

Session 11 The Forerunner Message in Isaiah 32-33

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Isaiah 32-33 was an especially important prophetic message to the leaders of Jerusalem. Given within two years of Assyria laying siege to Jerusalem in 701 BC (32:10), the historical events mentioned here occurred around 704-701 BC.

B. Outline for Isaiah 32-33

32:1-20 The coming King will rule in righteousness

32:1-8 The coming King will rule in righteousness

32:9-14 An urgent exhortation to the complacent women

32:15-20 The transforming power of the Spirit

33:1-24 The certain victory of God's King and kingdom

33:1 The certain destruction of Assyria

33:2-4 Isaiah's prayer for help in the crisis with Assyria

33:5-6 Strengthened by the knowledge of God's victorious plan

33:7-9 The crisis of Assyria's betrayal of Jerusalem

33:10-12 God's judgment of Assyria

33:13-16 A godly response to God's judgments

33:17-24 The beauty of King Jesus

C. What happens *in fullness* when Jesus returns occurs *in part* now and in an increasing way.

II. THE COMING KING WILL RULE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS (ISA. 32:1-8)

A. In the millennial kingdom, Jesus will establish righteous leaders over society (32:1-4).

¹Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice. ²A man [godly leaders] will be as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. ³The eyes of those who see will not be dim, and the ears of those who hear will listen. ⁴Also the heart of the rash will understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers will be ready to speak plainly. (Isa. 32:1-4)

1. **King:** Isaiah saw the King when he was commissioned (Isa. 6). He is the beautiful king of 33:17 (cf. 6:1, 5; 24:23; 33:22) who rules in righteousness (1:26; 9:7; 11:4-5; 32:1-2, etc.).
2. **Princes:** Jesus' princes will rule with justice in contrast to the ungodly princes of Judah.
3. **Cover:** These godly princes will be a source of provision and blessing to the people of God. Godly leaders use their resources to strengthen others—to provide shelter from the storm and to be like water and shade in a desert (32:2).

4. **Eyes will not be dim:** Under the influence of godly leadership, the people will gain insight—physically and spiritually (32:3-4; cf. 29:10-11,18; 35:5; 42:18). The spiritual blindness and judicial hardening of Israel (6:9-10) will be removed when Jesus returns (Rom. 11:25-26). They will clearly understand and communicate God’s truth instead of rashly distorting it.

¹⁰***“Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes...”***
(Isa. 6:10)

²⁵***...blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.***

²⁶***And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion...”***
(Rom. 11:25-26)

- B. The current foolish leadership in Jerusalem was easily recognized (32:5-8).

- C. Isaiah called the women to rise up and see the reality of the crisis that was coming soon to their nation (32:9-11; cf. 3:16-26). Great trouble was coming to their nation within two years (32:10). These women assumed that the ease which they currently enjoyed would continue uninterrupted as it always had. Isaiah challenged them to listen, tremble, and be troubled.

⁹***Rise up, you women who are at ease, hear my voice; you complacent daughters, give ear to my speech.*** ¹⁰***In a year and some days you will be troubled, you complacent women; for the vintage will fail, the gathering will not come.*** ¹¹***Tremble, you women who are at ease; be troubled, you complacent ones; strip yourselves...and gird sackcloth on your waists.*** (Isa. 32:9-11)

1. They were “complacent” because they trusted the optimistic words of the political leaders just described (32:5-7) which assured them that their covenant with Assyria would hold up (33:8).
2. Isaiah gave seven exhortations to the complacent women. He called them to “rise up” in action to seek the Lord (30:18-17), to “hear his voice” by giving special attention to gain understanding of the coming crisis (32:12-14), to “give ear” by applying the truth to their life, to “tremble” in light of the crisis coming within two years (32:10), to “be troubled” by implications of military invasion (32:12-14), to “strip themselves” of anything that hindered their spiritual preparation, and to “gird themselves” with sackcloth [in fasting; Joel 2:12-13].
3. Isaiah spoke of both God’s kindness (32:1-4) and judgement (32:12-14) to motivate them.

²²***Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness.*** (Rom. 11:22)

- D. The land of Judah was soon to suffer a great crisis. An Assyrian military invasion resulted in the harvest being devastated (mourn for the pleasant fields), the land being deserted (thorns coming up), and the homes of even the wealthy (palaces) being forsaken, as 200,000 people were taken captive by Assyria. The agricultural and economic crisis resulted in significant food shortages. The destruction begun by Assyria (701 BC) was completed 115 years later by Babylon (586 BC).

¹²***People shall mourn upon their breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine.*** ¹³***On the land of my people [Judah] will come up thorns and briars, yes, on all the happy homes in the joyous city;*** ¹⁴***because the palaces will be forsaken, the bustling city [Jerusalem] will be deserted...***
(Isa. 32:12-14)

- E. Trouble in Israel would continue “until” the time when the Spirit was poured out in fullness in context to coming of the King (32:1) who will rule in righteousness, heal the land, and bring world peace. At Jesus’ return, even the wilderness will become fruit fields (33:15; cf. 30:23-26).

¹⁵*Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field...*

¹⁶*Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness...in the fruitful field. ¹⁷The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. (Isa. 32:15-17)*

1. Justice and righteousness will be established throughout all of society, even the wilderness. The source of the transformation is the new King anointed with the Spirit (32:1, 15; 11:1-3).
2. Quietness and assurance are the opposite of fear and anxiety (32:17; cf. 30:15).

¹⁵*In returning and rest...in quietness and confidence shall be your strength. (Isa. 30:15)*

III. THE CERTAIN VICTORY OF GOD’S KING AND KINGDOM (ISA. 33:1-24)

- A. The certain destruction of Assyria (33:1): Isaiah 33 continues the theme from Isaiah 32. The Assyrian empire is referred to as the “treacherous one who plunders” (33:1), who broke the covenant with the leaders in Jerusalem (33:8), and who speaks with a stammering tongue (33:19).

¹*Woe to you who plunder [Assyria]...and you who deal treacherously...! When you cease plundering, you will be plundered...they will deal treacherously with you. (Isa. 33:1)*

- B. Hezekiah made a covenant of peace with Assyria, paying tribute to Sennacherib (2 Kgs. 18:14-17).

¹⁴*Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, “I have done wrong; turn away from me; whatever you impose on me I will pay.” And the king of Assyria assessed Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. ¹⁵So Hezekiah gave him all the silver... in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king’s house...¹⁷Then the king of Assyria sent...a great army against Jerusalem... (2 Kgs. 18:14-17)*

- C. Isaiah’s prayer for help in the crisis with Assyria (33:2-4): The words “people” and “nations” indicate the Gentile nations. When God *lifts Himself up*, it speaks **of** openly defeating His enemies.

²*O LORD, be gracious to us; we have waited for You. Be...our salvation also in the time of trouble. ³At the noise of the tumult the people [Assyrians] shall flee; when You lift Yourself up, the nations shall be scattered; ⁴And Your plunder shall be gathered... (Isa. 33:2-4)*

1. **Waited for You:** He assured them that God waited to hear the sound of their cry (30:18-19).

¹⁸*...the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you...¹⁹He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you. (Isa. 30:18-19)*

2. **Plunder:** Judah will gather the plunder of the defeated armies of the Antichrist (Zech. 14:14).

¹⁴*Judah also will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be gathered together: gold, silver, and apparel in great abundance. (Zech. 14:14)*

- D. The Lord's commitment to fill Jerusalem with justice instead of Jewish victims of war (33:6): God's people are strengthened by the knowledge of God's victorious plan (33:6).

⁵*The LORD is exalted, for He dwells on high, He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness.*

⁶*Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, and the strength of salvation; the fear of the LORD is His treasure...¹⁷Your eyes will see the King in His beauty... (Isa. 33:5-6, 17)*

1. **Strength:** Strength comes from knowledge—knowing the biblical narrative of the end times strengthens people with confidence and brings stability. The Spirit will emphasize Jesus' beauty in the end times (33:17). God's people will find strength by delighting in His beauty.
2. **Fear of the Lord:** One gift of God to His people in the time of crisis is the assurance that He sees everything and that even our small choices to obey and trust Him matter deeply to Him.

¹³*...but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account...*

¹⁶*Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace... (Heb. 4:13, 16)*

- E. The crisis of Assyria's betrayal of Jerusalem (33:7-9): Isaiah described the anguish of the Jewish people after the Assyrian King Sennacherib broke his peace treaty with them (2 Kgs. 18:14-17).

⁷*Surely their valiant ones shall cry outside; the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.*

⁸*The highways lie waste, the traveling man ceases. He [Assyrian king] has broken the covenant, he has despised the cities, he regards no man. ⁹The earth mourns and languishes, Lebanon is shamed...Sharon is like a wilderness, and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits. (Isa. 33:7-9)*

1. **Weep bitterly:** Even the valiant soldiers of Jerusalem would cry openly, and the ambassadors returning from peace talks with the Assyrians wept bitterly.
2. **Covenant:** Things seemed hopeless after Assyria broke the peace agreement with Jerusalem.
3. **Earth mourns:** Lebanon, Sharon, Carmel, and Bashan were known for wealth and beauty.

- F. God's judgment of Assyria (33:10-12): God is said to rise and exalt Himself in the times that He openly manifests His power to save His people and confront His enemies. Jerusalem suffered for a season, but in God's perfect timing He arose in answer to Isaiah's prayer (33:2-4).

¹⁰*“Now I will rise...now I will be exalted, now I will lift Myself up...¹²The people [Assyrians] shall be...like thorns cut up they shall be burned in the fire...” (Isa. 33:10-12)*

1. **Burn:** The nations making up the Assyrian army will burn quickly like dry thorn bushes. This burning of Assyria included an angel killing 185,000 soldiers in one night (37:36).
2. **I will arise:** When God “rises up” (33:10), or “lifts Himself up” (33:3), or “exalts Himself” (33:5), it speaks God manifesting His power in history to defeat His enemies openly.
3. The Lord manifests His zeal when He “arises” to intervene in history with His judgments to openly confront that which opposes His leadership.

G. A godly response to God's judgments (33:13-16): Isaiah calls all in the nations to pay attention to what God did to His own people (Judah) and to His enemies (Assyria) when He "rises up."

¹³**"Hear, you who are afar off, what I have done; and you who are near, acknowledge My might."**

¹⁴**The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"**

¹⁵**He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly...¹⁶He will dwell on high... (Isa. 33:13-16)**

1. **Afar off:** The result is that people who are "far away" in foreign nations and those who are "near" in Judah will see His judgment of both Judah (33:7-9) and Assyria (33:10-12).

2. **Sinners in Zion:** Those who grew up with a spiritual heritage in the things of God, yet continue to live in compromise, are referred to as "sinners in Zion"—a bit of an oxymoron.

3. **Afraid:** Sinners and hypocrites in Zion are terrified in seeing God's zeal in confronting sin. They tremble as they come face to face with their own danger in recognizing God's zeal in judging Judah and Assyria. God's end-time judgments will strike terror into the hearts of people—especially those who are familiar with the Scripture and the things of God.

4. **Dwell with fire:** Who can dwell in the manifest presence of God? —He is a consuming fire.

²⁴**For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. (Deut. 4:24)**

5. **He who walks righteously:** Isaiah answered the question in 33:14 by giving six responses of a person who chooses righteousness (33:15). Psalm 15 and 24 give a similar answer.

6. **He will dwell on high:** A person choosing righteousness will find grace to "dwell on high" (33:16) in the presence of God who Himself dwells on high (33:5).

H. The beauty of the King (33:17-24): God's people gain strength by encountering Jesus' beauty (33:6). One of the Spirit's emphases at the end of the age is on revealing the beauty of God.

¹⁷**Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; they will see the land that is very far off. ¹⁸Your heart will meditate on terror: "Where is the scribe? Where is he who weighs? Where is he who counts the towers?" ¹⁹You will not see a fierce people, a people of obscure speech... (Isa. 33:17-19)**

1. **Your eyes:** Those choosing to live in righteousness in 33:15-16 are the ones Isaiah addresses here in "your" eyes will see the King's beauty. The pure in heart will see God (Mt. 5:8).

2. **Land that is very far off:** lit. "land of far distances." Jesus' rule extends to the whole earth.

3. **Your heart will meditate on terror:** This speak of God's judgment both on Judah (33:7-9) and on Assyria (33:10-12).

4. **The scribe and he who weighs:** The Assyrian officials occupying Judah who wrote things down and weighed things out when making records to report to the Assyrian government.

5. **Not see a fierce people:** The Lord promised that the Assyrians and all other foreign powers will be removed forever from the land of Israel when Jesus sits on His throne in Jerusalem.

- I. Isaiah urges the redeemed to look or meditate on the future of Jerusalem or Zion (33:20). Jerusalem will be a city of peace that will never again be defeated.

²⁰Look upon Zion...your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet home, a tabernacle that will not be taken down...²¹But there the majestic LORD will be for us a place of broad rivers and streams, in which no galley with oars will sail, nor majestic [mighty] ships pass by ²²(For the LORD is our Judge, the LORD is our Lawgiver, the LORD is our King; He will save us); ²³your [Assyria's] tackle is loosed, they could not strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail. Then the prey of great plunder is divided; the lame take the prey. ²⁴And the inhabitant will not say, "I am sick"; the people who dwell in it will be forgiven their iniquity. (Isa. 33:20-24)

- J. The Antichrist's siege against Jerusalem will not succeed because the majestic Lord will be there "for us" or for the people living in Jerusalem (33:21). He will rescue them from all their enemies.

- K. ***Broad rivers***: Since there are no rivers in Jerusalem, the mention of ships challenges interpreters. Some see this as God being compared to a "river of supply" to His people. Others see it as the river of living water flowing out of the millennial temple in Jerusalem that no military ship dares to sail.

⁸In that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea [Dead Sea] and half of them toward the western sea [Mediterranean Sea] ... (Zech. 14:8)

1. Ezekiel saw a river with living waters that brought healing (Ezek. 47:1-12).

¹Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from...the temple...⁵it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep ...⁷There, along the bank of the river, were very many trees on one side and the other.

⁸Then he said to me: "This water flows...when it reaches the sea, its waters are healed..." (Ezek. 47:1-8)

2. The Psalmist saw a river flowing out of the temple in Jerusalem (Ps. 46:4; 65:9).

⁴There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God... (Ps. 46:4)

⁹You visit the earth...You greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water... (Ps. 65:9)

- L. ***Your tackle is loosed***: Isaiah described a disabled and deserted ship of the defeated Assyrian army after the Lord sent His angel to kill 185,000 soldiers. The cords that held up the sail or flag of the Assyrian ship were loose because the soldiers responsible for their maintenance were killed. When the Judahites saw the flag not flying, they approached to take the plunder left by the dead soldiers. The victory would be so great that even the lame would take the spoils of the defeated Assyrians. Some see this "disabled ship" as a picture of all of the enemies of Israel whom the Lord defeats.

- M. ***Judge, Lawgiver, and King***: Jesus will be the ***Judge*** (over all the courts), the ***Lawgiver*** (over all the legal systems), and the ***King*** (the head of the worldwide government). The reason for Jerusalem's security is that Jesus will live in Jerusalem as their Judge, Lawgiver, and King.

- N. ***No one is sick and all are forgiven***: There shall be no sickness in the millennial Jerusalem, and all who are permitted to live there are forgiven and walk strong in the grace of God (33:24).