

Isaiah 28-29

Good evening and thank you for joining us! We're continuing our vbv study through Isaiah, so would you please turn to Isaiah 28?

Chapter 28 begins a new section of Isaiah. Six woes or warnings are announced to the southern kingdom of Judah over the next several chapters-35. And as we've seen many times in Isaiah, these prophecies are a blend of both local and future judgments.

The term "woe" is a warning. It means that misery is on the horizon. And in these warnings we see how God will judge His people, the Jews - and His city, Jerusalem.

We're gonna study chapters 28-29, and the title of tonight's message is Ignoring God's Warnings.

Let's pray

1 Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim,
Whose glorious beauty is a fading flower
Which is at the head of the verdant valleys,
To those who are overcome with wine! Ephraim or the hills of Samaria are known for plush, fertile, "verdant valleys." Today, this is West Bank, Palestinian territory.

And notice God judged Ephraim because they were overcome with wine

2-4

2 Behold, the Lord has a mighty and strong one,

Like a tempest of hail and a destroying storm,
Like a flood of mighty waters overflowing,
Who will bring them down to the earth with His hand.

3 The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim,
Will be trampled underfoot;

4 And the glorious beauty is a fading flower
Which is at the head of the verdant valley,
Like the first fruit before the summer,
Which an observer sees;

He eats it up while it is still in his hand. Twice now “the drunkards of Ephraim” are accused of pride! Alcohol and pride go hand in hand. Alcohol lessens inhibitions and increases arrogance

5-8

5 In that day the LORD of hosts will be
For a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty
To the remnant of His people,

6 For a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment,
And for strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.

7 But they also have erred through wine,
And through intoxicating drink are out of the way;
The priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink,
They are swallowed up by wine,
They are out of the way through intoxicating drink;
They err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

8 For all tables are full of vomit and filth;
No place is clean.

The Lord wanted to bring them glory, but Israel “erred through intoxicating drink.”

Their love for God, their commitment to God, was eroded by alcohol.

9-10 describe these scoffers response to Isaiah

9 “Whom will he teach knowledge?

And whom will he make to understand the message?

Those just weaned from milk?

Those just drawn from the breasts? These are the words of the drunk, ungodly prophets and priests described by Isaiah

10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept,

Line upon line, line upon line,

Here a little, there a little.” In their mocking of Isaiah’s message, they actually pay him a great compliment. It is a beautiful thing for God’s truth to be presented precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little. When the word of God is properly presented, there is something for both the simple and immature to receive, and also something for the great saint to rejoice in and be fed.

Here’s our problem today. We live in an instant society. We don’t even have to wait for photos to be developed anymore. And we want the same instant approach to spiritual growth.

Isaiah tells us how God’s Word should be studied. Get into it line upon line, precept upon precept. Take a text and seek to understand it in its proper context.

Sadly, there’s not a lot of appetite for taking a book and plowing through it chapter by chapter.

Isaiah responds

11 For with stammering lips and another tongue

He will speak to this people, Isaiah is being sarcastic. The Jews were too affected by wine to study God's Word appropriately, so God will speak to them through a foreign army who will invade their land and talk to them in a foreign language. The unknown "tongue" was a sign of God's judgment.

12 To whom He said, "This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest,"

And, "This is the refreshing";

Yet they would not hear. God's Word gives us rest! Haven't you experienced it when you're feeling overwhelmed or stressed, and the word wraps up your heart in blanket?

13 But the word of the LORD was to them,
"Precept upon precept, precept upon precept,
Line upon line, line upon line,
Here a little, there a little,"

That they might go and fall backward, and be broken
And snared and caught. To the haughty, intellectual crowd this "precept upon precept" was too simple. It was beneath them. Because of the pride and stubbornness of the Jews it became a stumbling block to them. It caused their fall.

14-15

14 Therefore hear the word of the LORD, you scornful men,
Who rule this people who are in Jerusalem,

15 Because you have said, “We have made a covenant with death,
And with Sheol we are in agreement.
When the overflowing scourge passes through,
It will not come to us,
For we have made lies our refuge,
And under falsehood we have hidden ourselves.” Isaiah is
probably speaking of a protection treaty the Jewish king at the
time struck with Egypt.

But theologians see in verse 15 a future treaty. Daniel 9 teaches that the final seven years of Great Tribulation begins when Israel signs a covenant with the Antichrist. Here Isaiah refers to that treaty as “a covenant with death” - “an agreement with Sheol.” Now v 16 looks ahead to Christ

16 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:

“Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation,
A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation;
Whoever believes will not act hastily. Look at these descriptions of Jesus! He is “the stone God laid in Zion,” “the tried and tested stone,” “the precious cornerstone,” “the sure foundation.” He’s a foundation on which they can build. And Jesus is our rock!

1 Peter 2:6 applies this passage in Isaiah to Jesus. He is the “cornerstone” on which believers - the living stones - can rest their lives.

Sadly, the Jews in the last days will act hastily. They'll trust in the Antichrist, and watch him betray them. They should've entered into a covenant with Jesus Christ. He can be trusted!

17 Also I will make justice the measuring line,
And righteousness the plummet;
The hail will sweep away the refuge of lies,
And the waters will overflow the hiding place. Recall, a flood is an idiom for an army. The armies of the Antichrist will turn against Israel.

18 Your covenant with death will be annulled,
And your agreement with Sheol will not stand;
When the overflowing scourge passes through,
Then you will be trampled down by it. Daniel 9 tells us at the midpoint of the Great Tribulation the Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel. He'll claim to be god, and demand that the world worship him.

19 As often as it goes out it will take you;
For morning by morning it will pass over,
And by day and by night;
It will be a terror just to understand the report."

20 For the bed is too short to stretch out on,
And the covering so narrow that one cannot wrap himself in it. Israel tried to feel secure in their covenant - but the bed was too short, the blanket too small. Finally, their partner revealed his true colors. They were betrayed.

21 For the LORD will rise up as at Mount Perazim,
He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon—
That He may do His work, His awesome work,
And bring to pass His act, His unusual act. Perazim is a mountain four miles northwest of Jerusalem - on the way to Gibeon. The reference here is to Joshua 10, the Battle of Beth Horon. This was when God tinkered with the Earth's rotation to supply Joshua more daylight to defeat his enemies. Isaiah refers to it as an "awesome work" - God's "unusual act."

God even rained hailstones on the enemy as they tried to escape. During Joshua conquest of the land, God employed other unusual acts to win the victory, and take the land.

Of course, the name "Jesus" is Greek for the Hebrew "Joshua." And when Jesus returns to take the land, or planet Earth, like the Joshua before Him, He too will command the sun, and do some very "unusual acts."

22-25

22 Now therefore, do not be mockers,
Lest your bonds be made strong;
For I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts,
A destruction determined even upon the whole earth.

23 Give ear and hear my voice,
Listen and hear my speech.

24 Does the plowman keep plowing all day to sow?
Does he keep turning his soil and breaking the clods?
25 When he has leveled its surface,

Does he not sow the black cummin
And scatter the cummin,
Plant the wheat in rows,
The barley in the appointed place,
And the spelt in its place? The farmer doesn't prepare forever.
He eventually takes action... And so will God when He judges the whole earth.

26 For He instructs him in right judgment,
His God teaches him.

27 For the black cummin is not threshed with a threshing sledge,
Nor is a cartwheel rolled over the cummin;
But the black cummin is beaten out with a stick,
And the cummin with a rod.

28 Bread flour must be ground;
Therefore he does not thresh it forever,
Break it with his cartwheel,
Or crush it with his horsemen.

29 This also comes from the LORD of hosts,
Who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in guidance. As a farmer beats the leafs into spice, so the Lord knows how to most effectively bring forth His will.

Chapter 29

Woe to Jerusalem

Isaiah 28 was a woe against alcohol. Now Isaiah 29 is a woe against another form of intoxication - spiritual numbness.

1 “Woe to Ariel,[fn] to Ariel, the city where David dwelt!

Add year to year;

Let feasts come around.

2 Yet I will distress Ariel;

There shall be heaviness and sorrow,

And it shall be to Me as Ariel.

The Hebrew name “Ariel” means, “lion of God.” This was the nickname Jerusalem took, but this was far from God’s opinion of His people.

The Jews were living on a proud past. They harkened back to the days of David when the nation was mighty and they ruled their pagan neighbors. But those days were long gone.

Instead of calling upon God, they signed protection treaties with Pagan nations.

And here’s God’s response...

3 I will encamp against you all around,

I will lay siege against you with a mound,

And I will raise siegeworks against you. It’s difficult for us to imagine the terror of “siege warfare.” A siege occurred when a city was surrounded by its enemy’s army. Troops cut off all supply lines and communications. The siege army camped outside the city. Often cities were kept under siege for decades.

No matter how well stocked a city might be, it eventually ran out of food. Its residents were faced with the choice of surrender, starvation, or cannibalism.

So when Isaiah mentions the term “siege” it struck fear in his reader’s hearts. It brought to mind images of desperate, starving folks dying a slow, tortured death.

4 You shall be brought down,
You shall speak out of the ground;
Your speech shall be low, out of the dust;
Your voice shall be like a medium’s, out of the ground;
And your speech shall whisper out of the dust. Rather than roar like a lion they will speak in a low, mumbling, guttural growl.
There’s no laughter in a city under siege.
Yet God will deliver Jerusalem,
5-7

5 “Moreover the multitude of your foes
Shall be like fine dust,
And the multitude of the terrible ones
Like chaff that passes away;
Yes, it shall be in an instant, suddenly.
6 You will be punished by the LORD of hosts
With thunder and earthquake and great noise,
With storm and tempest
And the flame of devouring fire.
7 The multitude of all the nations who fight against Ariel,
Even all who fight against her and her fortress,
And distress her,
Shall be as a dream of a night vision. God will use the nations to judge His people, Israel. But then He Himself will judge the nations.

8 It shall even be as when a hungry man dreams,
And look—he eats;
But he awakes, and his soul is still empty;
Or as when a thirsty man dreams,
And look—he drinks;
But he awakes, and indeed he is faint,
And his soul still craves:
So the multitude of all the nations shall be,
Who fight against Mount Zion.” Israel’s enemies dreamed of conquest, but God brought about defeat. You can’t fight against God and win

9-10

9 Pause and wonder!
Blind yourselves and be blind!
They are drunk, but not with wine;
They stagger, but not with intoxicating drink.
10 For the LORD has poured out on you
The spirit of deep sleep,
And has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets;
And He has covered your heads, namely, the seers. God judged Jerusalem with a spiritual blindness - a spiritual slumber. Other than Isaiah the prophets and seers were asleep on the job!

A few decades earlier, around 750 BC, the Prophet Amos predicted this would happen. As Isaiah began his ministry, Amos was ending his. He said in **Amos 8:11... “Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord GOD,**
“That I will send a famine on the land,

Not a famine of bread,
Nor a thirst for water,
But of hearing the words of the LORD.

Isaiah was seeing the fulfillment of what Amos had prophesied. And sadly, this is the condition in our day.

11-12

11 The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, “Read this, please.”

And he says, “I cannot, for it is sealed.”

12 Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, “Read this, please.”

And he says, “I am not literate.” The idea is that nobody bothers to open their Bible and take heed. People who can read refuse to do so. They make excuses. “It’s too hard to understand... it’s sealed.”

13 Therefore the Lord said:

“Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths
And honor Me with their lips,
But have removed their hearts far from Me,
And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,
They say the right words, but their heart betrays those words.
They pay God lip service, but there’s no conviction, and no commitment, and no follow-through.

Jesus used this verse in Matthew 15 to describe the Pharisees of his own day. It's about willingness, not just words.

14 Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work
Among this people,
A marvelous work and a wonder;
For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish,
And the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden." God
will deliver His people from the promised siege. He'll be gracious.
They don't deserve His deliverance, but He'll grant it.
15-16

15 Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the
LORD,
And their works are in the dark;
They say, "Who sees us?" and, "Who knows us?"
16 Surely you have things turned around!
Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay;
For shall the thing made say of him who made it,
"He did not make me"?
Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it,
"He has no understanding"? The Potter has total sovereignty over
the clay. Likewise, God does whatever He pleases. The Clay,
that's us, answers to the Potter, not vice versa.

This is the verse Paul quotes when he discusses God's sovereignty in Romans 9. God doesn't ask me for permission, or owe me an explanation before He works. God is the potter. I'm just the clay in His hands.

17 Is it not yet a very little while
Till Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field,
And the fruitful field be esteemed as a forest? Lebanon was
known by the ancients for its cedars. Yet the Assyrians will flood
Lebanon as they march to Jerusalem and turn the forests into
plowed fields.

18-24

18 In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book,
And the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of
darkness.

19 The humble also shall increase their joy in the LORD,
And the poor among men shall rejoice
In the Holy One of Israel.

20 For the terrible one is brought to nothing,
The scornful one is consumed,
And all who watch for iniquity are cut off—

21 Who make a man an offender by a word,
And lay a snare for him who reproves in the gate,
And turn aside the just by empty words.

22 Therefore thus says the LORD, who redeemed Abraham,
concerning the house of Jacob:

“Jacob shall not now be ashamed,
Nor shall his face now grow pale;
23 But when he sees his children,
The work of My hands, in his midst,
They will hallow My name,
And hallow the Holy One of Jacob,

And fear the God of Israel.

24 These also who erred in spirit will come to understanding, And those who complained will learn doctrine." Though darkness and blindness covered Jerusalem in Isaiah's day, the future forecast is bright. Those "who erred in spirit will come to understanding."

And this is a prophecy for the last days. **Romans 11:25** For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so all Israel will be saved,[fn] as it is written:

"The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
27 For this is My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins." [fn]

By the time Jesus returns, Israel will be purified and embrace Him. God isn't through with Israel. They'll revere Him one day!