

Isaiah 28 Handout

Last week we studied Isaiah 26 which described the song God's people will sing after judgment. They praise Him for being their true security, for giving peace to those who trust Him, and for humbling the proud. Even in waiting and weakness, they cling to hope—including the promise that the dead will live. Then in Isaiah 27 we saw God defeating evil and restoring His people like a carefully tended vineyard. The judgment was real, but it was purposeful and measured. In the end, God removes what destroys and gathers His people home. Isaiah 28 acts as a pivotal transition. It shifts from the broad apocalyptic judgments of chapters 24-27 to specific, immediate warnings against the northern kingdom and Judah. Chapters 28-33 are referred to as the "Six Woes" aimed at Judah and Ephraim.

Verses 1-4 READ

How does verse 1 begin? _____

This is a prophetic word of warning that God's judgment is coming. It says, "*Woe to that wreath, the pride of Ephraim's drunkards*".

Ephraim is referring to the Northern Kingdom (Israel). Its capital city Samaria sat on a hill at the head of a rich, fertile valley like a crown. This capital city was a visible symbol of national pride and achievement. But they were corrupted by drunkenness and spiritual decay.

We see that what looks beautiful and strong is already withering. Ephraim's once glorious beauty (their prosperity, power and prestige) which they foolishly looked to rather than relying on God was all destined to fade away, just like a wilting flower. Their pride and self-indulgence will lead to their downfall.

- Wreath / Crown —> their symbol of power
- Glorious beauty —> their self-image
- Fading flower —> God's evaluation

What are they laid low by (end of verse 1)? _____

Because of their location and wealth, they mistakenly thought they were secure and therefore spent way too much time drinking, which now controlled them.

Listen to what Andrew M. Davis says about this verse in his commentary on Isaiah: "*The Lord speaks of the pride of Ephraim, a crown of splendor on the heads of drunkards. The image is repulsive: Ephraim is like a drunkard, slumped in his banquet chair; he is sleeping, drooling, with a faded crown of past glory set crookedly on his head.*"

In verse 2 we see the Lord has someone in mind to deal with Israel.

How are they described? _____

They will be like:

- A hailstorm
- A destructive wind
- A driving rain
- A flooding downpour

This is referring to the nation of Assyria. Think about how this coming invasion is described.

Verse 3

What's going to happen to Samaria (that wreath, the pride of Ephraim)? _____

Verse 4 shows us how easily the enemy would be able to seize and consume Israel. Israel's once glorious beauty would become a quick and easy meal for invaders.

In these first four verses we see a lot of repetition:

- "that wreath/crown" (vs.1,3),
 - This is emphasizing their self-exaltation, their visible prosperity and their false sense of security.
- "his glorious beauty" (vs.1,4), "head of a fertile field" (vs.1,4)
 - These phrases are repeated to emphasize the beauty of Samaria, the economic prosperity and strength. They took pride in this. In fact, their glory became their confidence.
- "Ephraim's drunkards" (vs.1,3)
 - Shows indulgence and highlights the leader's lack of clarity and moral seriousness. It stresses their spiritual dullness.
- "fading flower" (vs.1,4)
 - This stresses that beauty doesn't last, that glory is temporary and pride that is wilting. This repetition reinforces the contrast between appearance and reality. What they think is secure and glorious is actually already withering. They just don't know it.

So we see that Isaiah uses repetition to slowly strip away the illusion of strength, and exposes the contrast between external beauty and internal corruption. What they call a crown, God calls a fading flower.

Verses 5-6

The "*In that day*" at the beginning of verse 5 is referring to the time after God's judgment has been brought on Israel.

Who will be a "glorious crown" and a "beautiful wreath" for the remnant? _____

He becomes the true crown of glory for the people who have abandoned their pride in willing submission to Him.

What two things does verse 6 say He will be?

- _____
- _____

Verses 7-8

Who else is accused of drunkenness? _____

Whether this is literal drunkenness or symbolic of moral confusion (or maybe both), the point being made here is that the people who are responsible for giving God's truth can't think clearly or lead faithfully.

Verse 8 intensifies the imagery – “*all the tables are covered with vomit, and there is not a spot without filth.*” This is such graphic imagery, and it’s done on purpose. What should be sacred (possibly priestly tables used in worship or fellowship) has become polluted.

These two verses show a picture of total corruption as it exposes failed leadership. They also contrast majorly with verse 6 where we saw how the Lord Himself will bring justice and strength.

Verses 9-10

These two verses are showing how the people are mocking Isaiah. Isaiah is the “he” in verse 9. Verses 7-8 described the drunken priests and prophets who are discredited. Verse 9 quotes their sarcastic response to his message. “Who does he think he’s talking to, treating us like infants just weaned from milk?”

A literal translation of verse 10 in Hebrew is, “law after law, law after law, line after line, line after line.” In modern terms it would probably be more like, “Blah, blah, blah, yadda, yadda, yadda.” This is a dismissive attitude. They are implying that Isaiah’s teaching is too simple and too slow – like teaching babies.

God’s truth is given gradually and carefully, line by line, precept by precept. Each “rule” or “instruction” builds on the previous one. God uses repetition and small steps so that people can understand and live it out. The leaders treat this method that God uses as ridiculous or overly simple, because they are arrogant and think it’s beneath them.

Verses 11-13

How does verse 11 say God will speak to this people?

This is such a strong message being given here.

God basically says, “*All right then, since you reject my plain speaking through Isaiah, you’ll hear me through the tongues of foreigners. When they are trampling your land and commanding in their language the slaughter of your people, then you will understand what I’ve been trying to say to you through Isaiah’s “baby talk”.*”

In verse 12 we get what they rejected. What was it? _____

God has offered Himself as a resting place for His people – a source of stability and peace, but they refuse to turn to Him because of their pride and arrogance.

Verse 13 shows the consequences of their refusal to find rest in God. Because the people wouldn’t listen, God is going to allow foreigners speaking a strange language to become the instrument of His judgment.

Notice how God turns their sarcasm back on them in verse 13. They mocked His step by step teaching as being too simple. Because of this, He sends a judgment that they cannot understand or control.

The last part of verse 13 shows four things that will happen:

- Fall backward
- Be injured
- Snared
- Captured

Their pride and refusal cause defeat and humiliation (fall backward). Injured, snared and captured shows complete vulnerability. The very guidance they scorned results in disaster.

Verses 14-15

What are rulers in Jerusalem called in verse 14? _____

This is most likely referring to their mocking attitude towards God's instruction, continuing the theme from verses 9-10.

Isaiah is calling Judah to pay attention to what is happening to the Northern Kingdom and the message to their leaders. Maybe they can learn something from what he's been saying. Judgment is imminent in the north, and it is unclear if they will escape in the south. If they don't change their ways, they will definitely find themselves facing the same fate.

Who does Jerusalem claim to have made a covenant with? _____

When Israel says they "entered into a covenant with death" it is basically saying that they are trusting in something that ultimately leads to ruin. When they relied on alliances, military schemes, wealth, etc., they were effectively signing a covenant with destruction.

Saying "*for we have made a lie our refuge and falsehood our hiding place*" shows that they have covered their vulnerabilities with deception. It may feel safe, but it is only temporary. The outcome will be ruin and captivity.

Using the word "covenant" implies commitment and reliance. By choosing lies and human schemes over God, Judah is actively binding themselves to a path that leads to judgment.

Let's see how God responds to this in verse 16.

Verse 16

The verse starts with "so". This shows that God is responding to Judah's false confidence (vs.14-15). The use of the Sovereign Lord stresses His ultimate authority.

This verse is the theological heart of the chapter. Verse 15 shows what happens when people trust themselves. Verse 16 shows the solution that God provides. This verse counters everything about self protection.

We get a transition from human pride and false security to God's faithful, unshakable foundation.

What does the Lord say He has laid in Zion? _____

Listen to the description of this stone:

- ❖ A tested stone
- ❖ A precious cornerstone
- ❖ For a sure foundation

The cornerstone is the most important stone in a building. It is positioned where two walls intersect at the corner of a building. By connecting these two intersecting walls, it helps align the entire structure and bind it together.

God's "tested stone, precious cornerstone" means He is the true foundation for life and faith, unlike human lies or schemes. This is not temporary security here; this foundation will hold no matter what comes.

What happens to the one who relies on it? They will never be stricken with panic (shaken) Those who trust in the Lord and His provision don't need to panic when everything shakes.

This verse has near and far implications. For Judah's leaders, God is showing that they are building on sand (alliances, lies, self-sufficiency). This is all going to collapse. God says He is laying the real, sure foundation.

The New Testament directly identifies this stone with Jesus.

I Peter 2:6 quotes this verse: *"For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."* Peter is saying here that what Isaiah promised, Jesus fulfills.

In Romans 9:33, Paul connects this to salvation: *"As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame."*

Paul is combining Isaiah 28:16 and Isaiah 8:14.

Isaiah 8:14 says, *"He will be a holy place; for both Israel and Judah he will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare."*

He is saying that Jesus is both a cornerstone for believers and a stumbling stone for those who reject Him. This means that our response to it determines stability or stumbling.

Verses 17-19

I will make _____ the measuring line and _____ the plumb line.

A plumb line is a weight on a string that forms a perfectly vertical line and is used to confirm the straightness of a wall. Here we see that God's justice and righteousness will be the standard by which He will measure.

What does verse 17 say will sweep away their refuge and overflow their hiding place?

What will happen to their covenant of death (vs.18)? _____

Instead they will be beaten down by the overwhelming scourge.

In verse 19 we see God's judgment will come again and again without pause (*"morning after morning, by day and by night"*). It is going to sweep away false security.

What does it say in verse 19 that the understanding of this message will bring? _____

Finally they are going to understand this truth; they will realize that Isaiah was right. This verse shows the moment of awakening, but their understanding comes too late.

Verses 20-22

Isaiah uses two images to show inadequate security:

- A bed too short to stretch out on
 - No real rest
- A blanket too narrow to wrap around you
 - No real protection

Isaiah is saying that their human solutions are like a bed too short or a blanket too narrow.

How does this imagery describe the feeling of trying to find peace in things other than God?

What does it say the Lord will do at the beginning of verse 21? _____

It gives two places where God rose up in the past - Mount Perazim and the Valley of Gibeon. This is referring to two times where God miraculously intervened in battle on Israel's behalf.

Mount Perazim is referring to a valley west of Jerusalem where David defeated the Philistines, with God breaking through the enemy "like a bursting flood". (II Samuel 5:20, I Chronicles 14:11). The Valley of Gibeon is referring to the site of Joshua's victory over the Amorites, where God caused the sun to stand still and threw down great hailstones (Joshua 10:10-14).

Listen to the end of verse 21 again: *"to do his work, his strange work, and perform his task, his alien task."* This is odd phrasing. In the Hebrew, the idea is something unusual, foreign, or not His normal way. The two examples we just talked about showed God rising up to defend His people. Now we see God is going to rise again, but this time it won't be for Judah, but against them. That's why it's strange and alien. God's normal posture is one of mercy, protection,

faithfulness and rescue. But because they choose to persist in rebellion, He now must act in discipline. Judgment here is strange because it feels shocking when compared to His covenant love.

What does it say to stop doing in verse 22? _____

What will happen if they don't? _____

Isaiah closes this chapter with what many refer to as a wisdom parable. Up to now, he's been talking about the word of God and how the scoffers and drunkards refuse to listen. He is now going to illustrate his point by using the world of agriculture. It teaches the same lesson in two phases: plowing and planting and then harvesting and threshing.

Verses 23

This verse is a clear call to pay attention.

Listen and hear _____; pay attention and hear what _____

This is coming directly from the Lord.

This parable is showing the various ways that God works in history. Sometimes He deals harshly with His people, while other times He acts in great tenderness towards them. Sometimes He saves them from their enemies while other times He gives them over. So why does the way He works change so much? This parable gives us the answer.

Verses 24-26

A farmer changes the manner in which he works according to what stage of farming he is in. He doesn't continuously plow. He doesn't just keep working the soil. Once he plows and the soil is ready, he plants. Plowing is not the goal; it's a means to an end.

Verse 25 shows us that when it comes to planting, different seeds are planted differently, in specific places with intentional care.

Who instructs the farmer? _____

He teaches him the right way. The farmer is using the wisdom that he has received from the Lord. That's why his work is so productive – he is willing to listen to God's guidance, unlike the proud, foolish leaders of Jerusalem.

Verses 27-29

We read in verses 27-28 that different grains are threshed differently. Delicate seeds need gentle treatment while hard grains require heavier tools.

“Grain must be ground... but one does not go on threshing it forever.” This is the heart of the passage. God doesn't go on judging forever. His discipline is measured, not excessive. God knows exactly how much pressure to apply, when to apply it, and when to stop—so that something good can grow.

Verse 29 gives us the conclusion to the chapter.

Who is all of this coming from? _____

“whose plan is wonderful and whose wisdom is magnificent.”

So we see that God is not working haphazardly. He is working according to a plan. Most of the processes described in the parable we just read would suggest pain – plowing, threshing, grinding. But they are all necessary to reach the end goal of food production. In a similar way, the Lord is using this time of judgment for the good of His people. There is an end goal and that is to restore His people to Himself.

The Cornerstone (vs.16) and the Parable of the Farmer (vs.23-29) work together to show that God’s methods are purposeful, measured and founded on an unshakeable plan, even when His actions seem strange or painful.

- The Problem: False Foundations (vs.1-15)
 - The leaders trusted in political alliances and self-confidence. They thought they had made a “covenant with death” - a foundation they think will protect them.
 - The question that gets raised here is, “If everything they trusted is unstable, what *can* bear weight?”
- The Cornerstone: The Sure Foundation (vs.16)
 - God’s answer to failed human foundations is to lay a tested, precious cornerstone for a sure foundation.
 - This cornerstone represents the Messiah (Jesus), the only foundation that cannot be shaken. It provides stability for those who believe.
 - Just as a cornerstone aligns an entire building, God’s justice and righteousness are the “measuring line” and “plumb line” that expose everything that is crooked.
- The Farming: The Skillful Methodology (vs.23-29)
 - Isaiah used the farmer parable to explain why God is acting this way.
 - Purposeful plowing - a farmer doesn’t plow endlessly. He only breaks the ground long enough to prepare it for seed. Similarly, God’s discipline is not meant to last forever, but to prepare the soil of the heart for new life.
 - The farmer uses various tools for different crops. This shows that God’s discipline is proportional; He knows exactly how much pressure to apply to each person or nation to produce a harvest without being crushed.
 - The farmer knows the techniques to use because God taught him.

The cornerstone is the *Where* (the secure place to stand), while the farmer is the *How* (the process God uses to get us there). The goal is a harvest – the farmer threshes the grain to make bread. God threshes His people to remove the “chaff” of sin and produce righteousness. We need to trust the process. When life feels like a “threshing floor”, we can remain steadfast because our foundation is secure and we know that God is acting with perfect, loving precision.

So what does it practically look like to build our daily lives on this “precious cornerstone” rather than on “shifting sands”?

❖ Start the day with dependence, not strategy

- Instead of: “How do I manage everything today?”
It becomes: “Lord, where are You already at work? Help me walk in trust.”
- This is not about performance, but alignment

❖ Let truth interpret your emotions

- Shifting sand says: “This feeling defines reality.”
- The Stone says: “This feeling is real — but it is not ultimate.”

❖ Choose obedience in small things

- Small obediences are foundation work.
 - Speaking truth when it’s uncomfortable
 - Refusing to retaliate
 - Forgiving
 - Telling the truth instead of spinning it

❖ Anchor identity in what doesn’t move

- Sand identity:
 - “I am okay if things are okay.”
 - “I am valuable if I perform well.”
 - “I am secure if I can prevent pain.”

Stone identity:

“I am held, even when everything shakes.”

“I am known, even when misunderstood.”

“I am loved, even in grief.”

Storms don’t mean the foundation failed. They reveal what it was built on.

Something important to remember is that building on the Stone doesn’t mean that you won’t suffer, grieve, shake or question. It means that you are choosing trust underneath the shaking. The house may tremble, but the foundation does not.

Practical ways to apply this chapter:

❖ Beware of subtle self-reliance

- False security often feels wise in the moment.
- God sometimes allows it to collapse so we can find a truer foundation.

Ask: Where am I trusting my own strategy more than God?

Where do I feel “secure” because of control, planning or image?

❖ Don’t despise simple truth

- The leaders mocked Isaiah's message as childish repetition. They didn't reject the truth because it was unclear. They rejected it because it was simple.
- Sometimes maturity isn't discovering new truth, but rather obeying what we already know.

Ask: Am I overlooking simple obedience because I want something deeper or more dramatic?

Is God repeating something to me that I keep dismissing?

In what ways might we sometimes dismiss simple biblical truths because they feel "too basic" for our sophisticated problems?

❖ Align with the plumb line

- God says he will make justice and righteousness the standard by which He measures (the plumb line).
- The plumb line does not destroy, It realigns.

Ask: What standard am I currently using to measure myself?

Am I asking God to adjust His standards to fit my comfort?

Do I measure myself by culture, feelings, or Scripture?

❖ Remember: God's foundation is secure

- The leaders of Jerusalem built on political alliances; God offers a cornerstone.
- God Himself establishes what is stable.

Ask: What is my emotional life built on?

When everything shakes, what remains?

Am I anchoring in outcomes, or in God's character?

❖ God's discipline is purposeful

- It is not random wrath; it's corrective.

Ask: Where might God be exposing something false in me?

What hard thing in my life might actually be clearing ground for something stronger?