappear never to be built again. Therefore a people of strength will glorify You; ruthless nations and their cities will fear You. To the weak and powerless You have been a refuge; You have been a refuge to the needy in their distress. You have been a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat when the ruthless nations storm and burn down upon us. As heat in a dry and torrid land is cooled by the shadow of a cloud, so You subdue the shouts of the aliens and put to silence the boasting chants of the ruthless nations.

## COMMENTS

V. 1-3 SOVEREIGN LORD: Two Hebrew names of God are used in verse 1 — *Yaweh* and *Elohim*. According to the best lexicographers *Yaweh* (Jehovah) denotes God's covenant-keeping nature (faithfulness) while *Elohim* (Lord) denotes God's Lordship or Almightyness. Chapter 25 is the prophet's song of praise following Chapter 24's pronouncement of the doom of world power. The Covenant God has promised He will triumph over His enemies and that He shall reign eternally. Based upon the past faithfulness of God, Isaiah begins his song

of praise thanking Him for the promises of future covenant fulfillment. The prophet seems to thank Jehovah for future triumph as if it had already been completed. God's sovereign deeds are performed supernaturally in history as He carries out His covenanted plan of redemption. Such supernatural sovereignty and faithfulness causes men to marvel (cf. *Psa.* 40:5; 98:1; *Eph.* 1:11, etc.). The Hebrew word *yodoh* is translated *praise* in verse 1, and means literally, *celebrate*. Isaiah calls all who will to a celebration of praise for the faithfulness of Jehovah to keep His word.

Damascus (Syria), Samaria (Israel), Nineveh (Assyria), Memphis (Egypt) and Ethiopia threatened God's people. But always God warned and promised their doom. Where are they now? They have all been brought low. Now Babylon threatens. What are God's people to do? Trust in His faithfulness to keep His promise of Babylon's doom also. Verse 2 promises that no "city" of man shall be strong enough to resist the Faithful and Almighty God. No material device, no political ideology, no philosophical system will ever thwart the Absolute certainty of Jehovah's covenant. World systems may deceive some (even with lying signs and wonders) that they are going to eradicate God's kingdom and His covenant. But they shall never accomplish it. World systems have already been defeated (*Col.* 2:15, etc.) — their obliteration awaits only the Consummation.

In the meantime (while we await the Consummation), some "strong people" (Gentiles) will turn to Jehovah glorifying and fearing Him. Isaiah is predicting the conversion of Gentiles as they see the "wonderful" faithfulness of the God of Israel (cf. our comments *Isa.* 19:16ff).

V. 4-5 SHELTERING GOD: The Hebrew word *dol* is literally *exhausted* but translated *poor* in verse 4. Another reason for Isaiah's celebration of praise to Jehovah is His being a refuge for the weak and helpless. The Hebrew people had plenty of evidence for this aspect of God's nature. He had taken them as a helpless, infantile people (cf. *Ezek.* 16:1ff) and rescued them, nurtured them, protected them and blessed them. He sheltered them from their enemies century after century as long

as they depended upon Him. The metaphors of "storm," "refuge," "heat," and "shade" should register vividly on the Hebrew mind. Palestine is subject to some violent natural storms and is a land of torrid heat and arid dryness. The prophets used such metaphors of the land frequently to communicate God's nature and His will to their people. Jehovah is "The Shadow of a Mighty Rock, within a weary land." The storms of world power (cf. Revelation, the Seals, Trumpets, etc.) rage against God's elect covenant people (cf. Psa. 2:1-11) and, looked at from a human perspective, it appears the city of God will fall. But the Divine Perspective shows refuge and salvation and victory for the city of God.

Just as a cloud can obscure the heat of the sun and give refuge to a dry, dusty traveler, so easily will the Lord bring to nothing the torrid rage of His enemies and save His faithful ones. The supernatural deeds of God done in history and recorded by eyewitnesses testify abundantly that He will do what He has promised. Let all who believe Him celebrate in jubilant praise.

### QUIZ

1. What two names for God are used in this text and what do they signify?
2. How has God demonstrated in the past that He keeps His word?
3. Why does Isaiah's audience need to be reminded He keeps His word?
4. Have world systems already been defeated?
5. Is God a refuge for people because they are materially poor?
6. What "storms" rage against God's elect?

## 2. JUBILATION FOR JEHOVAH'S POSTERITY

TEXT: 25:6-9

- 6 And in this mountain will Jehovah of hosts make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.
- 7 And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering that covereth all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations.
- 8 He hath swallowed up death for ever; and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of his people will he take away from off all the earth: for Jehovah hath spoken it.
- 9 And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is Jehovah; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

## QUERIES

- a. Which mountain? v. 6
- b. Why feast on "fat things"?
- c. When will the Lord swallow up death forever?

## PARAPHRASE

And at the same time the Almighty Covenant God defeats the enemies of His people and provides for them a refuge and shelter, He will make in His Zion a feast of choicest food and most refined drink. He will destroy all that obscures and hinders all men from coming to this feast. He will swallow up death forever and remove the fear and hurt that death has brought upon His faithful ones. He will wipe away all tears from the faces of those who trust Him. He will take away forever all the reproach of their sin. It is as certain as the

person of Jehovah Himself. In that day, people from all nations will proclaim, This now is our God, in whom we trust, for whom we waited. At long last the One for whom we waited is here! He will save us! We gladly rejoice in His salvation!

## COMMENTS

V. 6 FEASTED: The prophets spoke glowingly of the coming Messianic age as an age of feasting and rejoicing for the covenant people of God (cf. Isa. 55:2; 61:1-7; Jer. 3:15-18; Ezek. 34:20-24; Zech. 8:14-23). It is apparent that all the feasts of the Mosaic dispensation were "shadows" of the good things to come (Heb. 10:1ff) and were to be fulfilled in the Messiah and His kingdom. Jesus likened the kingdom of God (the church) unto a time of great feasting (cf. Lk. 14:1ff, and Mt. 22:1-14; 25:1-13). Jesus spoke of men eating His flesh and drinking His blood as the Manna that came down out of heaven (cf. Jn. 6:63). The epistles liken the whole Christian life unto a feast (cf. I Cor. 5:6-8; 10:1-5). The present Christian experience to be consummated in the next life in heaven is symbolized as the "marriage supper of the Lamb" to which all who will accept are invited (Rev. 19:6-10). This passage is definitely Messianic and fulfilled in the establishment of the church — to be consummated at Christ's second coming. The Hebrew word for *fat things* here is *shemoneem*. It is used in Gen. 27:28 to speak of the "fatness" of the land. It is a word meaning "richness, delicacy, superabundance, etc." The Hebrew word for *lees* is *shemoreem* which means "settled, preserved, etc." In other words, God is going to provide the richest and choicest in abundance. The Hebrew language in this sentence uses the prefix *lecol* to the word *haameem* to emphasize that this feast is to be for *all the peoples*. In other words, the feast is to be for the Gentiles as well as the Jews — just as Jesus taught in His parables (Mt. 22:1-14; Lk. 14:1-24). The "mountain" is, of course, Zion, but as we have already seen symbolizes the N.T. church (cf. our comments on Isa.

2:1-4, etc.).

v. 7-8 FREED: Two different Hebrew words are used here to denote the coverings. One word, *loat*, means concealment; the other word, *mosokh*, translated veil, means curtain and is used to denote the curtain in the tabernacle. Two Hebrew words are used to denote peoples — *haameem* and, the more specific, *goyeem*, which specifies Gentiles. The covering and veil that is to be removed probably has reference to full and final revelation of God's redemptive program in Christ and the church (cf. II Cor. 3:12-18; Eph. 1:3-10; 2:11-22; Col. 1:24-29, etc.). Those who wish and who "come to Zion" (the church) and acknowledge and worship the true God will have the "curtain" removed that stands between them and knowing, serving and fellowshiping the Holy God. The "curtain" that kept man from the Holy presence of Jehovah was man's guilt for his sin, his fear of death (cf. Heb. 2:14-18) and the incomprehension of his tribulations. Christ accomplished the removing of that "curtain" by His death and resurrection, and now all men have access to the presence of God "through a new and living way which He opened for us through His flesh" (cf. Heb. 10:19-20). There must be some symbolic significance to the rending of the veil in the temple from top to bottom at the crucifixion of Christ (Mt. 27:51; Mk. 15:38; Lk. 23:45) in connection with this Messianic prophecy in Isaiah.

The Old Testament definitely teaches a future life after death. There are actual cases of resurrections from death in the O.T. (cf. I Kgs. 17:22; II Kgs. 4:35; 13:21). There are cases of translation where the individual did not die but was translated by God (Gen. 5:22-24; II Kgs. 2:11). Samuel reappeared after his death and talked with King Saul (I Sam. 28:12-19). David expressed faith in a future life at the death of his infant son (II Sam. 12:15-23). There are other passages too (Isa. 14:9; 26:19; 53:10-12; 65:20; 66:24; Hosea 13:14; Dan. 12:2). But this passage in Isaiah 25:8 is perhaps the most concise and significant statement in all the O.T. concerning life after death.

All cause for sorrow and frustration will have been removed;

therefore, the tender Father will wipe away all tears from the eyes of His children. A parallel promise in the New Testament is found in Rev. 21:1-4. While we are in this world we shall have tribulation, but we may be of good cheer for the Lord has overcome the world. We too, may overcome the world by our faith in Him. We are persuaded that "this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison . . ." (II Cor. 4:17).

v. 9 FELLOWSHIPING: In *the* day when Jehovah makes His "feast" for all peoples, in *the* day when He removes the "curtain" from between Himself and *all* nations and in *the* day when He swallows up death forever, those who have waited in eager faith will enter into a participation of the salvation He has provided. This passage reminds us of the prophecy of John the Baptist's father of the coming Messiah (Lk. 1:67-79) and of Simeon's prophetic prayer (Lk. 2:29-35). Much of the sin-stricken world was searching for fellowship with *The* Divine Being. They had even built altars to the "Unknown God" (Acts 17:23). When the Unknown God became Known, when the Word became flesh and dwelt among men and accomplished His redemptive work and was proclaimed throughout the known world by the apostles, thousands and thousands of men of every tribe and tongue said, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him. . . ." Men are still waiting for Him in places far away and near. He has made Himself knowable and available. But He has sovereignly chosen (Rom. 9-10-11) to become knowable and available through a response of faith to the preached Word (cf. Rom. 10:14-17). If every man is to have the opportunity to "be glad and rejoice in his salvation," then those who know the Word must preach it to every man.

## QUIZ

1. What does the N.T. tell us about interpreting God's "feast of fat things"?
2. What is the "covering" or "veil" that is spread over all



nations?

3. How is that covering removed?
4. What does the O.T. say about the future life after death?
5. How do we know the world was waiting for God?
6. How are men who wait for God to be brought into fellowship with Him?

### 3. JUBILATION FOR JEHOVAH'S PREDOMINANCE

TEXT: 25:10-12

- 10 For in this mountain will the hand of Jehovah rest; and Moab shall be trodden down in his place, even as straw is trodden down in the water of the dunghill.
- 11 And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst thereof, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim; but Jehovah will lay low his pride together with the craft of his hands.
- 12 And the high fortress of thy walls hath he brought down, laid low, and brought to the ground, even to the dust.

### QUERIES

- a. Why single out Moab for judgment by Jehovah?
- b. Why is Moab depicted as "swimming"?

### PARAPHRASE

Yes, in Mount Zion the victorious, festive presence of God will be residing. But all His enemies, like Moab, will be crushed and cast down in their own filth like straw is cast out and kicked into the miry dungpit. Jehovah's enemy, Moab, will make great effort to save herself; like a swimmer to keep from drowning spreads her arms and makes frantic effort to save herself. However, Jehovah will make a mockery of Moab's

pride by humiliating her and foiling all her crafty plots to save herself. Yes, Moab, your walls, high and fortified, will be thrown down, completely laid low, scattered over the earth and ground into dust.

### COMMENTS

**v. 10 STAGGERED:** "This mountain" has as its antecedent Zion. The tender hand of God will rest in mercy upon Zion, wiping away every tear. But, and the contrast is the point, the hand of God's judgment will rest upon Mount Moab. Those in covenant relationship with Jehovah will be protected, sustained and feted. Those not in covenant with Him will be defeated. Moab had a long history of opposition to Jehovah's sovereignty (cf. our comments on Isaiah chapters 15 & 16, Vol. I). Moab probably represents all the enemies of Jehovah's covenant people. God will use secondary agents to bring about Moab's downfall — Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans will successively conquer and ravage the mountains and valleys east of the Jordan river. It will become a desolate, deprived and despised area — a haunt of jackals and other wild animals. It will be crushed and cast off like barnyard straw pitched into the dung pit. There it will be trodden under foot.

**v. 11 STRUGGLING:** Moab, in the midst of its own desolation and despicability, will make frantic effort to save itself. Like a swimmer in danger of drowning, Moab will call upon every device and crafty plot it knows to save itself. But none of it will avail, for Jehovah is omnipotent. This is the point — the contrast between the high and exalted joy of Zion in its festive victory and the utter degradation and defeat of Moab.

**v. 12 STRUCK DOWN:** Moab was as proud as Edom of her fortifications. There, east of the Jordan, in the high cliffs and mountains of that region they built their walled cities. Military strategy has always been and always will be in troop-warfare, to occupy the "high ground." Ancient cities and villages invariably sought hills and rises in the terrain upon which to

## COME TO THE FEAST . . . R. S. V. P.

build. But Moab's arrogance and threatening need not be feared by God's elect for He will bring their enemies down to the dust of the earth. And so it has been through the ages. The faithful Covenant-God has protected and sustained and fed His kingdom upon the earth and it is alive and flourishing today. In contrast, those enemies who have threatened and warred against God's kingdom have come and gone and dissolved into dust, one after another. So shall it ever be.

### QUIZ

1. Which "mountain" is referred to in v. 10?
2. What is the point of this passage in connection with the rest of ch. 25?
3. How will Jehovah accomplish the demise of Moab?

### SPECIAL STUDY

## COME TO THE FEAST . . . R.S.V.P.

Enjoyment of God's provision is limited  
only to the invited guest's response

by Paul T. Butler

"You are cordially invited . . ." or, "The honor of your presence is requested. . . ." This is the way an invitation to a special festal occasion usually starts. It may conclude with "R.S.V.P." *Repondez, s'il vous plait* (French for "Please reply").

"Come to the feast!" has been the invitation of man to man since time began. There is no better opportunity for men to integrate their personalities, show their regard for one another, and help one another than at the festal table. Man has also

learned to use the word "feast" in a figurative way to express the joyful experience he knows when he has nurtured his soul on something aesthetic or spiritual.

God, the omniscient Father, fully aware of man's frame of experience, sent His messengers in times past inviting men, "Come to my feast!" The amazing fact is, millions have rejected His invitation and most of those few who accept the invitation somehow miss the festivities.

### The Christian life a feast

God ordained the physical feasts of the Jews for a purpose deeper than mere satisfaction of the flesh or of national pride. Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, and all the lesser festivities provided by the law pointed to a time of profound spiritual feasting when the Messiah was to come with His kingdom.

The prophets spoke figuratively and glowingly of the festal nature of the coming kingdom (Christian dispensation).

And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined (Isaiah 25:6).

Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness (Isaiah 55:2).

The Jewish nation, with the exception of a small remnant, misunderstood their own prophets and the typical nature of their own law. They were looking for a literal fulfillment of the types and prophecies. It was their desire that God should give them literal feasts, literal peace, literal prosperity, and a literal king.

Then Jesus came! He took up the figurative way of the prophets in speaking of the coming kingdom. He taught in parables that the kingdom-time would be a time of feasting. He intended that the people should anticipate a spiritual feast, but

again most would not receive His words, for they looked for a literal fulfillment as their fathers had before them.

In Luke 14:1ff Jesus gives one of His longest dissertations on this subject. He had been invited to a Pharisee's home to dine. While there He healed a man of dropsy. And as He observed men wrangling and striving over seats of honor at the Pharisee's table, He taught that humility marked the proper decorum for dining. He also attacked the social injustices against the poor.

The miraculous healing; the talk of honored seats; the attack upon social injustices; all caused one of the Pharisee's guests to jump up excitedly and cry, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."

This guest was sure the Prophet of Nazareth was giving instructions in protocol for the soon-to-be-established kingdom of the Messiah in Jerusalem, and he was overcome with the anticipation of it all. So Jesus took this occasion to teach that the call to the kingdom of God was a call to a great feast, but those who were first bidden refused to come. Others, out in the highways and hedges, were "constrained" to come. Those who were first bidden and refused shall not taste of His supper.

On several other occasions Jesus spoke of the kingdom in the figure of a feast (compare Matthew 22:1-14; 25:1-13).

Jesus spoke also of men eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and said that He was the manna come down out of heaven. In this He referred, of course, to men assimilating His word into their hearts and minds (compare John 6:63). He spoke of men drinking from the effervescent water of life, meaning the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (compare John 7:37-39).

The epistles testify to the festal nature of the Christian life. In I Corinthians 5:6-8 we are exhorted to keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Paul did not mean to limit "the feast" to the Lord's Supper. In I Corinthians 10:1-5 Christians are told that they eat and drink the same spiritual food the Israelites shared in the wilderness.

## Our spiritual feast

Now feasts are to be joyfully festive. Yet some Christians live the Christian life as if they were being force-fed some bitter medicinal compound. Christianity for them is a diet of unpalatable rules and regulations—of “dos and don’ts.” This is because some Christians, like the Jews of Jesus’ day, still have a materialistic concept of Christianity. That is, unless their Christianity affords some worldly joy, worldly fame, or worldly satisfaction, they “all with one consent begin to make excuse.” But, as Paul says, the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit (compare Romans 14:17). Or, as Jesus put it, man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from God (compare Matthew 4:4).

When we become Christians we “have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come” (Hebrews 6:1ff). We join with angels in festal array when we come to Zion (the church) (Hebrews 12:22, 23). Paul said he fed the Corinthians on the milk of the word (I Corinthians 3:2) and the book of Hebrews speaks of the word in the same way (Hebrews 5:12-14). Peter writes, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (I Peter 2:2, 3). Paul wrote, men should not become drunk with wine, but they should be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). Jesus is the living water, and none shall ever hunger or thirst if they come to Him (John 4:13, 14). For, “blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).

Studying and receiving the word is not all there is to the “feast.” Jesus tells us, “My meat (food) is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (John 4:34). We must not only contemplate the festive table of Christianity, we must become participants. We shall never taste nor be filled until we partake.

## R.S.V.P.

There are at least three reactions to Christ's invitation to the sumptuous Christian feast.

Some refuse to come at all. Most of these seem to feel they have more satisfying things to do. Some think to satisfy their souls with power and the temporal security. Others think they may satisfy their souls with pleasures of the flesh. Still others seek to satisfy their souls with the vain glory of fame and pride. Little do they know that they are starving to death spiritually while feeding on "husks." Isaiah in a Messianic context said, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed" (Isaiah 65:13).

Why do people spend their money (life's energies and soul's desires) for that which does not satisfy? Some discover—and most of them too late—that the bread of rebellion and worldliness does not satisfy the soul. Christ said that everyone who drinks of the water that is temporal will thirst again. Sooner or later the worldling finds that surfeiting himself on worldliness and sin has left only the taste of wormwood and bitterness in his heart. Jeremiah wrote, "I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall."

A second kind of response to the invitation is made by those who come to the feast but partake only of the rudimentary things. These are the Christians who stay on the same diet week after week. Rich fare is spread before their hearts and minds but they are so lazy they wish only to partake of that which is "spoon-fed" to them. They never know the thrill in going on to new heights of spiritual knowledge and experience. They never grow. They are satisfied to remain on their milk diet, never to partake of the meat of the word. For this reason many become spiritually weak and sickly, and some actually die a spiritual death (compare I Corinthians 11:27-32). They will never mature into full-grown men in Christ (compare Ephesians 4:11-16). It is not a lack of available food that causes

so much sickness and trouble in the Christian "body" (the church). It is rather the laziness of the "body" to partake. Finally, there are those who come and are eager to partake of every rich dish set before them in this heavenly feast. Here is one place where a person can never eat too much! Before him are such tasty dishes as the joy of salvation; the peace and security found in Christ; the thrill of soul winning; the challenge of having a wisdom and knowledge which transcends the vastness of the universe or even our own thoughts; the satisfaction of having an eternal purpose; the eagerness of hope in sharing a future glory with Christ; the boldness we have in Christ our high priest; the anticipation of a heavenly inheritance; being in partnership with God—a colaborer in His eternal scheme of redemption; and comradeship with the redeemed both in heaven and on earth. These are just a few of the satisfying, rich dishes in the Christian feast. The table is prepared before you, there is heavenly bread and living water; there is fruit from the tree of life and the fruit of the Spirit. All things are ready, come to the feast!

If your Christian life is lacking in joy and festive spirit, it is not God's fault. His table is bountiful and you are an invited, honored guest.

Perhaps in the past you have been pushing away His bountiful provision and have been eating at the devil's table. Have you found that the devil's table is filled with ashes and bread of mourning—with husks and pigs' food? If you are a prodigal son, you need to return to the Father's table. You need to "come home" rededicated, reconsecrated, ready to hear the Father as He commands to bring forth the robe, the ring, and the shoes, and to kill the fatted calf so that we may feast together.

Perhaps you have been sitting too lazily at the table and need to rouse yourself from your milk diet and partake of the rich satisfying, strengthening food that is there.

It may be that you have never accepted the King's invitation to come to His feast at all. Would you refuse an invitation to dine with the President at the White House? I tell you a greater



than the President has sent you a special invitation. The invitation of King Jesus is not to a select few. The invitation is printed, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."

The only requirement is that you put on the festive garment. In the parable Jesus told (Mt. 22) one was found at the king's feast without the proper garment and he was banished from the feast. But thanks be to God, our King has provided not only the feast but also the white robe to wear. You may put on this garment by faith and obedience to Christ, for it is through faith and obedience that we are "united with His death," and there have our robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

All things are ready, come to the feast! R.S.V.P.!

## C. JUSTICE AT LAST FOR JUDAH, CHAPTER 26

### 1. JUSTICE'S ORIGIN

TEXT: 26:1-6

- 1 In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah:  
We have a strong city; salvation will he appoint for wells  
and bulwarks.
- 2 Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth  
faith may enter in.
- 3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed  
on thee; because he trusteth in thee.
- 4 Trust ye in Jehovah forever; for in Jehovah, even Jehovah,  
is an everlasting rock.
- 5 For he hath brought down them that dwell on high, the  
lofty city; he layeth it low, he layeth it low even to the ground;  
he bringeth it even to the dust.
- 6 The foot shall tread it down; even the feet of the poor, and  
the steps of the needy.

## QUERIES

- a. What "day" is referred to in verse 1?
- b. What two cities are contrasted (v. 1 and v. 5)?

## PARAPHRASE

In that day when Jehovah makes a feast and removes the covering spread over all nations and swallows up death forever, this jubilant song of praise to Jehovah will be sung by Jehovah's people: Zion, our everlasting city, is strong; her strength is in the salvation He has made. Those of you in the city already, open the gates that all who are righteous and those who keep faith may enter in. Thou, O Jehovah, will keep in complete peace the man who bases his thinking on Thy will, because such a man has put all his reliance on Thee. Rely totally and eternally on Jehovah; for it is the Covenant-God, Jehovah, who is exclusively the eternal rock-of-hiding. He humbles the proud and brings the haughty, antagonistic world of opposition down to dust and oblivion. The poor and lowly, once scoffed at by the world and the lofty city, will walk on the ruins of the enemies of God.

## COMMENTS

v. 1-2 **STRONG CITY:** "That day" has as its antecedent the day of 25:9. On the day when God makes a feast for all nations, removes the covering from all nations, swallows up death forever, and when those who waited on Him rejoice in His salvation—they will sing this song! The "land of Judah" then must be symbolic of the covenant people of God, the church, in the Messianic age. The "new Zion," the "Jerusalem that is preeminent," (cf. Heb. 12:22-24; Gal. 4:26-27), the Church, will be God's city of divine strength and power. Her strength and power will be in the divine salvation God





and walk across the rubble-heaps of the once haughty enemies of God. A remnant of faithful ones endured the Babylonian captivity and walked upon the ruins of once proud, powerful, pagan Babylon. Christians today may go to Rome and walk among the ruins of the once cruel, calculating, Roman empire which vowed to exterminate Christianity from the face of the earth.

So the contrast in this section is between the "city of God" which we take to be the righteous, faithful covenant-keeping people of God, especially those of that day when God makes them a feast, removes their veil and swallows up death forever—the church—and the "high and lofty city" representing all that is Satanic and human and stands in opposition to the redemptive purposes of God. Justice, salvation and peace will come to the remnant in the new order to be brought by the Messiah. When it comes, the messianic people will sing about it.

### QUIZ

1. What does the "land of Judah" probably symbolize considering the context in which it is used?
2. What makes the "city" "strong"?
3. What character is possessed by those invited to enter the city?
4. Where does "perfect peace" originate?
5. How are we to get "perfect peace"?
6. Why use "rock" as a figure to represent God?
7. What is meant by the "poor" treading down the high and lofty city?

## 2. JUSTICE'S OBJECTIVE

TEXT: 26:7-15

- 7 The way of the just is uprightness: thou that art upright dost direct the path of the just.
- 8 Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Jehovah, have we waited for thee; to thy name, even to thy memorial name, is the desire of our soul.
- 9 With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee earnestly: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.
- 10 Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal wrongfully, and will not behold the majesty of Jehovah.
- 11 Jehovah, thy hand is lifted up, yet they see not: but they shall see thy zeal for the people, and be put to shame; yea, fire shall devour thine adversaries.
- 12 Jehovah, thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou hast also wrought all our works for us.
- 13 O Jehovah our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.
- 14 They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all remembrance of them to perish.
- 15 Thou hast increased the nation, O Jehovah, thou hast increased the nation; thou art glorified; thou hast enlarged all the borders of the land.

## QUERIES

- a. What is the "memorial name" of Jehovah?
- b. How has Jehovah wrought all their works for them?
- c. Who are the "other lords" v. 13?

## PARAPHRASE

The way of the righteous is straight and smooth because the Righteous Jehovah smooths the righteous man's way. Indeed, in Your divine judgments have we waited hopefully to see You. To see Your name glorified in judgment upon Your enemies, as in ages past, is the earnest desire of our soul. With my soul I have longed for You in the night. Indeed, in the depths of my being I am earnestly seeking You because when Your judgments descend upon the earth the world learns what is right. When Your goodness is enjoyed by the wicked man he does not learn to do right—he only keeps on doing wickedness because he does not become aware of the omnipotence of Jehovah. Although You have raised Your hand threatening them, they refused to give heed. Show them Your zealous protection for Your covenant people and they will be humiliated. Indeed, Jehovah, let them be consumed by the fire You reserve for Your enemies. Jehovah, You will establish peace for us. You alone are the source of everything good that has ever come to us. Jehovah, You alone are our God. Other lords we have allowed to have dominion over us, but we acknowledge only Your name as sovereign. Those other lords we served before are dead and shall not come again because they are like the deceased. You came against them and destroyed them, causing us to forget them completely. You have made our nation great, O Jehovah. You, indeed, have made our nation great! You receive the glory for it! You extended the borders of our land by Your judgments!

## COMMENTS

v. 7-10 GOVERN: The first objective of Jehovah's justice is to govern His creation. He governs the earth and mankind through His providential and revelational manifestations of justice. This passage very evidently relates to all that has been said thus far in chapters 24, 25, and 26. Jehovah is

going to bring in a new order (the Messianic order) by judging the old order and establishing justice which was so glaringly absent from the covenant people in Isaiah's day. God will reign in justice in His new order, and citizens of His new order will be men of justice. All this will redound to His glory.

The true Israelite will be a man of righteousness and justice. He will long for God's justice to be manifested because that will be his way of life. Changing men into just men is the purpose of God's just judgments. So, God makes the believer's way *upright* (Hebrew, *meysheem*, meaning; *even, level, smooth*). God's justice works for the good of the believer and makes him the kind of man God can govern in God's new-order-kingdom.

In ages past God showed Himself to be just and the justifier of him who believes. He punished rebels and delivered believers. That was the very essence of His character. He always acted faithfully, consistently and as He said He would, He established a *memorial* name (reputation) of absolute justice. Memorial is the Hebrew word *zekreka*. It is translated simply *name* in Ex. 3:15; Psalms 30:4; 135:13; Hosea 12:5. It is the same Hebrew word from which the name *Zechariah* ("whom the Lord remembers") comes. The true man of God desires with all his heart to see the God of justice act justly in the affairs of men, not for some selfish end but that all men might learn righteousness and justice.

The true man of God must have a deep and abiding desire to see justice done in order that men might learn righteousness. The true man of God cannot condone lawlessness and injustice in the name of indulgent mercy. Of course, every man of God must learn to be merciful, but he must also learn that justice is often the most merciful thing that can happen to a lawless man. The collapse of justice and punishment for evil was precisely the major cause of the downfall of the Hebrew people in the days of the divided kingdom! (Read Amos, Hosea, Micah and Isaiah.) The man who does not eagerly and passionately search for truth, honesty, justice and fairness is not the kind of man God calls into His kingdom.



So, you see, this entire context is related to the new order that is being prophesied, (cf. Rev. 6:9-11; 15:2-4; 16:4-7; 19:1-3). God's saints praise Him for His justice and judgment.

If the Lord resorted only to kind treatment of the wicked, indulging them in their self-destructive rebellion, such men would never learn righteousness. Severity and punishment is often times the only warning some men will heed. Even then, some will never repent (cf. Rev. 9:20-21; 16:9, 11). Pampering and indulging wicked men will only intensify their appetite for wickedness, (cf. Hosea 4:1-3; 4:12; 5:3-4; 7:1-7; 10:3-4, etc.).

The greatest manifestation of God's hatred for sin and the divine extent to which he would go to judge sin and accomplish divine justice is when He punished man's sin in His Sinless Son. At the cross God was both "just and the justifier of Him who believes" in Christ (cf. Rom. 3:21-26). That tremendous revelation of God's judgment and justice should "draw all men to Him," to be governed by Him as He rules their hearts.

v. 11-15 GLORIFY: The second important objective of God's judgments is to glorify His name. *To exalt the name of Jehovah is the most fundamental need of man!* If the name of Jehovah is not supreme, nothing is safe! If God's integrity and faithfulness can be successfully impugned, man is lost! So, all of God's actions are "for the sake of His name" (cf. Ezek. 20:9, 14, 22, 44, etc.). All that man holds to be true, real, valuable, right or wrong, good or bad, depends upon the integrity of God and His Word. If God is not Absolute, everything is false! God's most factual, arresting method of proving His Absoluteness is in His just judgments.

So, the true man of God prays for God's justice to be done. The true man of God waits upon the Lord to carry out His judgments in His own time and in His own way (cf. Rom. 12:14-21). And the true man of God does all within his own power to support God's ordained structures of human government through which God executes some of His judgments (cf. Rom. 13:1-10).

God's zealous deliverances of His people and His judgments

upon His enemies so glorify His name His people are moved to praise His name over and over.

God's people praise Him expressing their absolute faith in Him to establish peace for them. They willingly confess that He has "worked all their works for them." They, like David, realize that even their offerings to God came from Him (cf. I Chron. 29:10-19). All the good that any man has done is possible only as that man allows God to work in him and through him.

Verse 13 is interesting because it contains the three major Hebrew names for God: *Yaweh*, *Elohim*, *Adonai*. In this verse *Yaweh* and *Elohim* denote God while *Adonai* denotes "other lords." *Adonai* is parallel to the Greek word *kurios* (lord). Whether the "other lords" are human masters or idol-gods is uncertain. The Israelites allowed both human masters and idols to have dominion over them. When Jehovah has demonstrated once and for all His sovereign majesty in divine judgment and justice, and when He has brought in His new order men will never again call idols or human masters "lord." While the church is in the world it will, of course, be subject to every human ordinance (not disobedient to God) for the Lord's sake. But no human or idol will be called "Father" by a citizen of God's new-order-kingdom.

God purged Israel of its idolatry once and for all through the Babylonian captivity. Israel, so enamored of idolatry during the time of the divided kingdom, was cast into a veritable sea of paganism and idolatry in Babylon and Persia. There they saw the cruelty and corruption that idolatry results in, and they cried out for deliverance. God erased every desire for idolatry from the true heart of the man of God. All over the world in this age when the gospel is preached and men love Christ and obey Him they throw away their false gods. The gospel has power to cast down "strongholds and every imagination that exalts itself against God and to bring every thought into captivity to Christ" (II Cor. 10:3-5).

God took a comparatively small and disorganized mass of nomadic slaves known as Hebrews, delivered them from the

world-powerful hand of the Egyptian emperor, established a "beachhead" for them in the land of the Canaanites, and enlarged them numerically and geographically at the very center of world commerce and politics until their influence was felt all over the world. Miracles and providence were so evident in all this, the true believer had to acknowledge God's working as the source of it all.

The establishment of God's new-order-kingdom, the church, is even more spectacular and demonstrably divine in origin. One despised Galilean took twelve assorted fishermen and tax-collectors plus a tent-maker and conquered men from every tribe and tongue and nation on the earth.

In the days of Samuel, the people of God cried out for "a king like the nations." Many "lords" came and went, exercising dominion over God's people. For the most part, they led God's people into idolatry and captivity. Through it all the Lord, Jehovah, was seeking to bring His people back to His own dominion over them. After long centuries of "troublesome times" (cf. Dan. 9:24-27, our comments in *Daniel*, by Paul T. Butler, College Press), God came to earth incarnate in human flesh, in His Son, and re-established His rule and His kingdom among men. So, now, God has "increased the nation" and "enlarged all the borders of the land" to include all who have and all who will believe Jesus and obey His commandments. And it all redounds to His glory!

### QUIZ

1. What is the first purpose of God's judgments?
2. How does this work for the smoothing of the righteous man's way?
3. Why should the true man of God earnestly desire God to judge in justice?
4. Where is the apex of God's justice and judgment shown?
5. How does God work all man's works for him?
6. How may the release from idolatry and the increasing of the nation have a fulfillment today?

## 3. JUSTICE'S OPERATION

TEXT: 26:16-21

- 16 Jehovah, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.
- 17 Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been before thee, O Jehovah.
- 18 We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.
- 19 Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead.
- 20 Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.
- 21 For, behold, Jehovah cometh forth out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

## QUERIES

- a. Why were God's people in such agony? v. 16-18
- b. What "dead" are going to be made to live?

## PARAPHRASE

O Jehovah, during their distress and oppression, your faithful remnant visited You, pouring out their hearts in prayer when your correcting discipline was upon them. As a pregnant woman writhes and cries out in her pain as her time to deliver draws near, so were we when we came to You, O Lord, in our

prayers for deliverance. We too were in labor; we writhed in pain, but we brought forth wind—nothing! No deliverance has come from all our pain; no inhabitants of the earth have come to birth through our agony. But, O remnant, those who account themselves dead and cast off will live—they will rise again from oblivion. Those who dwell in dust shall awake and sing, for God's light of life will fall like refreshing dew upon them. Come, my remnant, enter your rooms and shut your doors behind you. Hide yourselves for a little while until the anger of God is satisfied in the captivities. The Lord is going to come down from his place in heaven to punish your captors and those who oppose you because of their rebellions. The earth cannot hide their guilt—their murderous deeds will be revealed—and all those they have slain will be accounted for.

### COMMENTS

v. 16-18 JUSTICE IS SLOW: *Batsar* is the Hebrew for *in trouble* and primarily means to *bind up, distressed, oppressed*. In verse 16 also is the Hebrew word *musareka*, translated *chastening*, which literally means, *correction* or *discipline*. We conclude then that verse 16 is speaking of the corrective discipline by which the Lord had oppressed the Israelites in the past and would afflict them with in the future (the Babylonian captivity). This latter affliction is apparent when one compares the term "indignation" in Isa. 26:20 with Daniel 8:19, 11:36, which we shall do later.

These verses represent the prayers of the faithful remnant, in all its history, making known its frustration of looking for justice and deliverance in the midst of its trials and unable to deliver itself. The remnant is driven to hope in God's justice. God's justice seems to walk with leaden feet (cf. Hab. 1:1-4; Isa. 59:14; Ezek. 9:9; Rev. 6:9-11). So the saints of God cry out, but God is trying them, purging them, building endurance and character, if they will believe

and hold fast their hope.

Like a pregnant woman, Israel had endured pain, much anxiety and now, trouble like a woman in the pangs of labor was upon Israel, and she had produced nothing. She knew from her prophets and patriarchs she was to bring to birth a new order, but now all she has is pain and in her anxiety she cries out again. Facing the captivity of the northern kingdom (Israel) and the disintegration of the southern kingdom (Judah) and its inevitable captivity, the faithful remnant (Isaiah, their spokesman) was gripped with frustration and anxiety about its Messianic destiny through which it was to bring deliverance to mankind.

Verse 18 contains the Hebrew word *naphal* which means *birth*, or as Leupold says, "is used of beasts *dropping* their young in birth." A better translation of the phrase, "... neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen" would be, "... no inhabitants of the world came to birth through us." This is better word usage and contextual harmony. The remnant's agonized concern was that God's covenant people had experienced nothing but pain and sorrow when their destiny was to produce a Messianic new-world-order. Thus far they had given birth to nothing at all!

v. 19-21 JUSTICE IS SURE: But the answer from God through His prophet is, slow as His justice may seem, absolutely and divinely certain. What they think is dead shall live. God's remnant is a living kingdom, not a dead one. There is some disagreement as to whether verse 19 refers to personal, individual, physical resurrection from the dead or to a resurrection of the redemptive program of God through the deliverance of the covenant people from the captivities and its subsequent Messianic fulfillment. We tend to accept the latter view. We feel it fits the context more clearly, and such figure is used elsewhere (cf. Hosea 6:1-3; Ezekiel chapter 37; and see our comments, *Daniel*, College Press, Dan. 12:1ff). Those who dwell in the dust of death (in captivity) shall awake and sing. English translators translated the Hebrew *'oroth* as *herbs*, but it would better be, *light*. Thus we have paraphrased

it: “. . . for God's *light* of life will fall like refreshing dew upon them.” See Hosea 14:4-7 for the life-giving refreshment of dew.

It is specifically God's people, the remnant, who are promised more than warned to hide themselves for a little while until the “indignation” is past. God *invites* them, Come, enter into thy chambers. He will protect them during the indignation. The Hebrew word used here for indignation is *zaam* and is the same word used in Daniel 8:19; 11:36; and also Dan. 11:30 where it is translated “enraged” (RSV). See our comments on Daniel 8:19, *Daniel*, College Press, pg. 313. The time of the *indignation* is the same as the “troublous time” of Daniel 9:24-27—the time for God's accomplishing through the Jewish nation all that He is going to accomplish which will come to a culmination at the birth and death of the Messiah. In other words, the faithful remnant is going to have to endure a time of indignation/trouble from the time of the Babylonian captivities, through Persian domination, Greek domination, Seleucid domination, Roman domination until Christ is born. At His birth comes the long sought for deliverance (cf. Lk. 1:67-79; 2:25-38). At His birth comes the “resurrection” of the remnant's Messianic destiny—its very life. The indignation, though it will last some 600 years, is only a “little while” with God. All during that time God is chastening, delivering, preparing them to become a people through which He can bring to birth His new order, His new covenant, the church.

God is going to do it. The guilty world cannot hide itself or its guilt. It cannot forego Jehovah's deliverance of the remnant. God's word is sure!

## QUIZ

1. What kind of trouble were these people suffering?
2. How intense was their trouble?
3. Why were they perturbed that they “had brought forth

nothing”?

4. What did they expect to “bring forth”?
5. How will the “dead” live?
6. What is the “indignation”?
7. What is the message about God’s justice here?

## D. JOINING OF JUDAH AND GENTILES, CHAPTER 27

### 1. JOINED BY DIVINE PROTECTION

TEXT: 27:1-6

- 1 In that day Jehovah with this hard and great and strong sword will punish leviathan the swift serpent, and leviathan the crooked serpent; and he will slay the monster that is in the sea.
- 2 In that day: A vineyard of wine, sing ye unto it.
- 3 I Jehovah am its keeper; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.
- 4 Wrath is not in me: would that the briers and thorns were against me in battle! I would march upon them, I would burn them together.
- 5 Or else let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; yea, let him make peace with me.
- 6 In days to come shall Jacob take root; Israel shall blossom and bud; and they shall fill the face of the world with fruit.

### QUERIES

- a. What is a “leviathan”?
- b. Who is to “take hold of” Jehovah’s “strength”?



## PARAPHRASE

In that day when Jehovah makes a feast and removes the covering spread over all nations and swallows up death forever, He will take His hard, great and strong sword and will bring judgment upon the monster, the swift, serpent-like one and upon the monster, the winding, serpent-like one. He will slay the monster that is in the sea. In that specific day, the Lord will have a delightful vineyard. O sing of it! I, Jehovah, am its Sustainer. My concern for it is constant and I will refresh it and protect it every day against those who would harm it. I, the Lord, harbor no spiteful resentment against My remnant. If enemies, like thorns and briers, stubbornly set themselves against My remnant, I will come upon them and destroy them. However, if these enemies cast themselves upon My mercy and make effort to come to terms of peace with Me and Mine, then they shall have My strength. Indeed, I invite all My enemies to make peace with Me and Mine. The day is coming when the true Israel of God will be established and it will certainly prosper. This true Israel of God will fill the earth with its offspring.

## COMMENTS

v. 1 MONSTER DEFEATED: Two Hebrew words in this verse may be translated *monster*; they are *liveyathan* and *thaniyn*. *Liveyathan* is translated *crocodile* in Job 40:25 (RSV) and *thaniyn* is translated *serpent* in most uses. In Ezek. 29:3; 32:2, *thaniyn* is translated *dragon*, referring to Egypt. Some commentators have concluded that the first leviathan, since it is swift, symbolizes Nineveh (Assyria) built upon the swift, serpent-like Tigris River, while the second, winding, crooked, leviathan symbolizes Babylon built upon the winding, serpent-like Euphrates River, and the monster that is in the sea symbolizes Egypt.

It is evident from the context (chapters 24-27) the prophet

is speaking of *that day* of the Messianic fulfillment (the first coming of Christ and the establishment of the church). Then what is the leviathan to be punished or slain? Obviously it refers to all the enemies of God and His people who were defeated at the first coming of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:8; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14-15; I Jn. 3:8; Jn. 12:31; 16:11; Mt. 12:29; Lk. 10:18, etc.) In the book of Revelation the Roman empire is referred to as the beast, false prophet and harlot, who is allied with Satan (called the great dragon). (cf. Rev. 13 through 20) But the beast, false prophet, and harlot are defeated and cast into the lake of fire. The dragon (Satan) is bound for a thousand years, then loosed for a short time and finally cast into the lake of fire forever with the beast. Daniel chapters 7 and 8 refer to the enemies of God as various beasts. Wherever the spirit of opposition to God has appeared, in whatever kingdom it may be, Satan is the author of it. He is the motivating spirit in all the forces that oppose God's rule in the universe. Perhaps in one area he assumes one characteristic, while in another he assumes still another characteristic. In Isaiah's day great world empires (Assyria, Babylon and Egypt) were the leviathans standing opposed to God's rule in creation (cf. Ezek. 29:3; 32:2; Jer. 51:34; Isa. 51:9; with Dan. ch. 7 & 8). The leviathan's (monster, serpent, dragon) strongest and most potent weapon against God and His people is deception. Isaiah points, in this section, to *that day* when the feast will be made, the veil is removed from all nations, and death is swallowed up forever. Leviathan, with all his power to deceive and hold man in bondage to the fear of death will be "cast out, judged and triumphed over," when the Messiah brings "life and immortality to light through the gospel."

V. 2-6 MERCY DISPENSED: At the same time, on the same day, Jehovah defeats the "monster" He dispenses mercy to *all* men. God's vineyard (the covenant people) in *that day* (the church) will be producing according to His wishes. It will produce "wine" not "sour grapes" like the vineyard of Isaiah, chapter 5. Its fruitfulness and pleasantness will motivate a response of rejoicing. The Hebrew word *ahnu*

means literally, "to answer, respond to by singing." Songs of praise, honor and rejoicing for God's church are appropriate human responses for the mercy God has provided through His new covenant relationship.

Jehovah Himself is the *notsrah* (keeper) which has the connotation of *preserver*. He will refresh it constantly. He protects it constantly (cf. *Psa.* 121:4). The Lord watches over this new vineyard (the church) in such a manner that even the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. There are many enemies ready to destroy the church but not one shall succeed. God's new vineyard will be invincible. Whatever wrath Jehovah once held for His rebellious vineyard (*Isa.* 5), He does not hold for His new vineyard. God's wrath against His covenant people is removed and punished in Christ. His wrath is still abiding on those who do not believe (cf. *Jn.* 3:18, 36), but those who believe are made "branches" in the "Vine" (cf. *Jn.* 15:1-11) and God cherishes them, prunes them, they produce much fruit and have much joy. Since this vineyard is symbolic of the Messianic kingdom it is a prediction of *that* day when *all* nations (*Isa.* 26:5ff) are part of it. It is a prediction of the joining (grafting, cf. *Rom.* 11) of the Gentiles with the Hebrews.

If briars and thorns attempt to choke out the vineyard, God will step upon them and crush them, then burn them. There is the challenge of the sovereign God here to His enemies. Nothing foreign to His vineyard can enter and take His vineyard. He will protect and purify it. Destruction is inevitable to the enemies of His vineyard.

There is one alternative open to His enemies. They may "take hold of His strength." God bids His enemies take refuge in His *maozyi*, or His *fortress*, *refuge* or *stronghold*. If the enemy comes into God's fortress (the church) he does so only after he has made peace with God. The Hebrew word translated *make* is the most fundamental Hebrew word for *make*, *ashah*, and therefore indicates a significant part of the peace between man and God is action initiated by man in *making* peace with Him. That action is belief, repentance and

obedience. When an enemy of God believes, repents and obeys, he is no longer an enemy but has come into God's stronghold (the new vineyard, the new covenant, the church). The repetition of the phrase, "let him make peace with me," serves to emphasize God's merciful grace in offering the invitation to His enemies to come to peace lest they be crushed and burned like weeds (cf. *Psa.* 2:1-11; *Lk.* 3:7-9; *Jn.* 15:6, *Jer.* 12:10ff, etc.)

In days future to Isaiah, Israel will take root. How many days in the future this promise is we are left to surmise from the context. It is obviously speaking of *that* day of Isaiah 25:6, 9; 26:1; 27:1, 2, in other words, the day of the Messiah. The Messiah is to be the "shoot" and "branch" out of the stump of Jesse (cf. *Isa.* 11:1ff). The Messianic people will take root, flourish, produce fruit and fill all the earth with its fruit (cf. *Hosea* 14:4ff). In the missionary proclamation of the gospel this passage finds its fulfillment, the Israel of God (cf. *Gal.* 6:14-18).

So, as before in these chapters (24-27), we see the focus of God's purging, chastening judgments on Judah is the preparation of a remnant through which He may accomplish His Messianic redemption of all mankind. Jews and Gentiles, all enemies of God, will be given opportunity to come into His stronghold (the church) when they have made peace with Him. God's judgment on Judah in her captivity was not capricious nor malicious but loving and purposeful—God aimed it all at calling to Himself a people zealous of good works.

## QUIZ

1. What do "leviathan" and "monster" symbolize?
2. Where is God's vineyard mentioned elsewhere in the Bible?
3. When is all this going to take place?
4. Why is God's wrath no longer upon the vineyard?
5. How do God's enemies make peace with Him?
6. When is "Jacob" to take root and fill the earth with fruit?

## 2. JOINED BY DIVINE PURGING

TEXT: 27:7-13

- 7 Hath he smitten them as he smote those that smote them?  
or are they slain according to the slaughter of them that  
were slain by them?
- 8 In measure, when thou sendest them away, thou dost  
contend with them; he hath removed them with his rough  
blast in the day of the east wind.
- 9 Therefore by this shall the iniquity of Jacob be forgiven,  
and this is all the fruit of taking away his sin: that he  
maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are  
beaten in sunder, so that the Asherim and the sun-images  
shall rise no more.
- 10 For the fortified city is solitary, a habitation deserted and  
forsaken, like the wilderness: there shall the calf feed,  
and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches  
thereof.
- 11 When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken  
off; the women shall come, and set them on fire; for it  
is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made  
them will not have compassion upon them, and he that  
formed them will show them no favor.
- 12 And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah will  
beat off his fruit from the flood of the River unto the  
brook of Egypt; and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye  
children of Israel.
- 13 And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great trumpet  
shall be blown; and they shall come that were ready to  
perish in the land of Assyria, and they that were outcasts  
in the land of Egypt; and they shall worship Jehovah in  
the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

### QUERIES

- a. How does "taking them away" forgive the sin of Jacob?

- b. Why does Jehovah not have compassion on them?
- c. What is the “trumpet” that is to be blown?

### PARAPHRASE

Has Jehovah stricken His own people as severely as He has stricken their oppressors? Have His people known death as those who killed them have known it? No! He has dealt with His own people by driving them from their land and dispersing them. He has driven them by His fierce blast, it is true; like the scorching wind from the desert He has come upon them. Yet only in this purging shall the guilt of His people be removed. Only in this way can the people's forgiveness be accomplished—if they smash their pagan altars into pounded chalk, and leave no idols standing. Look at most of the fortified cities of Israel to the north; they are desolate like a deserted house and as forsaken as the desert. Calves graze there; animals make them their habitations and feeding grounds. The limbs of the trees of these cities wither, dry up and break off and women come and use them for firewood. These northern neighbors of yours are foolish, stupid and rebellious people. This is the reason their Creator cannot have pity upon them or show them His favor—they do not want it. In that day when Jehovah begins to make His feast and remove the covering spread over all nations and swallows up death forever, He will gather His chosen together one by one like hand-picked grain, selecting them from the far reaches of the world—from Mesopotamia and from Egypt. In that same day a great beckoning shall be made like a trumpet blast and those who were lost in the far reaches of the world will come and worship the Lord in Zion.

### COMMENTS

v. 7-11 CALL TO REPENTANCE: In view of *that day* (Isa. 25:6-9, etc.) and all Jehovah proposes to do with His people,

the Lord now calls Judah, through Isaiah, to repent. First the Lord reminds His people that He has dealt with them mercifully. God has not smitten His own people as He has others. It is true He has handled them roughly, but this was for their good, that they might repent. Others (like the Canaanites and Amalekites) were extinguished as a race by the sovereign permission of God working through secondary agents. But He would not allow the covenant people to suffer extinction. He purposed to bring redemption to the whole world through them. However, He cannot work through any people unless they are willing. His firm, often severe, chastening hand rested upon them and will again rest upon them in exile to bring them to repentance. The Hebrew word for *measure* is *saah* which means *a third part of an ephah*. This enforces the idea that God does not *extinguish* Judah but only carries them away into exile, purifying for Himself a remnant through which He will yet work His redemption.

Verse 9 shows that the *effect* of the exile will be the expiation of Judah's sin. The captivity was the *means* by which the nation was brought to repentance—not the grounds of their forgiveness. There was no merit in their suffering. The suffering was a means to bring them to repentance. Only when they repented and turned to God could they be forgiven. The fruit worthy of repentance in their case was to be the breaking asunder of their idols and pagan altars and grinding them into chalky obliteration.

Secondly, the Lord directs the attention of Judah to most of the now desolate and ruined cities of Israel, the northern kingdom. The Assyrians have overrun and destroyed most of Israel—only the capital Samaria is left, and it is under siege. Assyrian armies now appear headed for Judah. To refer to a future desolate Jerusalem would have little impact on Isaiah's audience. But to point to most of Israel already lying in desolate ruins where dead trees and grazing animals are the only inhabitants of its cities would serve as a graphic warning. The accusation that the "people" of these "deserted" cities are "without understanding" fits very well the description

of the people of the northern kingdom as Hosea pictured them (Hosea 4:1-6, etc.).

v. 12-13 CALL TO RESTORATION: The predicted exile will have its effect in producing repentance and turning from idolatry back to Jehovah—at least in a faithful remnant. Out of, and through, that remnant restored to Palestine in the days of Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel will come the fulfillment of the Messianic order idealized and symbolized in this section. *That day* of verses 12 and 13 are obviously still integral parts of the whole context of this section (ch. 24-27) and refer directly back to *the day* when the feast is made, the covering is removed and death is swallowed up forever.

Jehovah will have *fruit* (Hebrew, *parah*; *produce*, *offspring*) from the far reaches of the world as a result of the exiled penitent, restored remnant. The Hebrew word translated gathered is *lakat* which means literally, *collect*, *pick up*, the same word as is used in Exodus 16:5, 16, 26, 27, to describe the Israelites *collecting* manna and quail. He will collect His own one by one, selectively. As Leupold says, "The point is, God's fatherly care for His own will appear in this that the scattered ones will be most faithfully gathered and made a unit again. Their unity however will express itself in their united worship at the sanctuary . . ."

If our interpretation is correct and *that day* refers back to the messianic program predicted in chapter 25, then "the great trumpet" to be sounded on *that day* must be the gospel proclamation which gathered (and is still gathering, collecting, picking) the true Israel of God from the far reaches of the world and uniting them in the worship of Jehovah in Zion, the real and abiding Zion (the church), not the earthly and passing Jerusalem, (see our comments on Isaiah 19:16-25, Volume I, College Press).

Thus closes a very significant section of Isaiah's message. It is a message to the last, remaining segment of the covenant nation. They are to be judged for their sin and idolatry. But it is the judgment of a merciful and sovereign Lord. He is



judging for a purpose. That purpose is to purge the covenant people of their sin in order that they may progress toward the goal Jehovah has for them. That goal is the redemption of all mankind through their Messiah and through them as a messianic people.

## QUIZ

1. Why ask if He has smitten his own people as He has others?
2. How does their removal relate to their being forgiven?
3. What does the "fortified city" have to do with their forgiveness?
4. What day is referred to in verses 12 and 13?
5. How is God going to gather them?
6. Where are they going to worship?
7. Summarize this entire section.

## EXAMINATION

### CHAPTERS TWENTY-FOUR THROUGH TWENTY-SEVEN

## DEFINITION

(Define the following words or phrases as they were discussed in the comments.)

- |  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. <i>lofty</i> people                     | 10. <i>perfect</i> peace       |
| 2. <i>new</i> wine                         | 11. mind is <i>stayed</i>      |
| 3. isles of the <i>sea</i>                 | 12. <i>Trust</i> ye in Jehovah |
| 4. <i>punish</i> the host of the high ones | 13. <i>everlasting</i> rock    |
| 5. I will <i>praise</i> thy name           | 14. <i>uprightness</i>         |
| 6. stronghold to the <i>poor</i>           | 15. thy <i>chastening</i>      |
| 7. feast of <i>fat things</i>              | 16. <i>indignation</i>         |
| 8. over <i>all nations</i>                 | 17. <i>leviathan</i>           |
| 9. keepeth <i>faith</i>                    | 18. <i>gathered</i> one by one |

## MEMORIZATION

"And in this \_\_\_\_\_ will Jehovah of hosts make unto all \_\_\_\_\_ a feast of \_\_\_\_\_, a feast of wine on the \_\_\_\_\_, of \_\_\_\_\_ full of marrow, of wines on the \_\_\_\_\_ well refined. And he will destroy in this \_\_\_\_\_ the face of the \_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_ all peoples, and the \_\_\_\_\_ that is spread over all \_\_\_\_\_. He hath \_\_\_\_\_ up \_\_\_\_\_ for ever; and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away \_\_\_\_\_ from off all faces; and the reproach of his people he will take away from of all the earth: for Jehovah hath spoken it." Isa. 25:6-8

"Thou wilt keep him in \_\_\_\_\_ whose \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ on thee; because he \_\_\_\_\_ in thee. Trust ye in Jehovah for ever; for in Jehovah, even Jehovah, is an \_\_\_\_\_." Isa. 26:3-4

## EXPLANATION

1. Explain how the Lord will punish the "host of heaven" and the "moon is confounded" and the "sun ashamed" when He manifests His glory before his elders. Isa. 24:21-23
2. Explain how God keeps men in "perfect peace." Isa. 26:3-4
3. Explain how "Jacob's sin was expiated" in the captivity. Isa. 27:7-9

## APPLICATION

(In its context every scripture has one meaning—the author's intended meaning. How may the following be applied in the believer's life?)

1. How does transgression of God's laws and breaking His covenant relate to pollution of the earth? Isa. 24:4-6
2. How does Isaiah's prediction that God will make a feast on Mt. Zion apply to the Christian's experience? Isa. 25:6-9
3. How does the yearning of the prophet in 26:7-12 for God's just judgment apply to the Christian character?

## V. EMANCIPATION NOT FROM EGYPT

## CHAPTERS 28 - 35

## A. FOUNDATION THAT IS FIRM, CHAPTERS 28-29

## 1. STUPIDITY

TEXT: 28:1-13

- 1 Woe to the crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim, and to the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley of them that are overcome with wine!
- 2 Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one; as a tempest of hail, a destroying storm, as a tempest of mighty waters overflowing, will he cast down to the earth with the hand.
- 3 The crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden under foot:
- 4 and the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be as the first-ripe fig before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.
- 5 In that day will Jehovah of hosts become a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people;
- 6 and a spirit of justice to him that sitteth in judgment, and strength to them that turn back the battle at the gate.
- 7 And even these reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink, the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they stagger with strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.
- 8 For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.
- 9 Whom will he teach knowledge? and whom will he make to understand the message? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts?
- 10 For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little.
- 11 Nay, but by men of strange lips and with another tongue will he speak to this people;

- 12 to whom he said, This is the rest, give ye rest to him that is weary; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.
- 13 Therefore shall the word of Jehovah be unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little; that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

### QUERIES

- a. Who is the “mighty and strong one” the Lord has?
- b. Why are priests and prophets drinking strong drink?
- c. How would God speak to that people by “strange lips and other tongues”?

### PARAPHRASE

Woe to the crowning glory of Israel, the city of Samaria. It is a city of drunkards. Its glory is about to fade into nothing like the withering flowers. She sits as a crowned head of a lush-green valley but her inhabitants have become slaves to wine. Beware! The Lord has an agent, Assyria, mighty and strong, and His agent comes like a devastating hail storm, a destructive storm, and like a roaring flood. His powerful hand is able to cast everything down to the ground. Yes, Samaria, the glorious fortress in which the drunkards of Israel boast is going to be trampled under the foot of this agent of the Lord. I repeat, This city of Samaria which sits at the head of the rich valley is nothing but a rapidly fading flower. In fact, Samaria shall be to the Assyrian like the fig ripe before its time is to the traveller. He will eagerly pick it and immediately devour it. He will not hold it in his hand. When Samaria has fallen, at last the Lord of the Covenant Himself will be the crowning glory of His remnant. To the remnant, He will be beautiful. To the remnant the spirit of justice He restores to the leadership of the nation will be beautiful. He will restore to the remnant

the strength, courage and faith to stand against their enemies. But, here in Jerusalem, even its leaders reel and stagger in drunkenness. Priests and prophets, the very shepherds of God's people, men who are to declare God's message, are drunkards. They are alcoholics! They are in such a stupor they cannot understand anything nor make a sensible judgment. They are so depraved and debauched they vomit all over the tables and floors and furniture where they carouse and there is hardly a clean place to be found.

Yet these are the people who are saying, Whom does Isaiah think he is teaching; to whom does he think he is explaining God's revelation? Let him search as widely as he wishes, he will not find any who is in need of such teaching. Is it to babies he thinks he is speaking? Isaiah's teaching is childish. It is nothing but repetitious, command upon command and rule upon rule, and there isn't enough of it anywhere to make any sense.

As a matter of fact, God is going to treat the people of Jerusalem like babies and speak a message of chastening to them through a nation whose language they do not understand. God is going to make believers out of these unbelievers by delivering them to the Assyrians. They are too immature and unbelieving to heed Isaiah's teaching, so they will have to be dealt with as immature babies. God repeated over and over His plea to the covenant people to walk in the way of true rest—obeying His commandments—but they would not do so! So, now, they are going to learn through chastening and hardship the will of God is to be obeyed. That revelation of God given through the prophet in command upon command and rule upon rule is going to come to pass and they are going to realize they have stumbled over it when they are broken and trapped and taken captive. That word of God which they mocked is going to mock them!

## COMMENTS

v. 1-6 DRUNKARDS: Ephraim, as Isaiah uses it here probably represents the northern kingdom of Israel (cf. Isa. 7:2-17;

Hosea 9:3-16). The "crown of pride," "the fading flower," and "the head of the fat valley," all are descriptive synonyms of Samaria, capital city of Israel, which lasted until the bitter end of Israel's subjugation by the Assyrians. The city of Samaria was situated geographically upon a high rise making it the "head" of a lush-green valley. Omri's intention when he built it was to make it so well fortified it could not be captured. It took the Assyrians three years (723-721 B.C.) to capture it.

This section was probably written in the early years of Hezekiah's reign in Judah when most of Israel had been overrun by the Assyrians and Samaria, the capital, was under siege and would soon fall. There was intense political pressure put upon Hezekiah to make treaties with Assyria and/or with Egypt to keep Judah free from foreign invasion. Isaiah was sent to Hezekiah, and the nation of Judah, with a revelation from God that no alliances should be made with either Assyria or Egypt, but that the nation and its leaders should trust in God for deliverance. This is the thrust of the chapters in this section (28-35). Isaiah begins by showing false foundations and the true foundation.

Isaiah intends to remind Judah that Israel's predicament (foreign invasion and destruction) is a consequence of Israel's debauchery. Drunkenness causes ruin—individually and socially. Of course drunkenness is only a symptom of a much more critical problem—self-indulgence or permissiveness. This stems from a fundamental rebellion against the word of God called sin! Drunkenness, or any other form of debauchery and self-indulgence is not sickness—it is sin. God created the grape and the juice of the grape and alcohol. All that God created is good. Wine, alcohol, food, clothing, houses and lands can all be perverted, misused and become objects of idolatry. But if used properly, within the will of God and with temperance and self-control, they are blessings from God.

The trouble with the leaders of Israel in its capital city Samaria was that they allowed themselves to be "overcome" with wine. They were alcoholics—enslaved to wine. They were incapable of making sensible judgments or of leading others to

do so. Drunkenness has the effect of completely incapacitating a person both mentally and physically. Alcohol is highly addictive as a depressant. It affects the ability of a human being to make proper moral judgments. Indulged in excessively it causes deterioration of the liver and other vital organs as well as destroying brain cells. When administered in controlled situations, by physicians as medicine, it may have some healing effect. In some situations, mild, diluted alcoholic beverage such as wine may be more physically safe to drink than the water available. This was certainly not the problem in Samaria. It is not the problem in America and the world in general today. The problem is excess, self-indulgence, sin—drunkenness. There are approximately 9,000,000 alcoholics in the United States today. That is more than the total population of both kingdoms of the Jews put together in Isaiah's day! Of course people can be obsessed with other things and indulge themselves to the point of idolatry and lose the ability to think properly and function as they should—gluttony, pride, greed, hate, sexual promiscuity all lead down the same path to ruin.

The Hebrew word translated *Lord* in verse 2 is *Adonai* and emphasizes *sovereignty*. The sovereign Lord has an instrument of judgment He is going to use against Ephraim (Israel). This instrument is a "mighty and strong" one. We take it to mean Assyria. The Assyrians were devastating in their warfare. They took no thought to preserve anything or anybody. Their method was to conquer, kill, loot, burn, destroy. In order to dispense with the necessity to occupy foreign nations they conquered with garrisoned troops, they simply took the conquered people captive back to their own land and imported their own trusted citizens to occupy conquered land. This is what they did to Israel, and the ancestors of the "imported" Assyrians later became hated "half-breeds" known as Samaritans in Nehemiah's day. The Assyrian army was aptly described as "a tempest of hail, a destroying storm, and a tempest of mighty water overflowing." They stormed upon the land and flooded it with destruction. That great fortress city, Samaria, the crown and pride of the once arrogant and rebellious northern kingdom

Israel would very soon be trodden under foot of thousands of fierce, pagan Assyrian soldiers. Let Hezekiah and Judah take warning! Assyria is going to gobble-up Samaria like a hungry traveler who sees an early-ripened fig, snatches it from the tree and gobbles it up from the palm of his hand without hardly looking at it.

When Samaria falls there will be a *shear*, Hebrew for *remnant*, or *that which is left*, which will reaffirm its faith and trust in Jehovah. Those few remaining faithful to the Lord, when they see Samaria fall, will reenforce and renew their stand for righteousness, justice and faithfulness. They will take new courage and strength from the Lord's actions and reenter the battle for truth and faith.

So the true foundation is the God of Justice, not self-indulgence or permissiveness. Judah had better know this! So the church of God today must know this!

V. 7-13 DEMENTED: Now Isaiah turns his attention to the people of Judah. "Even these" are "swallowed up of wine." It is the theologians who are pointed out—priests and prophets. Priests were to represent man to God and prophets were to represent God to man. The two primary functionaries through which men came into contact with God were, for the most part, drunkards. These religious leaders often times functioned also as advisors to the Hebrew king and his noblemen. Inebriated and intoxicated, completely overcome with drunkenness, they either misrepresented God's will to man or did not represent it at all! Thus the nation was left without religious instruction and leadership at all except for Isaiah and Micah and a few faithful souls known as the remnant! Hebrew religious life was so closely united with its civil structure when religion decayed, civil life became chaotic. Justice and morality dipped to a dangerous low. The drunkards lost their senses and were unable to make sensible, honest judgments. Sin itself is insanity (cf. I Cor. 15:34).

Isaiah paints a vile and repulsive picture of drunkards, but it is a true picture. Distillers of liquor in America often picture users of their product as "men of distinction," etc. The truth



of the matter may be known by anyone who wants to spend a little time around places where their product is excessively and indulgently consumed. It is a picture of behavior worse than the vilest animal. Vomit, cursing, lewdness, violence, incoherence and delirium is the environment created by drunkenness.

The drunken priests, prophets and other citizens of Judah and Jerusalem manifest their utter depravity by mocking Isaiah's attempts to instruct them in the revelation of God. They say in effect, "Who does Isaiah think he is to talk to us like one would talk to children. Are we babies?" The Hebrew word translated *teach* is *yarah* and means, *instruct, inform*. The Hebrew word translated *message* is *shemoah* which means, *something heard or report*. This verse (9) emphasizes the fact that Isaiah's major ministry was in teaching, instructing the nation concerning the report he had heard (revelation) from God. He evidently spent a great deal of time at teaching. While the nation resented being taught as one would children, that is how they were behaving.

The phrasing of verse 10 in the Hebrew is interesting: *tsav latsav, tsav latsav, qav laqav, qav laqav*. Leupold thinks, "it is sarcastic talk, done in monosyllables to make the simplicity of the prophet's message ridiculous." Thus Isaiah is represented as playing the part of the pedantic teacher treating them like stupid children. He doles out his lessons in a repetitious, sing-song, rote method. The drunkards are making great sport of Isaiah's sincere attempts to penetrate their wine-addled brains.

The prophet's reply in verse 11 is: As a matter of fact, God is going to treat the people of Jerusalem like babies and speak a message of chastening to them through a nation whose language they do not understand. God is going to make believers out of some of these drunken unbelievers by delivering them to the Assyrians. They are too immature and unbelieving to heed Isaiah's instruction, so they will have to be dealt with as immature babies. They will have to be *shown!* Their minds are too addled. They cannot reason—they can only understand harsh, punitive action. The Lord himself will speak unwelcome words to them which may also in a way be likened to

“stammering lips” and a “foreign tongue.” He is going to speak to them in a way they were not accustomed to be spoken to, and probably, in reference to the Assyrians, through a people whose language was foreign to them. The apostle Paul paraphrases Isaiah 28:11 in I Corinthians 14:21. Paul uses it, we are convinced, in the same way Isaiah meant it here. The church at Corinth, in its mania for the “charisma” or gift of tongues (speaking an understandable foreign language unknown to the speaker but miraculously empowered to do so by the Holy Spirit) was acting like a child. The Christians there clamored for this spectacular and showy gift more than they did for prophecy which instructed. Foreign tongues, miraculously uttered, was simply a *sign* for unbelievers who had to have a demonstration of the supernatural in order to make believers of them. Foreign tongues were not to edify, instruct or reveal anything to believers. The problem of “tongues” would be to a great extent solved if Bible students would make the connection Paul makes in Corinthians with Isaiah’s warning here to Judah. The connection is that the showy, spectacular, manifestation of the supernatural is for the immature and unbelieving. While teaching, instruction, prophecy is for the mature and spiritual.

God had reiterated His invitation again and again through the prophets. Time after time He sent prophets and teachers to guide them to Him wherein they might find rest for their souls (cf. Jer. 6:16-21), but they *deliberately* refused to walk in His restful and refreshing way. The way of rest is in believing and keeping His commandments (cf. Mt. 11:28-30; Jn. 15:1-11, etc.). But to those who are self-indulgent when the way of God is preached, it is to them like babbling (cf. Acts 17:18).

They mocked and scoffed at Isaiah’s sincere, untiring, repetitious and simple instruction of God’s revelation of Himself. They refused to comprehend that God was about to judge them. But within two generations the revelation given through Isaiah in command upon command is going to come to pass, and they are going to realize they have stumbled at the truth and are trapped by it and taken captive. That which they

mocked is going to mock them. God is not mocked—whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap!

## QUIZ

1. What is the “crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim”?
2. Why is drunkenness so destructive?
3. What era of the history of Judah is portrayed here?
4. What is the attitude of the people of Judah toward Isaiah’s teaching?
5. What is the connection between Isa. 28:11 and I Cor. 14:21 and “tongues”?
6. What is Isaiah’s answer to the mockery of the people of Judah?

## 2. STABILITY

TEXT: 28:14-29

- 14 Wherefore hear the word of Jehovah, ye scoffers, that rule this people that is in Jerusalem:
- 15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we are at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:
- 16 therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone of sure foundation; he that believeth shall not be in haste.
- 17 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.
- 18 And your covenant with death shall be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol shall not stand; when the overflowing

scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

- 19 As often as it passeth through, it shall take you; for morning by morning shall it pass through, by day and by night: and it shall be naught but terror to understand the message.
- 20 For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.
- 21 For Jehovah will rise up as in mount Perazim, he will be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon; that he may do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act.
- 22 Now therefore be ye not scoffers, lest your bonds be made strong; for a decree of destruction have I heard from the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, upon the whole earth.
- 23 Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech.
24. Doth he that ploweth to sow plow continually? doth he continually open and harrow his ground?
- 25 When he hath levelled the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and put in the wheat in rows, and the barley in the appointed place, and the spelt in the border thereof?
- 26 For his God doth instruct him aright, and doth teach him.
- 27 For the fitches are not threshed with a sharp threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod.
- 28 Bread grain is ground; for he will not be always threshing it: and though the wheel of his cart and his horses scatter it, he doth not grind it.
- 29 This also cometh forth from Jehovah of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom.

## QUERIES

- a. What is a "covenant with death"?

- b. What is the “foundation stone” to be laid in Zion?
- c. Why use the figure of a “short bed” and “narrow covers”?

### PARAPHRASE

Listen, you rulers of Judah that sit in Jerusalem and scoff—listen to the word of Jehovah! You scoff at the predictions of God’s judgment and say, We have insured ourselves against death—death cannot harm us, neither can Sheol—and the flood of Assyrian invasion that is upon Israel shall not come to Judah, for we have protected ourselves with deceptive diplomacy and international sophistry. Because your foundation of deceit and intrigue will crumble, the Lord says, I am laying in the midst of My faithful remnant, the foundation of Zion. This foundation will be a rock, the tested and precious rock, the promise of the Messiah, which will be a solid and sure foundation for every one who believes. Whoever believes this will not panic when my judgment comes. Not only will there be a secure foundation but the standards of measuring men will be according to God’s standards—justice and righteousness. Your refuge of deceitful diplomacy will be swept away as by a fierce hail-storm or raging flood. All the covenants and agreements you have made to insure against disaster will be cancelled out by the overwhelming might of the Assyrian invasion when it tramples down your land. The Assyrians will conquer your land swiftly and advance toward Jerusalem daily. You will hear news of their advance every day and night and every message will strike terror into your hearts. Your “bed is too short” and your “covers too narrow.” Your preparations for security are inadequate. Just as Jehovah rose up against the Philistines in David’s day at mount Perazim and Gibeon, he is going to rise against Judah, strange as it may seem, and bring to pass His word spoken by the prophets. So do not scoff at the warnings of God’s word, but give heed to them and repent or your destruction by the Assyrians will intensify because I have heard a revelation from God of the powerfulness

and universality of their conquests.

Now listen very closely to my words! Is the plowman so stupid that he plows his land over and over again without sowing his seed? No! When he had prepared the ground doesn't he broadcast the dill, scatter the cummin and plant the wheat and barley in rows? Yes, he does, for God has made him to use common sense to see and understand what needs to be done. The farmer never threshes all grains the same. A sledge is never used on dill—it is beaten with a stick. A cart-wheel is never rolled on cummin—it is beaten softly with a flail. Bread grain grinds easily so he does not pulverize it into dust. Once the cart-wheel has driven over it and ground it the farmer stores it. This is not only good common sense but it is true wisdom and comes from the Lord of Hosts who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom.

## COMMENTS

v. 14-22 FOUNDATIONS: The rulers of Judah, sitting in their fortress city Jerusalem, scoffed at Isaiah's prophecies of Judah's judgment. They had made agreements and covenants with Egypt to insure their protection from Assyria—they thought! This is probably the meaning of "covenant with death," and "agreement with Sheol." It is very doubtful that there is anything here associated with mysticism or black magic, etc. The context is an entire section devoted to Isaiah's denunciation of alliances with Egypt. The government of Judah had been dealing in political subterfuge and deceitful diplomacy, trying to manipulate Egypt against Assyria and Assyria against Egypt. Judah was trying to deal under the table—to play both ends against the middle. And they were trusting in their skill at such sophistry. Little did they know they were dealing with world powers much more deceitful than they—and more skilled at it! Political chicanery and international double-dealing is disastrous. No nation can build its security and prosperity on deceit.

Because of their sin and depravity, the rulers of Judah were trying to perpetuate the kingdom of God by deceit and falsehood. Such schemes destroyed the very purpose for which God had called them to be a kingdom—the redemption of men and women. So, because man could not make a proper foundation upon which to build redemption, God lays a true, tested, solid foundation. The Hebrew word *yisad* (lay) is past tense. God had already started the foundation. It was the Messianic promise. It was started at least as early as David (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12ff). The completion of the foundation would be found in the Messiah Himself (cf. Mt. 21:42, 44; Lk. 20:17; Acts 4:11; Rom. 9:33; Eph. 2:20; I Pet. 2:4-6). But God was laying in “Zion” (the faithful remnant) even then the beginnings of that Messianic hope through the prophets. The foundation stone then is the Messianic hope. The faith of a faithful few in Isaiah’s day in these promises (and others to come after them) resulted in the coming of the Messiah and the building of a holy kingdom and habitation of God in the Spirit—the church. Christ, the Person, the Incarnate God, was the chief cornerstone. That God was going to come in *A Person* to the earth to establish His kingdom was rejected by sinful men of the prophet’s day. They wanted “the vineyard” for themselves, and so they killed the messengers of God who came seeking God’s fruit. Then when they saw the Son coming, they killed Him because He was the heir (cf. Mt. 21:33ff). The foundation being laid by God, the Messianic hope, had already been tested and tried and men did believe in it. Their belief in it made them fit for God’s kingdom because it redeemed them. The standards of citizenship for God’s Messianic kingdom are belief, justice and righteousness. That small band of believers paying attention to Isaiah’s preaching would cling to the Messianic hope and their lives would be characterized by justice and righteousness. Upon that foundation and measured by those standards they would overcome the despair, confusion and spiritual destruction that the impending storm of Assyrian invasion would bring to the scoffers.

Isaiah promises the scoffers all their cherished plans and

schemes for protection from Egypt (built upon deceit) would be cancelled, wiped out. Whenever the Assyrians passed through the land the people of Palestine would be conquered—Judah as well as Israel. The Assyrians marched relentlessly, morning by morning, night after night, toward Jerusalem. Nothing hindered them (until of course, Hezekiah repented and prayed and Jerusalem was spared, cf. Isa. ch. 35-36). Every new day brought news of the Assyrian approach and terror began to grip them.

The prophet now turns to a proverb or parable probably very familiar to the people of his day. A bed too short for a man to stretch himself full length on and covers too narrow to wrap himself in on a chilly night are, to say the least, inadequate. As a matter of fact, they are a vexation! Judah's political intrigues with Egypt were like too short beds and too narrow covers. They were inadequate and would later vex their souls when God's judgment fell.

Jehovah will break through all the foolish and fallible schemes of Judah and her alliances with Egypt and execute His wrath on sinful Judah just as He did against the Philistines in David's day (cf. II Sam. 5:19ff). *Perazim* in Hebrew means "break through." David named the place where he brought the Lord's justice on the Philistines Baal-Perazim, "Lord of breaking-through." The Lord judging His people will be a "strange" work. Most of the Jews in Isaiah's day refused to believe the Lord would judge them (cf. Isa. 5:12, etc.). The work of the Lord is to purify for Himself a holy people (cf. Mal. 3:1-5, etc.). It may seem strange to men, but to God it is a part of His plan.

Isaiah now inserts a strong warning. The attitude of the rulers at Jerusalem seems to have been one of scoffing at the Word of the Lord as proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah. So Isaiah warns them what he has preached is a revelation from the Lord—not his own prediction. The more they resist it, the more inevitable and severe will be their doom at the hands of the Assyrians.

v. 23-29 FACTS: Not only were the rulers of Jerusalem



building on a false foundation, they were not even using good common sense and logic in their thinking. They did not have their facts straight. They must not only build on a stable foundation, they must think sensibly. It is tragic to watch sin throttle a man's ability to think logically and properly. Isaiah begins by calling for close attention to his words. Then he attempts to penetrate the calloused and crooked thinking of the rulers by illustrations from everyday experience. This is the way things work, says Isaiah; men do not continually plow a field. Once the field is plowed and prepared a man sows seed and later reaps a crop. God is going to "plow His field" to prepare it. But He will not continually plow it. The plowing is preparatory. Then He will sow and reap. But the plowing must be done. Verse 26 indicates preparing the soil; sowing and reaping is a systematic way things are done by men because such a systematic order of things comes from God. It certainly is a fact of experience that a man does not first go out and sow seed on fallow ground and then break up the sod and harrow it.

The same common sense and discretion is used in threshing. A man threshes the crop only as much as it needs to be threshed to extract the grain. He does not go on threshing it after the grain is separated and grind the grain into dust. God certainly will use the same reasonableness and discretion in dealing with His people. He will plow and thresh—this is needful—but He will not do so forever. He will reap also.

### QUIZ

1. Why do we think the "covenant with death" has no reference to black magic?
2. What does the "agreement with Sheol" mean in its context?
3. When did God lay the "foundation stone" in Zion?
4. What is the meaning of the "short bed" parable in verse 20?
5. Why would Isaiah refer to plowing and threshing to illustrate his message?
6. How does it apply to God's dealing with Judah?

SPECIAL STUDY

THE CHRISTIAN AND WAR

by

Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTION

I. A Continuing Christian Concern

- A. As long as there are unregenerate people there will be wars, James 4:1-4
- B. Viet Nam "cease fire" and end of the draft do not necessarily mean the Christian will never have to face the problem again.
- C. In addition, when we broach this subject we have entered the whole area of the Christian and civil government (laws, taxes, politics, social welfare, etc.).
- D. If I read the N.T. correctly at all, I am convinced the Christian cannot ignore these problems. We may not be "of" the world, but we certainly are "in" the world.
- E. To a larger extent than we may realize, unbelievers may be watching our Christian witness in this area (government) more than they watch it in the religious rituals we perform!

II. A Coherent Christian Certitude

- A. Christians, of all people, should have the most coherent answers to these problems.
- B. Christians, because they have regenerated their minds and they are no longer prejudiced by sin, should think logically, reasonably and sensibly.
- C. But more important than that, Christians have the written, revealed mind of Christ in the N.T.—the Divine Will settles the question.

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D. We will approach the subject on these two bases:

1. Reason
2. Revelation

### DISCUSSION

#### I. Reason (Natural Law; Conscience)

A. All men, even those who do not have a special-revealed law of God (O.T. or N.T.) have a revelation in the natural order of God's creation and in their reasoning capabilities which tells them

1. God's wrath on ungodliness and wickedness and suppression of the truth (Rom. 1:18ff); and His eternal power and deity.
2. They are either doing or not doing God's law (Rom. 2:14-16)
3. Of course, sinful men may wilfully refuse to recognize truth and may deliberately ignore historical and rational facts (II Pet. 3:5; II Thess. 2:9-12; I Cor. 15:34).
4. But Christians are commanded to use logic (Rom. 12:1-2) as a result of having their minds transformed. CHRISTIANS ARE NOT PERMITTED THE "LUXURY" OF IRRATIONALITY! CHRISTIANS ARE NOT PERMITTED THE ESCAPISM OF REFUSING TO FACE REALITY!

#### B. Axioms

1. Necessity of law and order (local, national and international)
  - a. In order to the maintenance of any kind of society (and man is by nature and necessity a social being) there must be law and order.
  - b. If this is doubted, just *universalize* a few actions which are presently considered anti-social:
    - (1) What if there were no sanctions against murder, i.e., that anyone and everyone were free to take anyone else's life violently, indiscriminantly, without cause or for any cause, at any time.
    - (2) What if there were no laws against theft and

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- robbery. What if any man were free to rob or steal from any other at any time, for any cause or without cause.
- c. The two above are, in effect, what wars of aggression and imperialism are all about. What if all nations acted as described above?
  - d. I Tim. 1:8-9 Law is not for just but lawless . . . etc.
2. Where there are no sanctions or penalties and where penalties are not executed, **THERE IS NO LAW!**
- a. We may enact and write local and national laws against murder, draft-dodging, theft, etc., until we are blue in the face but if we have no penalty or the penalty is not executed, we have no laws—we just have reams and reams of paper!
  - b. We can join United Nations bodies, debate, enact, sign and proclaim eloquently the international laws controlling our nations all we want, but if there is no penalty and no enforcement, there is no international law!
  - c. Eccl. 8:11; "Because sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil."
  - d. As Socrates reasoned: An unjust law is bad, but *no* law is worse!
3. Punishment must fit the crime
- a. Senator Taft (Robert Sr.) reportedly said: The war criminals at the Nuremburg trials were tried and punished after fact, i.e., they were tried and sentenced for a crime for which there was no law.  
Perhaps, technically speaking, there are no *written* international laws by which political leaders of nations which perpetuate international murder (war) may be tried and punished, but there certainly is a natural moral law—**JUSTICE**.
  - b. Justice is the action according to which one renders to another that which is the latter's *right* or the latter's *due*.

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- c. To sustain the majesty of the law there must be just and commensurate punishments (national or international).
  - d. In the realm of civil or national law, capital punishment is a vindictory sanction; that is, it vindicates the majesty and justness of the law against taking of life in cold blood. A murderer, when he takes another person's life, has taken something out of the totality of being which cannot be restored, namely, the victim's greatest good (his life); hence the state (society acting through its government), in order to restore the balance of justice, takes the murderer's greatest good (his life) in reciprocity.
  - e. Man is a person by virtue of the fact that he is a rational being. By heinous crimes which are offenses against the law of reason, he withdraws violently from the society of reason and sets out wilfully to destroy society. Therefore he forfeits his right to continue to live in that society.
  - f. Crimes of murder, robbery, aggressive war, etc. are all crimes against SOCIETY . . . not merely crimes against individuals. THE WHOLE STRUCTURAL FABRIC OF SOCIETY IS AT STAKE!
  - g. This principle of justice, punishment commensurate with the crime, has to be applied to international criminal acts. WHEN ONE NATION COMMITS VIOLENT, HEINOUS CRIMES (WARS) AGAINST INTERNATIONAL STRUCTURES OF SOCIETY, COERCIVE, PUNISHING, RESTRAINING FORCES OF DEFENSIVE WARS MUST BE WAGED TO VINDICATE THE INTERNATIONAL LAWS AGAINST WAR!
  - h. A punishment which is not commensurate with the crime will not vindicate the law against the crime!
- C. Conclusions
- 1. Man must have government to exist.
  - 2. Without government there would be social chaos.
  - 3. There can be no government without law.

4. If obedience to government or law is determined individually or subjectively, then no law would be immune from some people's disapproval or disobedience. The result would be anarchy.
5. It is a greater evil not to resist an international aggressor than to fight against him. "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing."

## II. Revelation

### A. Government, in general

1. Is ordained by God (Rom. 13:17)
  - a. No Christian is exempt from obedience to government just on the grounds that he is a Christian.
  - b. He who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed.
  - c. The O.T. teaches the authority of civil government as a God-ordained institution (Ezra 7:26; Ex. 22:28; Prov. 24:21-22).
  - d. The N.T. is plain and specific (Mt. 22:21; Titus 2:15—3:2; I Pet. 2:13-17).
  - e. Society must have government. God has provided it and preserves it—even "pagan" government (Jer. 27:5-7; Isa. 10:5ff).

"He (the Christian) may exert his effort to have unjust laws changed and unjust national objectives withdrawn. He may use every legitimate effort to convince the ruler that the laws are unjust or the war is unjust. But he has absolutely *no scriptural* authority to incite anarchy. Anarchy is satanic. God does not will anarchy in this present world; He wills order. Satan is the one who seeks anarchy, in order to oppose the will of God." Wm. LaSor, C.T. 1-30-70.

Anarchy is satanic whether it be by Bolsheviks, Red Guards, Black Panthers or Weathermen (see Reader's Digest, November 1970, *The Destruction of Diana*).

2. Originated for God (Rom. 13:1-7)

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- a. As a terror to bad conduct—to restrain evil and to punish the wrong-doer (the unrestrainable)—to execute the wrath of God upon the wrongdoer. Government is God's executive!
- b. "Now we know that the law is good, if any one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient . . ." I Tim. 1:8-9
- c. I Tim. 2:1-4
- d. Rulers do not wield the sword (instrument of execution) in vain! There is a purpose, a God-ordained purpose, in punishment—even in *capital punishment*!
- e. "It seems to me that those who advocate abolition of all capital punishment ignore three vital factors (1) The absolute sovereignty of God as the creator and giver of human existence on earth; (2) the malignancy of sin which left unchecked would destroy the universe; (3) the divinely delegated authority to human society to remove from its fabric those who are incorrigibly devoted to the destruction of that fabric by acts of violence against the innocent.

It is not the distance from animals but the proximity to God which makes man unique . . . Man abdicates his responsibility when he gets on the animal level or when he seeks to dethrone God. And he does both when he becomes a wilful and malicious murderer. He attempts to be under what he is over (animal)—and aspires to be over what he is under (God). AND IT IS HERE THAT GOD DECREES THAT MAN FORFEITS HIS RIGHT TO CONTINUE TO LIVE WITH THOSE WHO REMAIN WITHIN THE STATUS FOR WHICH MAN WAS MADE." Carl Ketcherside, *Mission Messenger*, Vol. 31, August 1969, p. 118ff.

- f. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man." Gen. 9:6 (the first book of the Bible)
- g. "He that killeth with the sword must be killed with

- the sword." Rev. 13:10 (the last book of the Bible)
- h. "Some object that capital punishment is action so utterly final and irretrievable, but it is not any more so than the death of a victim shot in the heart by a robber, or the death of a woman choked or bludgeoned to death in her own home by a rapist. Why is it that modern morality seems always to be on the side of the criminal aggressor without taking account of the rights of the innocent victim . . . Capital punishment for murder is to be exacted because it is the divine judgment to keep the land from being drenched in innocent blood. The forfeiture of one's right to continue in the land of the living is conditioned upon his blatant disrespect for the person of one made in the image of God. 'Mercy but murder, pardoning those who kill.' " Ketcherside, *ibid*.
  - i. People against capital punishment always quote the Decalogue "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13). This is ridiculous because just 27 verses later in the same book, God said, "If a man come presumptuously upon his neighbor, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die." (Ex. 21:12-17). GOD HAS ALWAYS DISTINGUISHED BETWEEN MURDER AND JUDICIAL EXECUTION. . . . ALL MURDER IS KILLING BUT NOT ALL KILLING IS MURDER!
- "He (the Christian) has no Biblical authority to tell the state it must renounce the use of force in order to preserve law, or to demand that the law of the state be changed to disarm policemen. This would be to take the 'sword' from the magistrate—and the bearing of the sword by the magistrate is recognized and approved by the Word of God." LaSor, *op. cit*.
- j. The great apostle Paul stood for the fair and just execution of capital punishment—even if it meant his own death! Acts 25:11



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- B. Government in International relationships (war, etc.)
1. The erosion of the public conscience against capital punishment and against international policing (war) against aggression is a device of Satan to take the sting out of rebellion, anarchy and social chaos.
  2. “. . . it seems to me that nothing is more unrealistic in the present state of the world than to say that war must never be used as a means of thwarting wilful and deliberate aggression. This position ignores the fact that God employed war as a judgment upon nations, and even upon Jerusalem (Ezek. 14:21). Surely He was not immoral. This does not mean that God likes war any more than I like it. I did not punish my children because I derived pleasure from the experience but in order to produce ‘the fruit of real goodness’ in their characters . . . Gen. Sherman said that ‘War is hell,’ and I concur, but I do not forget that God also made hell. And it was made as the result of war in heaven! If Michael and his angels had been pacifists, the devil might have taken heaven over, and if this had happened those who went to heaven would have been in hell. . . . Certainly war is an evil, but it is not necessarily a *sin*. All sin is evil, but not all ‘evil’ is sin. Obviously not every war is justified, but that is not the question . . . it will be necessary for all nations to desist from lifting up the sword against each other, for so long as one learns war with a view to the destruction of others, the others will have to defend themselves . . . God will turn those nations which hate Him and His rule into hell. War is the judgment of God upon such sin here, and hell is the judgment of God upon such sin hereafter. When I assist in the work of rewarding good or in striking terror into the hearts of evil men, I am abiding God’s minister to fulfill a responsibility to God.” Ketcherside, *op. cit.*
  3. Some scripture references: (additional to ones already cited)

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- a. Genesis 14:21-24; Abram's going after and defeating the kings of the East who had kidnapped his nephew, Lot, and the blessing of God's great high priest Melchizedek.
  - b. Joshua 8:1-29; Joshua's conquest of Ai, even instructed by God to *ambush* the warriors of Ai.
  - c. I Sam. 30:1-31; David inquired of the Lord about avenging violent aggression done upon his people by the Amalekites, and God commanded David to do so.
  - d. Eccl. 3:8; "a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace." Eccl. 8:8; "No man has power to retain the spirit, or authority over the day of death; there is no discharge from war, nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it." Eccl. 8:11 "Because sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil."
  - e. Jer. 48:10; "Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord with slackness; and cursed is he who keeps back his sword from bloodshed."
  - f. Daniel 5:17-28; Daniel informed Belshazzar of God's providential maintenance of Nebuchadnezzar's policing of the world and that all rulers, even pagan ones, when they usurp God's sovereignty, God brings them down.
  - g. Obadiah, verses 10-14; Obadiah tells the Edomites they should not have "stood aloof" when their neighbor nation (Israel) was being plundered by aggressors. **GOD HOLDS ALL NATIONS (EVEN PAGAN ONES) RESPONSIBLE TO HELP OTHER NATIONS DEFEND THEMSELVES AGAINST AGGRESSION!**
  - h. Amos 1:9; Amos says God will judge Tyre because Tyre broke a "covenant" she had made with Israel by allowing Edom to plunder Israel. **GOD HOLDS NATIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TREATIES AND COVENANTS THEY MAKE WITH ONE ANOTHER!**
4. Some examples:

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- a. Cornelius, a devout Roman soldier became a Christian and was not (so far as we know) forbidden to continue as such (Acts 10 and 11).
- b. John the Baptist and the soldiers (Luke 3:14). John the Baptist did not tell them to give up soldiering.
- c. Sergius Paulus became a Christian and continued as a proconsul. Acts 13:5-12
- d. It appears that Paul may have converted some of the elite military personnel of Caesar's own body guard (Phil. 1:13 and 4:21).
- e. Erastus was city treasurer in Rome (Rom. 16:23); this meant he was an official of a "pagan" government.
- f. Paul did not command the jailer at Philippi to resign when the jailer became a Christian (Acts 16:25-40).
- g. Angels, servants of God, moral beings with power to choose to obey or disobey God, serve God by engaging in war and in killing rebellious aggressive oppressors (Isa. 37:36-38; Dan. 10:1ff, etc.).
- h. Heaven protected itself by entering into a war of self-defense (Rev. 12:7-17; 19:11-16).

### C. Conscientious Objection

1. The only conscience a Christian should have against compulsory military service in a world with continued aggressive pressures like ours which demands a ready military establishment as a deterrent, would be if he were a missionary or a minister actively preaching the Gospel . . . and even then there may come a time when all able-bodied men might be needed to hasten the overthrow of evil aggressive forces at work in the world.
2. Conscientious objection to war or military service cannot be based on personal desires, but on the direction of God's expressed will in matters. Romans 13 (and all the other scriptures and reasons we have cited) is a clear expression of God's will for Christians in regard to war and the use of force and killing, if necessary, to check and punish aggression!
3. The Christian has a right to only one conscience. A

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conscience directed by God. The non-Christian must be forced to do right and justly by laws (conscription/draft) if he will not do right otherwise (cf. I Tim. 1:8ff). This is exactly what government and law is for! Men cannot be left to do only what they feel is right (especially unregenerate, lawless men). The main function of government is to force the immoral and ungodly to be as moral as is necessary to maintain society. Government was instituted by God to protect and enforce this fundamental necessity.

## CONCLUSION

"In America, a man stood up in a free pulpit to preach; he quoted detached sentences from the Christ whose hand held the lash when His Father's House was a den of thieves, and whose eyes were often as a flame of fire. The preacher declared that evil, no matter how diabolical, was never to be resisted with any physical weapons. Rhetorically, he asked, 'What has a sword ever accomplished worthwhile?'

"In a pew was a worshipper in whose heart was an aching void and in whose home was a Gold Star, speaking of the valor of a young crusader who marched forth with a righteous sword and came not back. At the church door, following the service, that worshipper said to the clergyman: 'I can tell you one thing that righteous sword has done.'

"What?" replied the minister.

"Replied the listener with deep feeling: 'The sword in the hand of those who have resisted militant evil has given you the right to stand here today and to proclaim your convictions without fear of being liquidated.'

"The one who had publicly said that rampant evil was never to be resisted by force paused for a moment and then acknowledged, 'I am afraid I cannot refute that.'

"There is no refutation in God's world and man's for the flash of a righteous sword!" (Dr. Frederick Brown Harris, Chaplain, U.S. Senate, 1943-1969, quoted in *U.S. News and World Report*, October 30, 1972.)

## 3. SUCCESS

TEXT: 29:1-8

- 1 Ho Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped! add ye year to year; let the feasts come round:
- 2 then will I distress Ariel, and there shall be mourning and lamentation; and she shall be unto me as Ariel.
- 3 And I will encamp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with posted troops, and I will raise siege works against thee.
- 4 And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust; and thy voice shall be as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.
- 5 But the multitude of thy foes shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be in an instant suddenly.
- 6 She shall be visited of Jehovah of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire.
- 7 And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her stronghold, and that distress her, shall be as a dream, a vision of the night.
- 8 And it shall be as when a hungry man dreameth, and, behold he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion.

## QUERIES

- a. What is "Ariel"?
- b. What is the "voice as of one that hath a familiar spirit"?
- c. What is the meaning of the use of dreaming as an illustration?

## PARAPHRASE

Woe to you altar-city, altar-city, Jerusalem, David's city. Let year follow year and the ceaseless round of feasts and sacrifices continue! But I will bring tribulation upon you, altar-city, and there shall be groaning and grief, and you will indeed become to me an altar of sacrifice! The enemy camp that surrounds you will be My camp; the entrenched troops surrounding you will be My troops; the siegeworks built up around you will be My siegeworks. And you shall be humiliated so that you will no longer boast loudly but you will speak humbly and low—your voice will be but a whisper like the low moaning of a ghost, barely audible. But then suddenly, the multitudes of enemy troops will vanish from their siege against you like dust and chaff when it is blown away in the wind. I, Jehovah of hosts, will come upon them with terrible judgment and power and but multitudes of enemy troops that come upon her will fall short of completing total destruction of Ariel just like when a hungry or thirsty man goes to bed and dreams he is eating and drinking but awakens in the middle of his dream and finds himself only dreaming and still hungry and thirsty. Even so, the appetite of Zion's enemies to devour her will not be satisfied.

## COMMENTS

V. 1-4 TROUBLE TO ARIEL: *Ariel* in Hebrew is usually translated "the lion of God." Sometimes it is translated "the hearth of God." However, in Ezekiel 45:13ff the same word with the definite article added (*h'ariel*) is translated *altar*. The context of verses 1 and 2 form the basis for our paraphrase of the word as "altar-city" for it appears Jehovah is speaking irony or sarcasm to Jerusalem. Jerusalem took pride in the multitude of her altars and sacrifices and religiosity (cf. Isa. 1:10-20). Jerusalem trusted in her own self-righteousness and religiousness rather than in God. She, like Samaria, thought she could

solve her own difficulties with her pagan neighbors through deceit, bribery and compromise. So Jehovah, speaking through His prophet Isaiah, warns Jerusalem that He, even the Lord God of Hosts, is going to bring trouble and distress upon Jerusalem. And the city which took such pride in her altars and sacrifices would (v. 2) itself become an altar of sacrifice to be used as such by God. All the troops which come to encamp and raise siege works against Jerusalem (the Assyrians in Hezekiah's day, cf. Isa. ch. 36-39) will be, in a very definite sense, God's army. God uses pagan armies to carry out His will (cf. Isa. 10:5ff; Jer. 27:1ff; Dan. ch. 7-8, etc.). And Jerusalem, proud, arrogant, haughty and self-righteous, will be humiliated. This undoubtedly has reference to the humiliating experience of Hezekiah and all of Jerusalem when the city was besieged by the Assyrians. In verse 4 the Hebrew word *keaov* (with familiar spirit) describes the weakened, humiliated and inarticulate condition Jerusalem will find herself in when God finishes bringing trouble upon her. She will be so weak that what she says will come as spoken by one prostrate upon the ground and as indistinct, unnatural, inaudible and inarticulate as that coming from a necromancer or medium in a trance. The point is the extreme weakness and powerlessness that is to come upon Jerusalem at the hand of Jehovah.

v. 5-8 TRIUMPH OF ZION: But in the city of Jerusalem there are a few, a remnant, who have not trusted in self-righteousness. There is a remnant trusting in Jehovah—disciples of Isaiah who have held fast to the “teaching and to the testimony” (cf. Isa. 8:16-22), and God will save Jerusalem from the Assyrians on their account. The instantaneous suddenness with which God will dispose of Jerusalem's enemies is the miraculous event recorded in II Kings 19, II Chronicles 32 and Isaiah 37:36-38. The Lord sent His angel to slay 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night and the king of Assyria “returned with shame of face to his own land,” and some of his own sons struck him down with the sword there. Verse 6 uses highly figurative language to describe the terror and the swiftness of God's destruction of the Assyrian siege. It may be that God

used a literal earthquake, whirlwind, tempest and flaming fire to devour the Assyrians. We are not told specifically how His angel accomplished the destruction. It is interesting to note the figure Isaiah uses to describe the frustrated plans of the Assyrians to devour Jerusalem. Nearly everyone has had the experience of dreaming and awakening with the dream only half completed. In fact, most dreams conclude only partially visualized. Some persons even anticipate in their dream the fact that their dream is going to end incomplete! That is the very nature of dreams. So, the Assyrian attempt to consume Jerusalem is going to come to an end just like a dream . . . incomplete! frustrated! Evil and ungodly men have dreamed for centuries of usurping God's rule of the universe. They have dreamed grandiose dreams of eradicating God's covenant people, the church, Zion, from among mankind, but their dreams have always ended sooner or later uncompleted, frustrated and shamed. So shall all be that fight against Zion! God says it is so! History demonstrated it to be so!

### QUIZ

1. Why is Ariel most likely to be translated "altar"?
2. How would Jehovah encamp against Jerusalem?
3. What is the point of likening Jerusalem's voice to that of a medium?
4. How do we know God's judgment upon Jerusalem's enemies was sudden?
5. How did God deliver Jerusalem from her enemies?
6. What does dreaming have to do with the downfall of Jerusalem's enemies?

### 4. SULLENNESS

TEXT: 29:9-16

- 9 Tarry ye and wonder; take your pleasure and be blind: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not



with strong drink.

- 10 For Jehovah hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes, the prophets; and your heads, the seers, hath he covered.
- 11 And all vision is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed:
- 12 and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned.
- 13 And the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw nigh unto me, and with their mouth and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men which hath been taught them;
- 14 therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.
- 15 Woe unto them that hide deep their counsel from Jehovah, and whose works are in the dark, and say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?
- 16 Ye turn things upside down! Shall the potter be esteemed as clay; that the thing made should say of him that made it, He made me not; or the thing formed say of him that formed it, He hath no understanding?

### QUERIES

- a. How is the "book" sealed?
- b. What was to be God's marvelous work?

### PARAPHRASE

Yes, go ahead and stand around with that look of incredulity. Go ahead and stagger around in your stupor of blinding

self-indulgence. The Lord has allowed you to drown yourselves in a spirit of deep stupor. The Lord has permitted your prophets and wise men to refuse to see His message. God's revelation has become a closed book to you. When men give it to a learned man and ask him to read it he says, I do not understand it, it is a closed book and I cannot read it. When they give it to the illiterate and ask him to read it, he says, I cannot read. None of you, therefore, know God's revelation. Now the Lord says, because you people pay Me only lip-service while your heart's desire is far away from Me, and because you revere the tradition and ritualism of men about My revelation, I will proceed with My program of judgment. I am going to manifest a miraculous judgment, such as only God can do. I am going to destroy the wisdom of your wise men. I am going to bring you into such difficult and impossible circumstances that none of your counselors will know the solution and their so-called wisdom will be shown to be folly. All this woe is to come upon you people because your leaders have taught you to reject the will of the Lord in your lives and they have taught you to believe the Lord is not the sovereign of your life. Your teachers have caused you to reverse reality! You have gotten every thing in life backwards. The clay vessel does not create the potter—the potter is maker and sovereign of the vessel. The pot does not say of the potter, he has no sense.

### COMMENTS

v. 9-12 BROODING: Isaiah represents the people as standing in a sort of stunned, hesitant, stupified state of sullen disbelief. They think it incredible that Isaiah is predicting Jerusalem will become a bloody altar to the Lord's vengeance. It does not make sense to them. They stare at the prophet like a drunken man stares when he does not comprehend what is being said to him. The Lord has allowed them to fall into a spiritual stupor. They have inebriated themselves and deadened their spiritual comprehension with rebellion against God's revelation and the heady intoxicant of self-exalting, self-justifying

human traditions and rituals. And the Lord has made man a moral being whose choices either make him better or worse. Man's moral choices either blind him or enlighten him. That is the way God made man, so it is ultimately God's doing. The prophet who continues to choose what is false will eventually be blinded to anything true. What a man does not use he loses. When men do not exercise their faculties to choose between evil and good they soon lose the ability to see good as distinguished from evil. The people of Jerusalem have made up their minds that safety and security from the Assyrian menace is to be found in their own political shrewdness and their treaties with Egypt. They have left the Lord completely out of their plans. They do not trust Him. They do not believe He will act in their best interests. They believe their way is superior.

Sullenly they brood over the revelation of God delivered through the writings of Isaiah (cf. Isa. 8:16-22), and when someone asks them what Isaiah's revelation means, their scholars and wise men scoff at it and call it a lot of gibberish and incredible nonsense which no one can understand. Isaiah's writings are like the sealed book of a mystic—they are completely unrealistic and far-fetched. What Isaiah says will never happen according to the wise men of Jerusalem. And, of course, in Isaiah's day many people were illiterate and depended upon priests and prophets and scribes for all their knowledge of what was written in books. The illiterate could not read for themselves, and when the literate would not read Isaiah's writings to them no one knew what Isaiah was revealing from the Lord. The whole nation learned only what the unbelieving, ungodly leaders taught them.

V. 13-16 BELLIGERENT: Now Isaiah turns his attention to the cause of their blindness. Their leaders were teaching them to trust in their religion as it was then being practiced. It was a syncretism of paganism and Jewish tradition. It was a religion of self-merit based on ritual observance and dissociated from any relationship to a personal, righteous, holy, loving God. It was a religion of going through certain

motions and saying certain words, but it had nothing to do with morality, goodness, truth, holiness of life. They had fallen into the same trap the devil has laid for so many men and women—that of compartmentalizing life. Religion is in one compartment; vocation is in another compartment; family relationships in another compartment; recreation in another compartment; none of these compartments of life are supposed to have any influence on the others. These people of Jerusalem gave God lip-service, but their heart—their desires and aspirations—was focused on themselves and the things of the world. The center of their lives was not God and His holiness but their own self-esteem and self-indulgence. They practiced a religion but it had no relationship to their way of life. They did not treasure God so their heart was not with Him (cf. Mt. 5:21). They revered the esteem of men; they treasured the traditions and opinions of men; they believed in man and his ability to solve all his own problems by his human wisdom and so they did not need God. They had simply turned a deaf ear to His prophet and eliminated God from all their plans.

Jesus quoted verse 13 in a confrontation with the Pharisees (Mt. 15:1-20; Mk. 7:1-23) over Jewish traditions. The Pharisees valued their traditions and opinions so highly they were eager to break the commandment of God in order to promote their traditions. It is the same old story of mankind's pride rejecting divine wisdom and sovereignty in favor of its own finite and fallible wisdom. To accept and be guided by divine revelation from The Sovereign God entails human surrender and self-humiliation—a full and complete trust in God's word over one's own wisdom. This is not easy. God has never said it was easy. But man's historic experience, coupled with God's historic demonstration of Himself in His Son, should prove beyond the slightest doubt that man is lost if left to his own wisdom.

Isaiah's prophecy here had immediate reference to the marvelous wonder God was about to do in the Assyrian siege and the deliverance of Jerusalem by the angel of death slaying

185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night. When God sent the Assyrian hordes and they got their strangle-hold on Jerusalem, the wisdom of Jerusalem's wise men was shown to be the foolishness it really was. Judah's leaders had advised that an alliance with Egypt would protect them from Assyria. The leaders discounted all Isaiah's warnings of judgment from Jehovah as so much nonsense. In effect they were saying, Isaiah is a fool and he is wrong; God has nothing to do with our political affairs; what God supposedly advises through Isaiah is foolishness; we know what is right and effective in our own affairs. So, when God allowed them to be brought to utter helplessness and near to being completely consumed by the Assyrians, He was destroying the wisdom of the wise.

The climactic point in history where God demonstrably destroyed the wisdom of the wise was at the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. All the human schemes and philosophies of self-righteousness, self-esteem and self-salvation were thoroughly invalidated and shown to be foolishness. The cross and the resurrection were demonstrated to be the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. That is why the apostle Paul quoted Isaiah 29:14. Every historic demonstration of God's wisdom versus man's foolishness in the Old Testament was a type and a prophecy of the climactic demonstration at the cross and the empty tomb! The Assyrian siege and the deliverance by the Lord's angel was one of those types!

When a man takes it upon himself to exclude God from any area or circumstance of his life, that man has "turned things upside down!" The man who tries to hide his doings and thinkings from the Omniscient God is a fool! His attempt is as absurd as the clay vessel attempting to say that it made itself and the potter had nothing to do with it. And when man gets his relationship to his Creator upside down all of man's existence gets perverted and in opposition to his real self! All man's moral perverseness, intra-personal antagonisms and self-conflicts are directly related to man's rejection of the sovereignty of his Creator in all the areas of life.

God extends Himself in love to reclaim autonomous, belligerent, sullen man. God carries out His program of reclamation through judgments and redemptions. But man, a free moral agent, must make a willing, humble, surrendered response. Man must surrender to God's sovereignty. God's judgment and redemption of Jerusalem at the siege of Assyria accomplished the reclamation of a remnant through which the Messiah was to be born. But the majority of the Jews continued in their belligerence and sullenness rejecting God's wisdom spoken through the prophets until in Jeremiah's day practically the whole nation (cf. Jer. 5:1) was in rebellion.

### QUIZ

1. Characterize the people of Jerusalem as Isaiah saw them in this chapter.
2. How was Jerusalem to become an "altar" to Jehovah?
3. What was the response of the people of Jerusalem to Isaiah's revelation?
4. What was the cause of the people's attitude toward God's prophet?
5. What was the climactic demonstration of God's destruction of the wisdom of the wise?
6. What is the cause of man's perverseness?
7. How may man find salvation from his perverseness?

### 5. SANCTIFICATION

TEXT: 29:17-24

- 17 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?
- 18 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and

out of darkness.

- 19 The meek also shall increase their joy in Jehovah, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.
- 20 For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scoffer ceaseth, and all they that watch for iniquity are cut off;
- 21 that make a man an offender in his cause, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just with a thing of nought.
- 22 Therefore thus saith Jehovah, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale.
- 23 But when he seeth his children, the work of my hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name; yea, they shall sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall stand in awe of the God of Israel.
- 24 They also that err in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmur shall receive instruction.

### QUERIES

- a. What "day" will the deaf hear words of the book?
- b. Who are the "children" of vs. 23?

### PARAPHRASE

It shall surely not be long before what seems impressive among men, great, forest-like, man-dominating world empires like Assyria will be turned into plowed fields producing fruit for the Lord. And what seems unimpressive among men, the covenant people of God, will be turned into a majestic forest. In that day, many spiritually deaf and blind will hear the word from the book of God's messengers, and they will be brought out of the darkness of falsehood and sin into the marvelous light of God's truth. The meek who have learned patience through discipline and the poor who, having no riches to buy

favours, have had to commit their cause into the Lord's hands, shall all find fulfillment and joy in their trust in the Holy One of Israel. Because at this time, those who have tyrannized God's faithful ones and those who have scoffed at them and shamed them, and all those who have deliberately done evil to them shall be overcome. In that day justice will reign in God's kingdom. Those who try to make the innocent appear to be the guilty, those who try to impugn the integrity of judges, and those who take bribes to pervert justice will be overcome. So, the God who redeemed Abraham from a world of sin, says concerning the progeny of Jacob, the messianic people, You shall never be ashamed of your God again when that day arrives. In that day, Jacob's progeny shall see the work of God in all its fulfillment in their midst in the person of the Messiah, and they shall sanctify themselves unto Him, in reverence and awe to His name. That God keeps His word will be so thoroughly proven then, Jacob's progeny will openly and unashamedly acknowledge Him as the Holy One of Israel. Many of those who had erred will be enlightened, and many who had found fault will learn the truth.

## COMMENTS

v. 17-21 REDEMPTION: God predicts through Isaiah that He is going to work a transformation of the people described in chapters 28:1—29:16. This nation of stupid, unstable, sullen people is to form the basis for a changed society sanctified unto the Holy One of Israel. God is going to refocus the ideas of men concerning the value of human structures versus God's kingdom. Human sovereignty and human schemes (such as the world-encompassing empires have formed to build human utopias—from ancient Babylon to modern Communism) are going to be hewn down, brought low and made to be fields from which God's kingdom will reap its citizenry. The helplessness of human schemes of salvation is going to be demonstrated by centuries of judgments and redemptions of the Jewish



nation and by one great historic act of God when He takes what men have counted as common and unimpressive (the covenant believers) and makes them like a majestic forest in the Messiah and His church. Lebanon (a great forest) represents Assyria and all succeeding world-utopian-schemes. It will be brought low. Judah (a fruitful field) represents the faithful covenant people of God. It will be "esteemed as a forest." Part of the sanctifying process is a reorientation of men's sense of values—a regeneration of their thinking. All the history of the Hebrew people between Isaiah and the Messiah will be given to this goal of reorienting the thinking of those who will believe. It will involve all the captivities, oppressions, deliverances, restorations predicted by the prophets (esp. Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah) and will culminate in the death and resurrection of the Messiah and the establishment of His church.

When that process takes place, some of the spiritually deaf and blind (those who have excluded God from their plans and have turned to human programs and rulers, Egypt, Assyria, etc.) will pay heed to the words of the prophets (like Isaiah) who have delivered God's revealed wisdom in books. They will be enlightened and come to know the truth about where man's salvation lies—not in Egypt (or any human-utopia)—but in Jehovah and His covenant. Those who walk in darkness will see a great light (Isa. 9:1-2) and the veil will be lifted (Isa. 25:6-9).

A reorientation of values concerning what kind of people God chooses as His own will be necessary also. The "meek" and the "poor," who have little to rejoice over in relationship to worldly circumstances, are going to have a joyful inheritance. Through a program of decisive reversals of successive human schemes to rule mankind God is going to demonstrate the only viable program of salvation and regeneration. That program will be one of belief and obedience to His beneficent and sovereign will. Kings and kingdoms will crumble into dust. Pagan philosophies and religions will show themselves to be more harmful than helpful. But the meek and poor humble

believers in the Lord will show that keeping his commandments changes man into the image of his Creator and transforms man into a holy, good, honest, true, loving person. The Hebrew word *aoi'iyts* in vs. 20 may be translated *violent, fierce, tyrannical one*. Three classes of ungodly will be removed from the midst of God's new society (the messianic kingdom). God's redemption will rescue those who trust Him from all who want to destroy their souls—tyrants, scoffers and evil-doers. The prophet is not saying that those who kill the body will be cut off. As long as the present world exists there will be tyrants, scoffers and evil-doers killing and persecuting believers. But they can destroy only the body. Those who trust in the Lord will be rescued from the spiritual destruction these ungodly ones can cause. God's new society will also be characterized by the absence of dishonest, unjust, greedy persons (vs. 21).

V. 22-24 REGENERATION: The Lord, Jehovah, rescued Abraham from idolatrous Ur of the Chaldees. As a result of his redemption Abraham became a changed man. He became a giant of the faith—named by God as “a friend of God” (cf. Heb. 11:8-12; Jas. 2:21-24). Just so, God's redemption of the progeny (house) of Jacob will bring about regeneration, spiritual rebirth. The descendants of Jacob (those who believe and trust God—both Jew and Gentile; cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 3:6ff; 6:16; etc.) will be changed in attitude and deed. Israel oftentimes thought of herself as inferior to the rich, powerful, sophisticated, indulgent pagan nations surrounding her. Her consuming desire was “to be like the nations.” She was ashamed of her God. But when God culminates His great redemptive program, Jacob's spiritual descendants will change their minds (repent) of that attitude. The RSV more properly translates the latter half of vs. 22 “. . . Jacob shall no more be ashamed, no more shall his face grow pale.”

In view of the context we think vs. 23 could be paraphrased as follows: When the covenant nation sees true children of God, the work of God's hands, in its midst, many of the nation will be converted and set apart in the new, messianic kingdom, the church. Many will sanctify God and revere Him as sovereign

of their lives. The fulfillment of this may be readily seen in the book of Acts of Apostles. When God had completed His great redemptive work in the death and resurrection of Christ, the church was begun on the Day of Pentecost. Those converted Jews began to go into all the world preaching and living the gospel. Thousands upon thousands, seeing true children of God, the work of God's hands, sanctified the name of the Lord in their lives also. This was a great manifestation of regeneration of the house of Jacob from what they were in Isaiah's day!

Those "wandering in spirit" and those "finding fault" (vs. 24) will also be regenerated in their attitude. These are the spiritually blind and deaf. The history of Israel is replete with "wanderers" and "murmurers" (cf. Heb. 3:7ff, etc.). They wandered in spirit because they succumbed to false teachings, and they murmured resisting the truth. Isaiah connects regeneration and sanctification directly to instruction and understanding. Conversion begins in the mind. Sanctification (continuing conversion) is a continuing mental process. Neither conversion nor sanctification comes to any man unless it comes through the process of learning, understanding and practicing the truth! No one can be converted without knowing what the Bible says. No one can continue in the sanctified life without knowing, understanding and practicing what the Bible says. Teaching and preaching the word of God is not just important — *it is crucial!* Knowing and understanding the word of the Lord would be a complete change from the Israel of Isaiah's day (cf. Hosea 4:1-6, etc.).

### QUIZ

1. Who is "Lebanon" and who is "the fruitful field"?
2. Why is God going to change the position of the two mentioned above?
3. Who are the "meek" and "poor" and what will be their new circumstances?
4. Why mention the redemption of Abraham?

5. Name three changes of attitude that Isaiah predicts will take place in "Jacob's house."
6. What does instruction and understanding have to do with conversion and sanctification?

## EXAMINATION

### CHAPTERS TWENTY-EIGHT THROUGH TWENTY-NINE

#### DEFINITION

(Define the following words or phrases as they were discussed in the comments.)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. <i>fat valley</i>                     | 7. <i>fitches</i>                            |
| 2. a <i>mighty</i> and <i>strong</i> one | 8. <i>Ariel</i>                              |
| 3. <i>residue</i>                        | 9. <i>familiar spirit</i> out of the ground  |
| 4. <i>precept</i> upon precept           | 10. hungry man <i>dreameth</i>               |
| 5. men of <i>strange</i> lips            | 11. him that is <i>not learned</i>           |
| 6. covenant with <i>death</i>            | 12. fruitful field esteemed as <i>forest</i> |

#### MEMORIZATION

"And the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people \_\_\_\_\_ nigh unto me, and with their \_\_\_\_\_ and with their \_\_\_\_\_ do \_\_\_\_\_ me, but have \_\_\_\_\_ their \_\_\_\_\_ far from me, and their \_\_\_\_\_ of me is a commandment of \_\_\_\_\_ which hath been \_\_\_\_\_ them; therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a \_\_\_\_\_ work among this people, even a marvellous work and a \_\_\_\_\_; and the \_\_\_\_\_ of their wise men shall perish, and the \_\_\_\_\_ of their prudent men shall be hid." (Isa. 29:13-14)

#### EXPLANATION

1. Explain the predicament Judah was in as a result of the drunkenness of its priests and prophets (28:1-8).

## UNBELIEF IS DELIBERATE

2. Explain the people's question, "Whom will he teach knowledge? and whom will he make to understand the message? them that are weaned . . .?" 28:9
3. Explain why and when God's people would sanctify God's name upon seeing His children. (29:23)

### APPLICATION

(In its context every scripture has one meaning—the author's intended meaning. How may the following be applied in the believer's life?)

1. How may Isaiah's warning to the immature, unteachable people of his day be applied to the Corinthian church of the New Testament and to the church today? (28:9-13)
2. What lesson will be learned by Judah in its attempt to make lies its refuge and hide itself under falsehood and what application may be made to national politics today? (28:14-22)
3. How did the Lord pour out upon the people a spirit of deep sleep, and how may this whole discussion of their refusal to know God's will be applied today? (29:9-16)

### SPECIAL STUDY

## UNBELIEF IS DELIBERATE

by Paul T. Butler

### INTRODUCTION

"First of all you must understand this, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own passions and saying, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation.' They *deliberately ignore* this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago, and

an earth formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished." 2 Pet. 3:3-6

## I. Unbelief Almost Incomprehensible

- A. Faced by what seems so logical and reasonable, so sensible and so beneficial evidence . . . so true and right . . . we do not understand why there is unbelief.

Why do so many people who seem sensible, sincere, reasonable, not acknowledge the same truths we hold to be so self-evident?

Why, in a world of so many intelligent, relatively moral and upright people, is there so much unbelief?

- B. Peter, in our text, I believe, shows the primary cause of unbelief—**DELIBERATE IGNORANCE**.

The Bible has a great deal to say about this . . . we will discuss it in just a moment from the aspect of Peter's entire 3rd chapter of this 2nd epistle.

## II. Some Unbelief is Due to a Simple Lack of Knowledge

- A. "Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ." Rom. 10:17
- B. Often times children grow up, even in Christian homes, without ever having been given a faith with foundations in facts or evidence (cf. Deut. 6:6-25).
- C. The church has not fulfilled her mission until she has presented the good news founded on the evidences of factual history.
- D. But even a lack of knowledge will not be accepted as an excuse by God since all men have had enough knowledge of God revealed to them that they stand condemned by God if they disbelieve (cf. Rom. 1:18ff).

**SO, PRIMARILY SPEAKING, UNBELIEF IS MORAL REBELLION.**

## DISCUSSION

### I. Unbelief is deliberate.

A. "For this they willingly are ignorant of . . ." another translation says, "They purposely ignore this fact . . ." v. 5

1. Unbelief comes to men because they deliberately choose to ignore the facts as these facts reveal a God to whom they have a moral responsibility.
2. Rom. 1:21 men . . . "became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles." v. 25, "they exchanged the truth about God for a lie . . ." v. 28 "they refused to have God in their knowledge."

"But the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Rom. 1:20

3. Men may deny the facts if they wish . . . but they are without excuse because God is so sufficiently revealed even in nature that unbelief condemns men . . . the evidence, the facts are so abundant that any man who says there is no God is a fool, for only a fool is willingly ignorant.

Dr. G. G. Simpson, famous Paleontologist from Harvard once said concerning some highly improbable evidence as to the origin of the horse "it is so improbable as to be unacceptable *unless* we can find no hypothesis more likely to explain the facts." IN OTHER WORDS, HE IS WILLING TO ACCEPT AN UNACCEPTABLE EXPLANATION IF THERE IS, IN HIS ESTIMATION, NONE BETTER!

4. Jesus once made a most shocking accusation against the Pharisees, "But because I say the truth, ye believe

me not." Jn. 8:45 The very reason they would not believe Jesus was the fact that he told them the truth. There is hardly a worse state man can get himself into than this!

5. Those who hate the truth will be deceived and believe a lie (II Thess. 2:10-12). These do not love the truth; therefore, they are not attracted to it and even when they see it, they hastily reject it and rationalize their reaction.
6. The god of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not (II Cor. 4:3-4). These refuse to listen to the truth when it condemns the unrighteous things in which they find pleasure and which they are determined to continue . . . Thus they seek for some message which will assure them that the unrighteous thing is right and thus permit them to continue in it without being rebuked by their conscience. God sends such people strong delusions in that He has ordained the laws of man's heart and of morality, and that person who has no love for the truth and who lives in and takes pleasure in unrighteousness will unfit his heart for the reception of truth and fit it for the reception of strong delusions which comfort and assure him in his error and unrighteousness.

Dr. Henry Morris, when on the OBC campus for the 1966 Science & Scripture Forum, emphasizing the impact of the 2nd law of thermodynamics upon theories of evolution concluded that ANY SCIENTIST AWARE OF THIS LAW (AND ALL SHOULD BE) WHO REMAINS AN EVOLUTIONIST OR UNIFORMITARIAN, MUST DO SO BY DELIBERATELY IGNORING THIS FACT!

7. Jeremiah put it this way . . . "Behold their ears are closed, they cannot listen; behold, the word of the Lord is to them an object of scorn, they take no pleasure in it." Jer. 6:10 (see also Jer. 6:16-19).
- B. "scoffers . . . *walking after their own lusts* . . ." v. 3
1. Unbelief comes to men because they choose to walk after their own lusts . . . Rom. 1 . . . "God gave



## UNBELIEF IS DELIBERATE

them up to the lusts of their own hearts . . . unto vile affections . . . they not only do these things but even take pleasure in seeing others do them."

2. The people of Israel cried out to Moses as Pharaoh approached, "It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness . . . would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full . . ." Ex. 14:10-12; 16:1-3

Desire to satisfy the flesh chokes out the word, Mt. 13:13-23

3. Unbelief is due to the fact that men choose deliberately to have physical security, or sensual pleasure, or pride.
4. Agrippa's lust for a woman not his own caused him to deliberately refuse to believe Paul. Acts 26:28
5. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and *men loved darkness* rather than light, *because their deeds were evil*. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved (exposed for what they really are)." Jn. 3:19-20
6. "For the time will come when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths." (II Tim. 4:3-4) (cf. also Micah 2:11; Hosea 5:4; 4:6)
7. One of man's lusts which causes him to deliberately disbelieve is **PRIDE**.
  - a. Pride from wealth, Deut. 8:1-20
  - b. Pride from power, Ex. 5:2; Dan. 4:30; 5:23
  - c. Pride from security, Obadiah 3
  - d. Pride in self-righteousness, Job 33:9; Lk. 18:11; Jn. 9:39-41; Rev. 3:17
  - e. Pride from self-sufficiency, Jas. 4:13-17
  - f. Pride is man's desire for human autonomy over against the sovereignty of God . . . a proud man