

**Strange Alien Work  
God is Love and He is Also Holy  
Isaiah 28:20–29:1**

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When we were last together, we finished up at Isaiah 28:20. Isaiah was telling the leadership of Judah that they had made their bed, and now they had to sleep in it. The false sense of security they were relying on was the same as sleeping on a bed that is too short and with covers that will not cover you. Uncomfortable to say the least.

YAHWEH is showing the ruling elite of Jerusalem that rhetoric and positive confession and legalism alone don't work, they never have. The people need to be trusting in the Lord and His mighty hand, not anything else. Especially agreements with the nations of the world who will only disappoint.

YAHWEH follows up with two examples of how He views having to apply judgment. He considers it to be a strange act, something unusual and alien for Him to be doing.

Many who are universalists reject the Old Testament because they think it contains contradictions to the character of God, it doesn't. We see here that God Himself recognizes the activity of judgment is unusual, yet it is also appropriate when His attributes are fully examined.

*Isaiah 28:21*

*"For the LORD will rise up as at Mount Perazim, He will be stirred up as in the valley of Gibeon, To do His task, His unusual task, And to work His work, His extraordinary work." (NASB95)*

Isaiah is assuming his readers have a thorough knowledge of their Old Testament history. As NT believers in the 21st century, we read this and struggle a bit. Isaiah is using Mount Perazim and the valley of Gibeon as examples. What are they all about?

Let's look at Mount Perazim first. We find the story reflected in 2 Samuel 5:17-25 and in 1 Chronicles 14:8-17. The timing is after David has secured Jerusalem as his capital.

**1 Chronicles 14:8–17**

*“When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king of all Israel, all the Philistines marched up to confront him. When David heard about it, he marched out against them. Now the Philistines had come and raided the Valley of Rephaim. David asked God, “Should I march up against the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?” The LORD said to him, “March up! I will hand them over to you!” So they marched against Baal Perazim and David defeated them there. David said, “Using me as his instrument, God has burst out against my enemies like water bursts out.” So that place is called Baal Perazim. The Philistines left their idols there, so David ordered that they be burned. The Philistines again raided the valley. So David again asked God what he should do. This time God told him, “Don’t march up after them; circle around them and come against them in front of the trees. When you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the trees, then attack. For at that moment the LORD is going before you to strike down the army of the Philistines.” David did just as God commanded him, and they struck down the Philistine army from Gibeon to Gezer. So David became famous in all the lands; the LORD caused all the nations to fear him.” (NET)*

To the west of Jerusalem, near the western suburbs is the Valley of the Rephaim, Baal Perazim is near there. Looking from the northwest.



(Bolen 2012, Used with Permission)

This is an area to the west and south between Jerusalem and Bethlehem and looks very different today, especially from the air.



(Bolen, Rephaim Valley aerial from north 2012, Used with Permission)

Not once, but on two occasions in this valley, YAHWEH went before David and provided him the victory. In both cases, David inquired of the Lord and was provided instructions from Him. YAHWEH took to the field on behalf of the nation and gave them the victory doing so in an overwhelming way. He established the fear of David as a military leader on the surrounding nations. This helped to finally finish the work of securing the land that Joshua started. The failure of Israel to complete it until David was due to sin. This overwhelming flood of victory YAHWEH gave is used as an example of just how He intends to judge His own people unless they repent.

The Lord secured David on the throne by signal defeats of the Philistines. This was the stepping-stone to national security and the establishment of Zion. But the deepest result of turning from the word of God is to excite divine enmity. Those who rejected the divine promises located in Zion (16) would find that their portion is wrath on the same scale. (Motyer 1999, 212)

The second example goes back to the time of Joshua and the taking of the land at the direction of YAHWEH.

#### *Joshua 10:5–14*

*“So the five Amorite kings (the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon) and all their troops gathered together and advanced. They deployed their troops and fought against Gibeon. The men of Gibeon sent this message to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal, “Do not abandon your subjects! Rescue us! Help us! For all the Amorite kings living in the hill country are attacking us.” So Joshua and his whole army, including the bravest warriors, marched up from Gilgal. The LORD told Joshua, “Don’t be afraid of them, for I am handing them over to you. Not one of them can resist you.” Joshua attacked them by surprise after marching all night from Gilgal. The LORD routed them before Israel. Israel thoroughly defeated them at Gibeon. They chased them up the road to the pass of Beth Horon and struck them down all the way to Azekah and Makkedah. As they fled from Israel on the slope leading down from Beth Horon, the LORD threw down on them large hailstones from the sky, all the way to Azekah. They died—in fact, more died from the hailstones than the Israelites killed with the sword. The day the LORD delivered the Amorites over to the Israelites, Joshua prayed to the LORD before Israel: “O sun, stand still over Gibeon! O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon!” The sun stood still and the moon stood motionless while the nation took vengeance on its enemies. The event is recorded in the Scroll of the Upright One. The sun stood motionless in the middle of the sky and did not set for about a full day. There has not been a day like it before or since. The LORD obeyed a man, for the LORD fought for Israel!” (NET)*

Here is where all the action took place, the area around Azekah in the Elah Valley looking from the south.



(Bolen, Azekah and Elah Vallet aerial form south 2012, Used with Permission)



(Bolen, Central Benjamin Plateau aerial from south 2012, Used with Permission)

The Valley of Gibeon is where YAHWEH struck down the fleeing enemy and showed up in a display of awesome power for Israel with the long day of Joshua, and with hail and meteors.

He was judging the people of the land. *“In the fourth generation your descendants will return here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its limit.”* (Genesis 15:16, NET)

The actions of Moses, Joshua, Caleb the judges, Saul and finally David were instrumental in taking the land and judging the inhabitants of the land for their sin. This sin included the nations abiding with an ongoing gene pool problem ala Genesis 6. Hint: Giants in the land.

These two examples being shown to the nation by Isaiah at this point are important. Just as YAHWEH stood up and did miracles on behalf of His people to judge the Amorites and others in the land in order to give them the land, He would now do the same to judge His people and remove them from the land.

*Isaiah 28:21*

*“For the LORD will rise up as at Mount Perazim, He will be stirred up as in the valley of Gibeon, To do His task, His unusual task, And to work His work, His extraordinary work.”* (NASB95)

The purpose of His rising and His raging is to accomplish His work (cf. 5:12), even the work of judgment. Yet Isaiah describes this as a strange work, and the performing of his task as something foreign. This does not mean that in His work God will act as a stranger or foreigner would act. Nor does it mean that retributive justice is something foreign or alien to God’s nature. God is love; but God is also a consuming fire, and the work of punishment is right and just. An essential attribute of His nature is His vindicatory justice. Apparently what Isaiah means (although the language is difficult and one must not be dogmatic), is that what is to take place is something unusual, foreign from the ordinary course of providence. (Young 1969, 293)

God saves through judgment to show the glory of his character at the Fall, at the Flood, at the exodus from Egypt, at Israel’s exile from the land, at the cross, and at the existential point of conversion for everyone who repents of sin and believes unto salvation; and God will show His glory by saving through judgment when all things are consummated at the return of Christ. (Hamilton, Jr. 2010, 558)

When God moves against His own people due to their unfaithfulness and sin, judgment is a necessary but unusual act for God.



### Lamentations 3:32–33

*“For if He causes grief, Then He will have compassion According to His abundant lovingkindness. For He does not afflict willingly Or grieve the sons of men.” (NASB95)* This is His strange work.

Going back to the statement God gave to Abraham about why four generations. *“Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.” (Genesis 15:16, NASB95)* God gave them time to repent, but they did not, and Israel was used to judge them. The people were warned about what would take place if they were not faithful. They had been sent prophet after prophet. The full story:

### Leviticus 18:24–30

*“Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. For everyone who does any of these abominations, the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people. So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God.” (ESV)*

The northern kingdom was gone, exiled by the time this was written. Judah still had a chance to mitigate what was now coming, if they would repent.

“His strange task.” The word usually denotes a laborious service. Judgment is God’s strange work, because His especial delight is in mercy. It is even His “strange task,” because He doth not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men. (Birks 1878, 143)

### Isaiah 28:22

*“And now do not carry on as scoffers, Or your fetters will be made stronger; For I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts Of decisive destruction on all the earth.” (NASB95)*

Back in verse 14 Isaiah began his pivot from Ephraim to Judah by addressing the ruling elite as scoffers. For anyone at that time with a Biblical worldview, being called a scoffer is not good news. It is a strong accusation of unbelief. This accusation came from YAHWEH.

There is still hope as addressed here in verse 22. There is still time to mitigate and change outcomes, but the reverse is also true. If there is no repentance, it will be even worse.

The verse begins with the command to stop ridiculing the message that Isaiah is bringing. Stop being scoffers. If they do not stop, then what is coming from the Assyrians would be brutal and severe. Isaiah then adds to the message that this is what he has heard directly from YAHWEH. He adds that there has been a decision made to destroy the entire country of Judah. “A decree of destruction is literally “a complete destruction and a determined thing.”” (Ogden and Sterk 2011, 743)

### Isaiah 1:18

*“Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.” (NASB95)*

The window which was announced to be open in chapter 1 is rapidly closing. Some of the conditions have already changed. The issue is now repent, and it won’t be as bad as it could have been. This is a very different word from YAHWEH than the original pre-Ahaz word.

Isaiah is also taking us far beyond the near future of the Assyrian invasion about to take place in Judah to the invasion of the Assyrian, the Beast, in the last days. Notice again what Isaiah says in verse 22:

*Isaiah 28:22*

*“And now do not carry on as scoffers, Or your fetters will be made stronger; **For I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts Of decisive destruction on all the earth.**” (NASB95)*

This also further enhances the comment made in verse 21 about the unusual nature of judgment and sweeps us back to verse 16 and the need to be standing on the true foundation at the end of the age.

Daniel also made reference to this:

*Daniel 9:27*

*“And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until **a complete destruction**, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.” (NASB95)*

The decreed complete destruction talks to the one being judged. Indeed, Judah is being judged and the Assyrian army will rampage throughout Judah only to be stopped on the hills of Jerusalem. The destruction is determined for the Assyrians, but Judah will be burned. So too the Beast at the end of the age. Why the two examples?

Joshua and his actions taken to secure the land was a type of the actions of Jesus Christ when He secures the land at the end of the age. David and his actions in the Valley of the Rephaim were necessary battles to help complete the actions begun by Joshua and fully secure the land. This last action was completed in what is now the southwestern suburbs of Jerusalem.

This is also a picture of the final ultimate battle, Armageddon, which will see the armies of the final Assyrian, the Beast, surrounding Jerusalem and in the valleys and hills of Jerusalem when the final Joshua arrives at the Mount of Olives.

The occasion also, when, at the bidding of Joshua, “...the sun stood still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon”: he also the type, in this and his other victories by which he gave Israel rest, of Him whose name by appointment he bore, “Jesus”; in “the day of His power” when “His enemies shall be made His footstool” and He shall give the possession of “the rest that remaineth for the people of God.” Which interpretation, and reference to the Lord’s Second Coming, is decided by this “strange work” of judgment being called, ver. 22, “a consumption, even determined, upon the whole earth”.

Then, again, will the Messiah be proved to be “the foundation-stone...the sure foundation”, when He shall prove to be the true “refuge” from “the overflowing scourge”, and the true “hiding place” from the storm which shall sweep over the world: as KING as well as SAVIOUR. And “laid in Zion”, the seat of His kingdom, whence “Jehovah shall send the rod of His strength” in that day (Ps. 110:2). And then also, amidst the dismay of His enemies and the unbelieving, will be verified anew, and finally and for ever demonstrated in the salvation of His people, the promise annexed—“HE THAT BELIEVETH IN HIM SHALL NOT BE CONFOUNDED”. (De Burgh 1863, 155-156)

The Scripture remarks upon the unique authority given by the Lord to Joshua to enable him to command the sun to stand still and the moon to halt in order that the victory of Israel might be pursued and the day of slaughter extended for them. What a comparison and yet what a contrast with Jesus, the better Joshua! John’s Revelation tells us that the eternal city no longer has need of the sun or the moon, for the Lamb is her light! (Rev 21:23). The Lamb is the light, in other words, the brilliance of Jesus’ redemption is the light that gilds the eternal city! His light celebrates redemption rather than slaughter. (Gage 2013)

**Zechariah 14:1–7**

*“Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him! In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light.” (NASB95)*



(Bolen, Jerusalem area aerial from north 2012, Used with Permission)

**Revelation 19:11–19**

*“And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, “Come, assemble for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.” And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.” (NASB95)*

“...on all the earth” the universal judgment seen in chapters 24–27 is repeated, but thank God, there will also be a universal redemption (i.e., v.16)! (Utley 2001, 291)

Those of the remnant who have relied on the Cornerstone will not be scoffers, they will be redeemed and will see their King on the throne.

### Isaiah 28:23–29

*“Give ear and hear my voice, Listen and hear my words. Does the farmer plow continually to plant seed? Does he continually turn and harrow the ground? Does he not level its surface And sow dill and scatter cummin And plant wheat in rows, Barley in its place and rye within its area? For his God instructs and teaches him properly. For dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge, Nor is the cartwheel driven over cummin; But dill is beaten out with a rod, and cummin with a club. Grain for bread is crushed, Indeed, he does not continue to thresh it forever. Because the wheel of his cart and his horses eventually damage it, He does not thresh it longer. This also comes from the LORD of hosts, Who has made His counsel wonderful and His wisdom great.” (NASB95)*

Starting with verse 23, the format that Isaiah uses, through the rest of the chapter, comes from wisdom literature. He has been dealing with those who are scoffers. It makes sense then to treat them to a familiar format. “Thus Isaiah would have been appealing to a form which would have been very familiar to the royal counselors among whom the wisdom forms are now held to have been transmitted. He thus turns their own tools back upon them.” (Oswalt 1986, 522)

The purpose of the pivot from Ephraim to Jerusalem has been warn and alarm those of the ruling elite of Jerusalem that in the eyes of YAHWEH, they are no better than scoffers. By taking the warning to its extreme end in the last days, he also shows that this is a problem that begins to tie origins back to the ongoing problem of unbelief. The northern kingdom is in exile and unless true repentance takes place, the south is soon to follow.

An enemy is in place that will do the necessary actions on behalf of YAHWEH unless there is repentance and that is the goal. This is consistent with what Isaiah has been saying in the book so far.

There are those also who are in Jerusalem who are faithful. They hear the message of Isaiah and despair for their nation. The message is also to provide comfort for those who are remaining faithful. There are two aspects to the message couched in the familiar context of a farmer. The first section, verses 24 – 26 is in the context of planting.

The second section is in the context of the harvest, or reaping.

Multiple crops are referenced in this as well and that is intentional. The message is to Judah and there is a need for the hearer to know that YAHWEH discriminates in judgment.

### Isaiah 28:24–25

*“Does the farmer plow continually to plant seed? Does he continually turn and harrow the ground? Does he not level its surface And sow dill and scatter cummin And plant wheat in rows, Barley in its place and rye within its area?” (NASB95)*

A farmer who is paying attention to what he is doing does not spend all of his time only plowing. He knows how deep for each crop, how much plowing is needed and when to stop.

Different crops require different action and treatment. Not every crop has to be planted on level ground, but some do require that the ground be leveled.

This is being drawn for us as an example. Just as the farmer knows that different crops require different tools and at different times, so the Lord also knows what He is doing in our lives.

We all have different levels of stubbornness. Some of us require a two-by-four to get our attention, others just a whisper.

God knows just what tools to use and when to use them. Just like the farmer. Those who want to accuse YAHWEH of bringing down judgment all the time on everyone indiscriminately do not understand who He really is. We are all different, just like crops are different, and He is an expert at dealing with His creation.



What YAHWEH is also implying with this wisdom being given through Isaiah is what took place in the Northern Kingdom with Ephraim may not be the same as with the Southern Kingdom. “The Jerusalemites should not conclude that because God would allow the Assyrians to defeat the Ephraimites the same fate would necessarily befall them. A change of attitude could mitigate their judgment.” (Constable 2003, Is 28:27)

Moving on to the crops being harvested, it is striking to notice that all of the types of crops listed are seed crops. Each require some type of crushing, beating, etc. The method of harvest, utilization and crushing is different for each type of crop. It is not a one size fits all activity.

The message for the scoffers being offered grace here is the same. The way that YAHWEH dealt with Ephraim does not have to be the same way He deals with you. How you respond to Him can mitigate or worsen the treatment. Just as with the plowing and the harvesting.

The two conclusions in vv. 26 and 29 simply communicate to the audience that God teaches people wisdom so that they can do the right thing. Now the prophet’s audience must listen to what God has said about Israel’s mistakes, the false instructions of the prophets and priests, and the deceptive covenant with death in 28:1–22. If they will listen to God’s wisdom and respond the right way, they can avoid the disasters that Isaiah has predicted in 28:7–22. (Smith 2007, 493)

*Isaiah 28:29*

*“This also comes from the LORD of hosts, Who has made His counsel wonderful and His wisdom great.” (NASB95)*

YAHWEH knows what has to be done with each member of His creation. He treats each of us as individuals, not one size fits all. “God does not treat his people with severity apart from his wise and good purpose. He is powerful, but he is also wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom. God’s people must trust in his wisdom and benevolent purpose. This message was especially relevant for Isaiah and others of the faithful remnant if they were to maintain their faith through the hard times ahead.” (Briley 2000-, 23)

With that we finish chapter 28 which started off with an oracle against Ephraim but pivoted to Judah and Jerusalem. Why the Assyrians? Why Ephraim into exile and Judah being eviscerated? Because there is still hope for Judah, but this is a hope that is rapidly fading.

This brings us to another woe, in fact there are two in this chapter, more bad news from Isaiah, but now he is going to use code words. The words he chooses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit are fully intended to sting. The first woe of this chapter is all about Jerusalem.

*Isaiah 29:1–2*

*“Woe, O Ariel, Ariel the city where David once camped! Add year to year, observe your feasts on schedule. I will bring distress to Ariel, And she will be a city of lamenting and mourning; And she will be like an Ariel to me.” (NASB95)*

Who or what is Ariel? If you guessed the name of a mermaid, we need to talk.

Ariel אֲרִיאֵל (a’-re-el) = Lion of God; altar of God; God’s altar-hearth. (Smith and Cornwall 1998, 21)

Ariel - “lion of God, i.e. very mighty hero...hearth of God, used of the altar of burnt-offering...proper name of a man.” (Gesenius and Tregelles 2003, 78-79)

## Ariel

The term Ariel occurs 16 times in different spellings in the OT and once in the Moabite Mesha-inscription (KAI 181:12, the suggested second occurrence in line 17 is doubtful). The meaning of the word is disputed among scholars. Regarding its etymology, several propositions have been made...but only two of the suggested derivations seem to be applicable: 1. 'ryh 'lion' with the theophoric element 'l 'God'. 2. Ar 'iryat with affirmative lamed 'fire-pit' or more freely 'altar-hearth.' (Munger 1999, 88)

The reference in Isaiah 29:1, 2, 7 is more difficult to explain. Here Ariel (spelled 'ry'l, 1QIsaa 29:1 'rw'l) refers definitely to the city of Jerusalem (J. Werlitz [BZAW 204; Berlin/New York 1992] 310), but again, without any clear meaning. One should therefore leave it untranslated in this passage. (Munger 1999, 88) Here in Isaiah, Ariel is the altar hearth of YAHWEH, like in Ezekiel 43:15 & 16. The term also clearly points to Jerusalem where His altar-hearth is.

What goes along with being the home of YAHWEH's altar-hearth?

It is the place of the ever-burning fire, a symbol of the presence of the Lord. It is the place where the sin offering, burnt offerings are made and totally consumed by the flames. "Total devotion does not go unrewarded. And, it is reasonable to conclude that a never-ending fire to consume a complete burnt offering thoroughly on the altar symbolizes a never-ending attachment to God." (Vasholz 2007, 32)

The significance of this term being used is the people of YAHWEH were to be just as the burnt offering was, given over unreservedly to the service of YAHWEH. This is not optional.

Not only was the Burnt-offering demanded by the ordinance of God from Israel unitedly, as in the daily Burnt-offering, and in the annual ceremonies of the Day of Atonement, but it was continually required of individual Israelites. See Lev. 12 and 14. Indeed an Israelite, who walked in the fear of God, would feel himself under perpetual obligation to bring a Burnt-offering, whenever he became conscious of failing in right devotedness towards God—and that might be more often than the day. (Newton 1852, 33-34)

*"Woe, O Ariel, Ariel the city where David once camped..." (Isaiah 29:1a, NASB95)*

Looking at the Hebrew, this is more than just a camping location. The word is חָנָה (hanah) – "1. to decline (towards evening) 2. encamp; to be settled (for the night); 3. to lay siege to: with 4. to encamp as a guard for." (Koehler, et al. 1994-2000, 332)

It seems that the most likely meaning is "the city that David besieged." (Ogden and Sterk 2011, 753)

"Woe, O Ariel, Ariel the city David besieged."

*2 Samuel 5:6-7*

*"And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, "You will not come in here, but the blind and the lame will ward you off"—thinking, "David cannot come in here." Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David." (ESV)*

Notice the next phrase, "...Add year to year, observe your feasts on schedule." (Isaiah 29:1b, NASB95) Literally let your feasts revolve. What was more important to the people of Jerusalem was the formality of all of the different things they did to show they were YAHWEH followers. The reality though...they were not YAHWEH followers. Not at all. "Judah turned away from the fear of the Lord; formality took the place of true spiritual worship until God Himself could no longer tolerate the unfaithfulness and hypocrisy which so frequently characterized the people with whom He had entered into covenant relationship." (Ironsides 1952, 177)

Jerusalem was the home of YAHWEH's altar-hearth where obedience to Him was expected and holiness was to be commanded to be committed to. The actions were to be an outward expression of what was going on inside and the desire to be faithful followers of YAHWEH. This would be expressed in the desire to remain pure as commanded by YAHWEH in Leviticus 11:44. The people had failed.

Today, the expectation is the same. Jesus has taken care of the sin problem for us, so we do not have any of the same legal requirements the Jews had since we are under God's grace. But there is still the expectation of obedience. *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."* (John 14:15, NASB95)

They were religious professionals. But their heart was not in it. The rapidity of their fall into apostasy under Manasseh proved out that fact. The fact that the leadership was busy lying to themselves and to the people but thinking they were okay because they were doing the right things is a real problem that continues into the present day.

Jerusalem is the site of the only YAHWEH approved official altar-hearth location. Because of that, God should be pleased with us and take care of us. Wrong.

They feel good because they can smell the sacrifices going up. God is not pleased at all. As soon as possible, they stray away. Like sheep.

We have the same problem here in the last days. Jesus told the last days church, characterized by the church at Laodicea, *"I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth! You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference."* (Revelation 3:15–19, NLT)

*Isaiah 29:1*

*"Woe, O Ariel, Ariel the city where David once camped! Add year to year, observe your feasts on schedule."* (NASB95)

Woe to the chosen home of YAHWEH's altar-hearth. The city that David once besieged. Cycle through all your festivals.

The chosen home of YAHWEH's altar-hearth, secured for YAHWEH by the faithful actions of David, a man after God's own heart, is all about the feasts and fasts required by the Law. But unlike David, who had a heart for YAHWEH, the home of YAHWEH's altar-hearth, does not.

The feeling in Isaiah 29:1 is that Jerusalem is proud (Ariel), resting on its spiritual heritage instead of its present reality (the city where David dwelt!), and living for present pleasures without concern for God (Add year to year; let feasts come around). (Guzik 2000, Is 29:1-4)

Unfortunately, the Church today is in the same condition.

As we move through this section of Isaiah, we will see the lengths that YAHWEH will go to in order to bring His people back to Himself. This will stretch out to actions at the end of the age.

For us today, we need to remember the admonition that was given by Jesus to the Laodicean church. *"Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."* (Revelation 3:19–21, NASB95)

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