

## Robert Vannoy, Major Prophets, Lecture 10

### Isaiah 28-30

#### Review

We began a new section of Isaiah last week toward the end of the hour: chapters 28 to 35. I mentioned that 28 to 35 seems, in many respects, to parallel the Book of Immanuel, which was chapters 7 through 12; and it seems that the setting for chapter 28 that we began to look at was an address to a gathering of the leaders of the land – the nobles of the land – and you recall that in the first verses, Isaiah speaks of judgment to come on Ephraim, the Northern Kingdom – particularly on Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom. He does have figurative language that speaks of that crown of pride, of the drunkards of Ephraim; in reference to Samaria, but that's going to be destroyed by this hailstorm – this flood of mighty waters – which is a reference to Assyria. But then when you come down to verse seven, Isaiah changes the focus of his words from the north to the people who are sitting before him when he says, “But these also have erred through wine and through strong drink and are out of the way – they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.”

Isaiah 28:8-13 Nobles Mock Isaiah – Isaiah Responds – A Foreign Tongue Will Teach them

Chapter 28, verse 8: “For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness.” And then you get the response – either what these leaders actually responded or at least what they were thinking – and that's verse nine and following: “Whom shall he teach knowledge? Whom shall he make to understand? For those who are weaned from milk and drawn to breast? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little.” As I mentioned in verse ten, in the Hebrew, the words are chosen for their sound value: it's *sav lesav, kav lekav*, almost like the babbling of a child or baby. So these nobles are mocking Isaiah: “Why do you come to us with this kind of baby

talk? Why do you treat us this way?” And then Isaiah’s response is, “With strange lips and another tongue, if you’re not going to listen to the clear teaching of the LORD, he’ll come to you with strange lips and another tongue” – namely the language of the foreign invaders of Assyria. And verse 13 says, “Then the word of the LORD will be *kav lekav, sav lesav* – will be like the gibberish that you were accusing me of speaking to you in. So that’s where we stopped at the end of last session. That brings us up through verse 13.

#### Isaiah 28:14-22 – Address to Jerusalem Nobles’ Alliance with Assyria

I think verses 14 down to 22 make it pretty clear that the background that I’ve been suggesting up to this point is really the way to understand this chapter. Notice what 14 says – 14 says: “Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, you scornful men that rule this people who are in Jerusalem.” See, this address is to the leaders: you men who rule these people – the leaders, the nobles of the land. Go back to chapters 7 to 12, the book of Immanuel; it was the king, it was Ahaz. Now you’re talking about the leaders of the land. “Hear the word of the LORD, you scornful men that rule the faithful who are in Jerusalem. Because you have said, ‘We have made a covenant with death and with Sheol are we in agreement. When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge; under falsehood have we hid ourselves.’” Here again, I think you have description of the thinking of these nobles: their idea is they have made this covenant with death; they are in agreement with hell, and I think what that’s a reference to is they’ve made an alliance with Assyria – the ungodly nation Assyria – that’s their protection. But their idea is *we will have protection when the Assyrian comes closer because we have made lies our refuge; under falsehood have we hid ourselves*. So they feel that they’re safe.

#### God’s Foundation Stone [Messiah]

But verse 16 says, “Therefore, thus saith the LORD: Behold, I lay in Zion for a

foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste.”

I think what 16 is saying is that the Lord – in contrast to what they think – the Lord says the only protection is in the foundation stone that God Himself has laid. And what is that? I think at this point we would say that is faith in God’s provision, and his will only is secure. Faith in God’s provision is Israel’s only security. “He that believeth shall not make haste”; that is, he that believeth will not be impatient, but he will trust in the LORD. Now, that provision of God for Israel’s security finds its center ultimately in the person and work of the Messiah. It really goes back to that same idea in Isaiah 7 to 11, the provision of Immanuel. So I think here you have what you might call “a veiled Messianic reference” – it’s not clear and explicit, but a veiled Messianic reference.

On your citations – page 20, middle of the page under J.A. Alexander’s commentary on the prophecies of Isaiah – the first paragraph, which is from page 454 of his commentary. Student: “What page again?” 454. It’s on page 20 of the citations, but that first paragraph you might note comes from page 454. Unfortunately, page numbers got left out of this thing, from where these citations are from – they’re under the bibliographic entry but they’re not with each paragraph, unfortunately... But that first paragraph is from page 454 where Alexander says, “You trust for safety in your own delusions. On the contrary, I lay a sure foundation and no other can be laid. This foundation is neither the temple (Ewald), nor the law (Umbreit), nor Zion itself (Hitzig), nor Hezekiah (Gesenius), but the Messiah, to whom it is repeatedly and explicitly applied in the New Testament. Romans 9:33 – if you look in Romans 9:33, [it] says, “As it is written: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone, a rock of offense; whoever believes on him shall not be ashamed.’” And 1 Peter 2:6: “Wherefore it is also contained in the Scriptures, ‘Behold I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone – elect, precious; he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.’” And that’s certainly in a context which clearly references Christ. So again you get into this question,

how much did Isaiah understand that this was a reference to the Messiah? I'm not so sure, and I'm not so sure that the contemporaries of Isaiah would have found explicitly some kind of Messianic reference, but the principle you see is the truth, is the same: trusting God's provision is Israel's security, and ultimately, that comes from Immanuel, from Christ himself.

“Make Haste” or “Make Ashamed” (Cf. Rom. 9:33)

Let's look at the Hebrew word for “haste.” It's, third masculine singular. That really means “to make haste.” Now it can be understood in this sense – as the NIV puts it: “One who trusts will never be dismayed...” See probably, probably what's behind that translation... the Septuagint translates that “shall not be ashamed,” which is much closer, you see, to “will never be dismayed.” The Septuagint says, “will not be ashamed.” That is the way Romans 9:33 quotes it – “will not be ashamed” – and so then the question is how do you get “ashamed” out of “making haste”? And perhaps it's in this sense: “he that believeth shall not make haste” in a sense will not be impatient, even though the execution of the promise is delayed. Will not be impatient – that is, make haste in that sense – but trust the promise even though the fulfillment and execution of it might be delayed. I think “be ashamed” makes more prominent the idea that a believer's hopes will not be disappointed; they will not be ashamed, their hopes will not be disappointed. I think there's a close similarity between those ideas, but the emphasis is somewhat different... probably [the] NIV is influenced by the Septuagint translation, and New Testament quotation stresses that aspect of the idea “make haste” in that sense. Gesenius argues that the Hebrew verb, on the basis of an Arabic root, meant not only “hasten,” but also “be ashamed.” That'd be another direction, but I'm not so sure about the validity of that – appealing to an Arabic for a double kind of meaning to the word.

### Isaiah 28:17 River Overflows the Hiding Place

All right, verse 17: “Justice also will I lay to the line and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.” Because Israel refuses to put their trust in their LORD – to seek their help and protection through God’s provision to believe and to trust – because they refuse that, they will have to meet the judgment of this verse, where again Isaiah compares the coming of the Assyrians to a great river that will inundate the land. The water shall overflow the hiding place. That’s similar, you remember, to chapter eight, verses seven and eight, where Isaiah had said, “The waters of the river [are] strong and mighty – even the king of Assyria in all his glory, he shall come up over the channels to overflow its banks, pass through Judah, overflow, go over, stretch even to the neck.” See the same sort of suggestion here, and of course, the hail is what he had spoken of as destroying Samaria so that judgment will come and overflow the hiding place.

### Isaiah 28:18-20 Covenant with Death=Assyria, Impossibility of Human Sources of Security

Verse 18: “And your covenant with death” – this arrangement you have with the Assyrians – “your covenant with death will be annulled; your agreement with Sheol shall not stand when the overflowing scourge shall pass through and ye shall be trampled down by it.” That arrangement will prove to be useless because the Assyrians are going to overrun Judah as well as the Northern Kingdom.

Verses 19 and 20: “From the time that it goes forth, it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over by day and by night; it shall be a vexation only to understand the report. 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.” The NIV says, “The bed is too short to stretch out on, the blanket too narrow to wrap around you.” It’s an illustration of the impossibility of securing safety by human

resources without God. The New Bible Commentary says of verse 20 – verse 20 is an interesting verse – it says, “This is the last word on resources that miserably fail.” The last word on resources that miserably fail. I’m sure all of you have had the experience of trying to sleep on a bed that’s too short or you’re cold and you have a blanket you can’t get around you, and it’s a frustrating kind of experience. Well that’s what Israel’s arrangement with the Assyrians is going to prove to be.

What about a blanket too narrow to wrap around you? I got a call from my son this week; he spent all of last week, which was his spring break – this is my son Mark that’s the naval kid – he went in to explore to the Sierra Nevadas last week and hiked out of the Yosemite valley at 7-8,000 feet with snow shoes in five and six feet of snow. It snowed every night that they were there, so they about froze. Even with everything – all the clothes he had on – and then, in his sleeping bag, which is a good sleeping bag, he was still cold. Maybe he experienced something of what that felt like. He said that you’d pitch your tent, [and] in the morning you’d be about 3 feet lower. The body heat would sort of melt you down I guess, sink down through the snow. That was verse 20.

#### Isaiah 28:21-22 God’s Judgment on Israel

Verses 21 and 22: “For the LORD shall rise up as in Mount Perazim; he shall be angry, as in the valley of Gibeon – that he may do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act. Now therefore, be not scoffers lest your hands be made strong; for I have heard from the LORD God of Hosts a destruction even determined upon the whole earth”. “Earth” is the Hebrew word *eretz* I’d say “land, country,” probably. I don’t think it’s global at that point.. ... But 21 and 22... In 21 you have an allusion to a slaughter of the Philistines under David. “The LORD will rise up as in Mount Perazim.” 1 Chronicles 14:11 and 16 speak of a slaughter of Philistines by David through the strength of the LORD. And then the victory of Joshua over a Canaanite coalition – “He shall be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon.” That’s in Joshua chapter ten – that’s where you had

Joshua's prayer for the sun to stand still and of that victory the LORD gave over the Canaanites. But notice how this works in verse 20: "The LORD shall rise up as in Mount Perazim; he shall be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon; but that he may do his work, his strange work." Now, God's judgment is not on the Philistines or on the Canaanites. It's on Israel; it's on Judah; so it's his strange work--his judgment has turned on his own people. Not what the Israelites would expect – that his judgment comes on them. So he says stop scoffing, therefore – or the punishment will be worse, "for the LORD has determined to judge the whole land."

In verse 22 the NIV, I think has a better translation: "Stop your mocking or your chains will become heavier. The LORD, the LORD Almighty, has told me of the destruction decreed against the whole land."

#### Isaiah 28:23-29 God Plans as a Farmer Does

And then we come to the end of the chapter, verses 23 to 29, which is a separate unit in figurative language and somewhat difficult to sort out exactly how this fits with what precedes in the chapter. I'll make some suggestions, but let me read it first. I'll read it from the NIV: "Listen and hear my voice; pay attention and hear what I say. When a farmer plows for planting, does he plow continually? Does he break – keep on breaking up and harrowing the soil? When he has leveled the surface, does he not sow caraway and scatter cummin? Does he not plant wheat in its place, barley in its plot, and spelt in its field? His God instructs him and teaches him the right way. Caraway is not threshed with the sledge, nor is a cartwheel rolled over cummin. Caraway is beaten out with a rod, and cummin with a stick. Grain must be ground to make bread, so one does not go on threshing it forever. Though he drives the wheels of the threshing cart over it, his horses do not grind it. All this also comes from the LORD Almighty, wonderful in counsel, magnificent in wisdom."

Seems to me in 23 and 26 – the first section – that the idea is God is not a

workman who does things in a haphazard way. And, of course, he's using the analogy here of the way a farmer goes about his work, but God is not a workman who does things in a haphazard way. He has plans that are carefully laid out and he works them out in a way consistent with the material with which he is working. He has careful plans; he works them out in a way consistent with the material with which he is working. So the plowman doesn't plow forever. When a farmer plows for planting, does he plow continually? No, he doesn't plow forever. After he's plowed, he plants the seed. So when God is finished with this present stage of dealing with his people, he'll begin the next stage. He's not going to plow forever; he'll also plant. He's not going to plant forever, but he'll also harvest in the right time. So it seems to me that there's an analogy drawn here between God's dealings with his people and the way a farmer deals with the various stages of his farming work. God has protected Judah, but they should not think he will do that forever if they continue in unbelief and in disobedience, He'll bring judgment. When he brings judgment, that also will not be forever. The LORD will move on to the next stage. But the farmer's method seems to be a parable of God's dealing with his people.

But then when you get to verses 27 to 29 – particularly 27 and 28 – the farmer deals differently with different types of products. Caraway's not threshed with a sledge, nor is a cartwheel run over cummin. Caraway's beaten with a rod, cumin with a stick, and so forth. The farmer deals differently with different types of products, so God deals differently with those outside his covenant than he does with those who are his people. And in the context, I think one thing in that respect that becomes clear is he will punish his people, he will chastise them, he will judge them, but not finally destroy them. He will give his people chastisement, but not final destruction.

I think more than that is in this parable, but I would think that yeah, I think that that's included in it. I don't think it's just specifically that, but that God will move through various stages to deal with his people in different times and



different ways and at this point, because of their disobedience, that does bring judgment.

More out of the context – the principle it seems in the figure of verses 27-28 is different kinds of materials are treated in different ways by the farmer. Now, in this context you’ve had the statements about Assyria, the forest being cut down never to grow again. Yet Israel’s going to be judged and it will, so it seems to me, that that is one possible application of that principle – the way in which God deals with Israel. It’s hard, this section.

#### Isaiah 29:1 Ariel

Alright, let’s go to chapter 29. It begins, “Woe to you, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David settled.” That Ariel seems clearly to be a name used for Zion, or Jerusalem. “Woe to you, Ariel, the city where David settled.” The question is: what does the term mean? Some have suggested that it comes from the Hebrew root *ariel*, lion, and so you have “lion of God.” But then there’s an Arabic root that suggests that the meaning of Ariel is “hearth” or “fireplace.” In context that seems to fit a lot better, hearth or fireplace of God, but that comes from an Arabic analogy. You see, if you read further, “Woe to you, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David settled. Add year to year; let your cycle of festivals go on. Yet I will besiege Ariel; she will mourn and lament, she will be to me like an altar hearth.” The NIV there says the Hebrew for “altar hearth” sounds like the Hebrew for Ariel. So Ariel’s to suffer trouble and difficulty.

Yet it’s not something that is going to be everlasting or totally destroyed. You read in verse three, “I will encamp against you all around; I will encircle you with towers will set up my siege works against you. Brought low, you will speak from the ground; your speech will mumble out of the dust. Your voice will come ghostlike from the earth; out of your dust your speech will whisper.” So in the first four verses you have the city under siege, crushed to the ground, suffering under judgment. But then you have a reversal of the situation in verses five to

eight. Five to eight says, “But your enemies will become like fine dust, the ruthless hordes like blown chaff. Suddenly, in an instant, the LORD Almighty will come with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with windstorms, tempests, and flames of devouring fire. Then the hoards of all the nations that fight against Ariel, that attack her in her fortress and besiege her, will be as it is with a dream, with a vision in the night – as when a hungry man dreams that he is eating, but he awakens, and his hunger remains; as when a thirsty man dreams that he is drinking, but he awakens faint, with his thirst unquenched. So will it be with the hordes of all the nations that fight against Mount Zion.” So in verses five to eight, even though Judah is helpless to deliver herself from – and I think here the reference is still to the Assyrian invaders, even though it’s plural with nations, and hordes of all the nations... Seems to me, in the context, we’re still talking about that Assyrian advance against Judah.

#### The Lord Will Protect Judah

Some references that indicate other nations joined in with the Assyrians’ advance against Judah, but I don’t see that. But it seems to me that that’s what’s in view. But even though they’re helpless against that onslaught, God will protect Judah. You notice He says, “Suddenly, in an instant, the LORD will come,” and verse five says, “Your enemies will become like fine dust, the ruthless hordes like blown chaff.” So, when you get down to verses seven and eight, it will seem to the Assyrian king just like a hungry man who has been sleeping, dreaming about some great meal, and he wakes up to find he doesn’t have anything. Assyria thinks, *look, we’ve got Judah, we’ve got Jerusalem*, but the LORD intervenes and the Assyrians are forced to withdraw in the time of Hezekiah as we read later in the book of Isaiah. So I think you find the literal fulfillment of it in Isaiah chapter 37, during the time of Hezekiah when Sennacherib comes against Judah, vows to take Jerusalem but then is forced to retreat.

### Isaiah 29:9-12 Turned Away from the Lord and His Word

Okay, verse 9 through 12: “Be stunned and amazed, blind yourselves and be sightless; be drunk, but not from wine, stagger, but not from beer. The LORD has brought over you a deep sleep: He has sealed your eyes (the prophets); he has covered your heads (the seers). For you this whole vision is nothing but words sealed in a scroll. And if you give the scroll to someone who can read and say to him, ‘Read this, please,’ he will answer, ‘I can’t; it’s sealed.’ Or if you give the scroll to someone who cannot read, and say, ‘Read this, please,’ he will answer, ‘I don’t know how to read.’” 9 to 12 – seems to me that what you have is continued denunciation of the leaders of the land, the nobles. They are drunk with wine; as we read in chapter 28, verse 7, they also have erred through wine, through strong drinks; they are out of the way – so they have been drunk with wine, but he points out here in addition, in verse nine, that they are drunk but not with wine. “Be stunned and amazed, blind yourselves, be sightless; be drunk, but not from wine; stagger, but not from beer.”

Now what he’s referring to is that they’ve turned away from God. They have a book before them and could easily read it, but they refuse to do so. They have this scroll which I think refers to God’s Word, and they could read it, but “If you give the scroll to someone who can read and say to him, ‘Read this,’ he says, ‘I can’t, it’s sealed.’ And if you give it to someone who can’t read and say, ‘Read this,’ he answers, ‘I don’t know how to read.’” They have excuses. The person who’s able to read doesn’t bother to break the seal to read it. The one who isn’t able to read doesn’t bother to take it to somebody who can read, to read it to him. They’re not interested in reading; they’re not interested in the Word of the LORD, so they’re in this deep sleep—they’re drunk but not from wine; they’ve turned away from the LORD and they have no interest in the Lord. So it seems to me that’s the situation up to the end of verse 12.

### Isaiah 29:13-24 Israel Plots with Assyria, They Pictured They Are the Potter

Verses 13 to 24: a very interesting passage, very difficult to interpret. I'm going to give a suggestion. You can think about it. It seems to me that what's involved in 13 to 24 is a long-term sort of birds' eye view of God – of God's program for his people in the future that moves way beyond the present situation—the time of Ahaz and Hezekiah. Let's read it, and then I'll make some comments on it. Thirteen: "The LORD says: These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men. Therefore, once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish. Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the LORD, who do their work in darkness and think, 'Who sees us? Who will know?' You've turned things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay. Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'He did not make me'? Can the pot say of the potter, 'He knows nothing?' In a very short time will not Lebanon be turned into a fertile field and the fertile field seem like a forest? In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. Once more the humble will rejoice in the LORD; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. The ruthless will vanish, the mockers will disappear, and all who have an eye for evil will be cut down – those who with a word make a man out to be guilty, who ensnare the defender in court and with false testimony deprive the innocent of justice. Therefore, this is what the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, says to the house of Jacob: 'No longer will Jacob be ashamed; no longer will their faces grow pale. When they see among them their children, the work of my hands, they will keep my name holy; they will acknowledge the holiness of the Holy One of Jacob, and will stand in awe of the God of Israel. Those who are wayward in spirit will gain understanding; those who complain will accept instruction.'" Now,

I think what you see here is the LORD declares he's going to do a marvelous work among his people.

Now, if you read in the King James, verse 14, you read, "Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder. But the wisdom of their wise men shall perish." The NIV there says, "I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder." But something astonishing's going to happen, a marvelous work. He's going to cause the wisdom of the wise to perish; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish." That's verse 14.

I think verse 15 is an allusion again to this plan in the immediate situation to deliver the land by an alliance with the wicked powers. Fifteen says, "Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the LORD, who do their work in darkness and think, 'Who sees this? Who will know?'" *We will make this arrangement with the Assyrians, we'll find our security there; it's done in secret – who's going to know?* But then verses 16 and 17: Israel is acting as if they are the potter instead of themselves being the clay and the LORD the potter. It turns things upside-down. See, you turn things upside-down; the potter was thought to be like the clay, which, "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'He did not make me?'" They act like they're the potter instead of being the clay and the LORD the potter, and God is going to show that he is the potter and they are the clay by performing this great reversal – overturning present conditions.

Isaiah 29:17 Lebanon Turned into a Fertile Field [not Israel]

And it seems to me that that's what is the background for the key statement in this whole passage, which is a figurative one in verse 17. And the way in which you interpret 17 is going to have – determine how you interpret most of the rest of this passage. You see, 17 says, "In short time will not Lebanon be turned into a fertile field and the fertile field seem like a forest?" Now it seems to me that what's being said there is Israel has been the fertile field, the fruitful field. Israel's

been that vineyard that the LORD has cultivated. He's lavished his care and his love, he dug about the vineyard, preserved it. The Gentiles are like the forests of Lebanon, outside the covenant of Israel. And now he's going to do this wonderful work of verse 14--marvelous work. And what is it? Lebanon's going to be turned into a fertile field, and the fertile field is going to be esteemed as a forest. So it seems to me that what verse 17 is saying is that the people of Israel are to be treated as though they were outside God's covenant while those who were previously outside the covenant are to be brought into a position among God's people. "In a short time, will not Lebanon be turned into a fertile field, [and] the fertile field seem like a forest?"

#### Isaiah 29:18 Those Outside the Covenant Brought In

Now, that thought is further developed in verse 18 – at least if you accept that understanding of the figure. I think there's always some degree of uncertainty when you come to a figure and what the figure represents, and there have been other suggestions about what that figure represents. But if you see that in that way, the thought's furthered develop in verse 18: "In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, [and] out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see." You see earlier in the chapter back in verses 11 and 12, we've been told that the people who have the law of God and are able to read it – refuse to do so. God's own people: they give all sorts of excuses – they're not interested in hearing the Word of the LORD, and here in verse 18 you read that those who are deaf are now to be given the privilege of hearing. "In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and those who are blind will be given sight. Out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see." So the heathen who have been outside God's covenant are to be brought in, their eyes to be opened, their ears to be opened, and to take their place among God's people.

Seems to me that the figure here is depicting the same sort of thing as the figure in Romans 11 of the olive tree, in which some of the branches were broken

off and these wild branches were grafted in in their place. I think you can see somewhat of a parallel here also between what's being spoken of here and what we found in Isaiah chapter seven. Remember with that Syro-Ephraimitic thing and Isaiah's message to Ahaz the king: in Isaiah seven, God rebuked Ahaz and said that in God's own time, he's going to replace Ahaz, the unworthy king, with a worthy occupant of the throne of David--with Immanuel. And here in chapter 29, he's rebuking the wicked leaders of the land, the nobles, for their indifference to the Word of God, their lack of interest, their excuses, and He's really saying, *you are to be replaced with those you consider to be outside the circle of God's people*. So in that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see.

#### Isaiah 29:19-22

Verse 22—well—I didn't comment on... Let me go over 19 to 21; we may come back to that, but 19: "Once more the humble will rejoice in the LORD; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. The ruthless will vanish, mockers will disappear, and all who have an eye for evil will be cut down – those who with a word make a man out to be guilty, who ensnare the defender in court and with false testimonies deprive the innocent of justice."

#### Isaiah 29:22-23

Then you get to verses 22 to 23. You read there, "Therefore, this is what the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, says to the house of Jacob: no longer will Jacob be ashamed, no longer will their faces grow pale. When they see among their children the work of my hands, they will keep my name holy; they will acknowledge the holiness of the Holy One of Jacob." Jacob you might expect to be in misery over the condition of his children, but what we read is: he will rejoice. And verse 23 says why: he will see his children. See, no longer will Jacob be ashamed. "When they see among them their children, the work of my

hands.” Jacob will see his children, the work of God’s hands. I think what’s being said is the true Israel will be increased by the addition of those who are not necessarily the seed of Jacob according to the flesh. But they are those who have been redeemed by the power of God and they are the work of God’s hands. So you read, “Therefore, this is what the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, says to the house of Jacob: no longer will Jacob be ashamed, when they see among them their children, the work of My hands, they will keep my name holy; they will acknowledge the holiness of the Holy One of Jacob, they will stand in awe of the God of Israel.”

#### Isaiah 29:24 Turning of Gentiles to God

Verse 24 – conclusion – looks into the still more distant future perhaps. Because there you read, “Those who are wayward in spirit will gain understanding; those who complain will accept instruction.” The wise who turned away from God and became foolish and were cast aside eventually also will come to understand it. So those who had erred in spirit or wayward in spirit will also eventually come to understand it. I think there you perhaps have a parallel to what Paul says in Romans 11 with the olive tree figure that the natural branches, which were broken off for a time, will again be brought back and re-engrafted into their own olive tree. Those who are wayward in spirit will gain understanding. Those who complain will accept instruction. Now if that’s a legitimate way to understand what’s going on in this chapter, you see you have from verse 14—from verse 13 on – from verse 13 to the end, you get this sort of bird’s eye view of God’s future dealing with his people as God turns from the Jews to the Gentiles and ultimately brings back the Jews themselves into that olive tree. Now, as I mentioned, the key to that is verse 17: what do you do with that figure which is at the heart of this whole passage? Of Lebanon being turned into a fertile field, the fertile field being like a forest? And the way you understand that is going to affect the way you understand the specifics of the rest of the passage.



### Isaiah 29:19-21 Weakening Influence of Evil as Gospel Spreads

Verses 19 and 21 are difficult. I think you can understand it in the sense as the Gospel spreads, as the Gospel moves from Israel to the Gentiles and spreads through the nations of the world, there will be a weakening of evil influence. A weakening of evil influence – not an eradication, but a weakening of it.

At that point it may sound like, yeah, yeah... But you see in verse 19 the meek shall increase their joy in the LORD, the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel – certainly you can understand that in terms of the experience of the Gospel.

### Isaiah 29:20-21

Verses 20 and 21: The terrible one is brought to nothing, the scoffer is consumed, all that watch for iniquity are cut off, who make a man an offender for a word, lay a snare for him who reproveth in a gate, turn aside the just for nothing. That kind of behavior that is totally unjust – that kind of thing weakened by the spread of the Gospel through the impact which the Gospel has in the ways in which man lives. Well, again you see, I think that depends on what you do with verse 17. Let me give you a totally different idea from what I suggested here: J Barton Payne treats 17 quite differently, and then he treats the other verses differently as well and puts it in the context of the Assyrian situation; Payne suggests when it says, “In a little while Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field,” he sees that as a symbol of Lebanon being reduced to the level of weakness; see he takes the fruitful field as a symbol of weakness: Lebanon shall be reduced to a level of weakness, while Israel will become more powerful. The fruitful field shall be seemed as a forest, the forest being a symbol of power. So that – I think they had some of this in your citations... look at page 22, the last paragraph. Under Payne. Verse 17 – that’s of this chapter – 29:17. “Yet a little while Lebanon shall be turned to a fruitful field, the fruitful field shall be seemed as a

forest,” and explains, Lebanon, the light of Isaiah 10:34, which seemed to be a type of the great Assyrian empire again about to be reduced to a level of weakness, while Israel, on the other hand, would become more powerful.

Top of page 23: there’s a string of references there, but you notice the first one is verses 18 to 24, this section we’ve been looking at. Here’s the way he sees it: a major series of prophecies interspersed among predictions about Sennacherib’s advance, and subsequent annihilation concerning the contemporary effects that this destruction would produce, these commence with promises for Israel’s vindication. Jacob shall not now be ashamed when he sees his children – what does Jacob see in his children? You see that’s down in verse 23—the ones not destroyed by Sennacherib, but in the midst of him “they shall sanctify my name and stand in awe of God. The meek shall increase their joy in the LORD,” and then the next paragraph: 20 to 21 adds, “The scoffer ceaseth and all they that watch for iniquity and turn aside the just” meaning that a wholesome reverence and fear has taken hold of them – a result not noticed in 2 Kings 18 and 19, but a valuable supplement to this historical account. In other words, what Payne is saying is when God does intervene and does deliver from the Assyrians, the effect that it produces on the people who observe that is what is being described here in Isaiah 29. He says that’s not mentioned in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings, but that that’s what’s in view here.

Such conviction would come to the floor over matters that should be religious as well as ethical. 30:22: “And ye shall defile all thy graven images of silver and shall cast away unclean things.” More positively, 29:24 predicts they that err in spirit should come to understanding, for when the convicted sinner asks, in 33:14, who among us can dwell with the devouring fire?, Isaiah had already answered in verses 15 and 16: he that walketh uprightously in the prophet’s specifications. Isaiah 29:18, though, speaks of the deaf hearing the words of the book – the idea being that divine restoration brings true illumination. These people came to a true understanding because God intervened and did deliver, and

so he sees the figure you see of Lebanon being turned into a fruitful field as a symbol of Assyria falling into weakness, and the fruitful field being esteemed as a forest represents Israel gaining strength, and then the results of that are what are described in verses 18 through 24. So, we're back into this thing of interpretation of figures. Very difficult. Yeah.

Key Interpretive Issue: "Fruitful Field," Symbol of Weakness or God's Cultivation

Is this vision fulfilled later in Isaiah's own lifetime? Well, I don't know if you could say it would be likely or unlikely to use a figure to predict something that's going to be in the more immediate future rather than to the more distant future – I mean in principle, it's still prediction, so I don't know. But see, to me the problem is more of what the fruitful field idea means. To me, the fruitful field in the context of Isaiah's thoughts is his own people. It's not a symbol of weakness. The fruitful field. No, the vineyard was God's people that he cared for and that he cultivated and pledged a vow. And what he's saying is Lebanon's going to become the fruitful field. Israel has *been* my fruitful field, but you're going to become the forest. You're going to be outside this sphere of my direct involvement and work for a time. You see, Isaiah uses symbols of strength and weakness – fruitful field as weakness – forest as strength. Well, you can debate that as far as you wish.

I think it fits with all that, and the other thing it fits with – that however you take verse 17 in chapter 28, you must take verse 15 in chapter 32. You come back to the same imagery. In chapter 32 you read, "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field become a forest." And seems to me that the Spirit being poured on us from high is Pentecost – the coming of the Holy Spirit and it's with the coming of the Holy Spirit that you get this reversal – the Gentiles being brought into the sphere of God's redemptive activity, but Payne still tries to relate that to the Assyrians – I think more difficult with 32:15 – but it's the same figures in 32:15 as in 29:17.

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