

Allan MacRae, Isaiah 7-12, Lecture 6

This is lecture 6 delivered by Dr. Allan MacRae at Biblical Theological Seminary on Isaiah 7-12:

Now in this section we're looking at chapters 7 to 12 and 28 to 35 where there is a very close inter-relation of thought. You may think it's rather strange the way I've been jumping from one chapter to another in assignments and in discussion. But it is so inter-related I feel that you can work into it better if you see certain emphases in the way they're developed rather than just to go straight ahead and for me to have to anticipate it a bit. So that's the reason I'm going the way I am now. The 29th chapter I found one of the most thrilling chapters in the whole section. But one which did not give me much of an idea of what it really meant when I first read it. I think that when one has an understanding of the great principles involved in this section and of the chapters that immediately follow as well as those that precede it, that one is in a better position to understand what that 29th chapter is dealing with. I don't expect to get to that until the week after next. Next week the assignment is on chapter 28 which leads into it.

I'd like to review again giving perhaps just a word about the prophet's purpose which I may express a little differently than I have before. The purpose of the OT prophets that involves more of their writing than anything else is the purpose of rebuking people for their sin. That is the purpose that we find over and over. We can probably find in 3/4s of the prophetic books there is at least a little bit that is devoted to this purpose. It's easy for us to think that we can just skip over that material after all he is telling those wicked people back there about God's attitude towards them but we want to hear what God's plan is for the future. Everything in the Scripture is meant for God's people. There are very vital lessons for us in those sections. We will not go into those sections as fully as we might wish in this class because we do have a lot of material to cover and there is perhaps more similarity in it than some of the other sections and it's also easier to understand than some of the other sections. But it is very vital and important. God

has real blessings for us in it. So rebuking people for their sin is the purpose of the prophet's work which consumes more space than anything else in the prophetic books. And I believe that God wants it to consume a great deal of space in our own lives. Because we all tend to sink back into sin even though we are justified through Christ and our sins are completely laid on him if we have truly and sincerely from the heart received Him as Savior. Nevertheless we constantly need to be warned about the sin into which we so easily slip and to turn to Him to help us to gain victory over it and to do better next time. And so those sections on repentance I hope you will read a good bit and that you will study them and that you will get the meaning for your hearts that you should have from them.

Now the second purpose which involves a great deal of the prophetic writing is to encourage God's people. The prophetic books encourage those who are sincerely trying to follow Him by assuring them that God has blessing ahead for those who are true to him. It is to give renewed confidence, renewed assurance. That is the purpose of most of the future prophecies. Some of the future prophecies are definitely connected with the rebuke for sin telling how God is going to punish and what terrible events are going to come but another large part of the future predictions are definitely connected with this matter of comforting God's people and giving them assurance and hope.

The Bible was not written simply to satisfy our curiosity. You can get a crowd together and tell them what God's word says about what Russia's going to do in the next five years and what's going to happen to the Arab states and what is the future of the United States. If you are a dynamic speaker you can arouse great interest by it. If in the course of doing so you really stress the gospel and the importance of being true to the Lord well I say you have done good even if some of what you say is a lot of imagination. But I do not believe that the Scripture was written in order to satisfy our curiosity about the future. The Lord does, however, give us definite glimpses of many aspects of the future and He gives them for the direct purpose of leading us to have greater confidence in Him, greater trust in

Him, to live more as He wants us to live.

Now there is a comparatively small part of the prophetic books that is devoted to telling God's people just what they should do in particular situations and giving them specific guidance. That of course has an immediate relation to their situation. The people of Jerusalem are told by Isaiah, "Don't worry about the Assyrians they are not going to destroy Jerusalem. God will protect you." The people 150 years later are told by Jeremiah, "God is going to bring Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Jerusalem and these people who say God's going to protect Jerusalem are false prophets." The message was precisely the opposite as far as the immediate situation. It was important for the people in Isaiah's day to trust God and know that he would protect them. It was important for people in Jeremiah's day to realize that God was now sending the punishment for their sins. They were going to go into exile and they should not hold onto false hopes. So the immediate situation was quite different. Rarely if ever, does God give us as specific direction as that today. But all that he gave his people in Old and New Testament gives us examples of how he works and how he deals with his people. It gives us principles that can have a great application as we decide what to do in our own life. But I think we all realize how foolish it is to think that you can open the Bible and just take a verse and that will give you God's guidance. That's not the purpose of the Bible while I believe God does lead His people very definitely at certain crucial points in their lives. I think that in most points of our lives, he wants us to make our own decisions in light of the principles taught in His word. He will guide us and lead us, but he rarely simply says "Go this way" or "Go that way." He wants us to learn how to follow him. So those are the three great purposes of the prophets.

Then as we read the prophets we must realize that the prophets immediately spoke to their own people. They did not sit down in a private place somewhere and have a vision for the distant future. The nearest you come to that is in Isaiah 40-56 where Isaiah tells how God is going to deliver the people from exile 150 years

later. But even in that case, I am quite convinced, that He was speaking directly to the godly in his own day, giving them assurance that though the exile was certain to come, God was going to eventually deliver from it and that God was going to send His own son to deal with the question of sin which was the cause of the exile. That I believe is the nearest we have to something that has relevance more largely to the distant future than the immediate situation. Though even there, I believe there was an immediate purpose for the faithful followers of Isaiah right then.

So to truly understand the prophetic books, you have to understand the relation of the prophet to his own people. That is the relation we have to learn through the study of the historical books and through the incidental references in the prophetic books which give us clues as to exactly how the prophet is dealing with a particular situation.

Now personally I think that the prophet said a great deal more than is included in the Bible. But God caused that which should be written in the Bible and preserved what had meaning not only for their own day but for his followers in future days. Not necessarily for all his followers, not necessarily for his followers at any one time. There may be things in the Bible that were tremendously meaningful for people 50 years ago, that is hard for us to see the relevance of for today. There may be matters in the Bible that if the Lord carries will exactly fit our needs 100 years from now, that is hard for us to see the relevance to today. And there may be passages in them which exactly fit our needs today which would have been very difficult for them to see back then. But we can't just rule any section out. God can open up matters in it that we didn't realize were there. In any case, it has great relevance for today. But I would say then that all the Scripture has relevance to believers at all ages but that it all has relevance to people during the immediate time and you have to learn a good bit about the immediate time in order to appreciate and understand truly its relevance to your own time.

Then another matter in that connection that I have had a number of

questions about lately and which is very important and not easy to fully grasp, is the nature of the prophet's vision of the future. The prophet did not have a book that gave an account of everything that is going to happen in the future. He picks things from it that he is going to tell us. God gave the prophet glimpses of future events where it related to his purpose, to the message he wanted to give. These visions that he gave might be given in words or they might be given in pictures. He might see a picture and describe it. He might see an event happening and describe it. He would describe it in his own words, but God would keep him from error as he did so. That the words would not give a false idea of what God was giving him. But as he looks into the future, there is always some relation to the immediate situation.

Now when he makes a specific statement about the immediate future, often the relation is very close of course. For example, when Samuel told Saul that his father's donkeys had been found and that they were now worried about him and told him that when he went down the hill that he would meet a group of prophets coming up. He gave him some specific accounts of things that were going to happen in the immediate future which God revealed to him (1 Sam. 10). The prophet, however, in most of what is preserved looks further ahead. As he looks further ahead it is not always easy for us to tell how far he is looking. Because in order to give comfort, an encouragement in relation with certain situation, the Lord may give the prophet a view of something a hundred years later. Or he may give him a view of something ten years later. Or He may give him a view of something thousands of years later. The distant views are often foreshortened. I don't believe there is such a thing about a statement about an immediate event that also describes an event thousands of years later. Though there may be a principle, as in the relationship between Isaiah and his disciples that is similar to the specific event later of the relation of Christ to his followers. But when he looks at the more distant future, it is possible that some events may be telescoped a bit. It is possible and it is possible that there may be a foreshortening in his view. I believe that all

these things are important for us to keep in mind as we try to understand specific sections of the work.

Now, we have taken quite the bit of time looking at Isaiah 7 and 8 as they lay the foundation for this whole section. In those chapters we notice the great emphasis on the question of the security of the people, that which naturally is the first thought of most people “what is going to happen to me in the near future.” Here in relation to that we find that God’s desire was that they should trust Him. They had no power to handle the various conflicts of the great powers at that time and work their way cleverly through it. There was no way that they could do that, but if God carried them through it they could safely trust him. If God didn’t safely carry them through it they could know it was for His own purposes and there was a good reason.

So he sends a word to Ahaz “You don’t need to worry about Ephraim and about Syria, God will protect you from them.” Ahaz has his own clever scheme which God says could not protect you. In fact, he says it is going to do you harm. So God rebukes Ahaz and God says that the result of this is just going to be to do away with the buffer states, Israel and Aram or Syria, and bring you right against the terrible power of that brutal Assyria which will do great damage to your land. Now in this section I don’t think that the vision of the prophet goes beyond the invasion of Sennacherib. Later on there are places where he sees clear beyond the exile. But in our present section, as far as the question of the security of the nation, as far as God’s relation to the political situations is concerned, He looks forward to a great climax which will take place about 30 years later in which Sennacherib will come with his army and overrun all of Judah. The only possible way they can be delivered is by supernatural deliverance by the Lord and God assures Isaiah that this is going to come. That is one of the high spots of all our present section.

As far as themes, there are two particular emphases one is: your clever schemes of looking to wicked human forces to deliver you will only do harm. You are rebuked for them. They are wrong. They will only do you harm. And the

other is: it is God's will to give you protection from the Assyrians. The Assyrians will never destroy you. Of course eventually at the end of chapter 39 he gives the specific word: it will be the Babylonians who will exile you, after the Assyrian empire has been destroyed which was 150 years later. So in all the powers around, even the mighty Egypt was falling before the Assyrians, God protected Jerusalem and enabled them to survive another century. So that is the great climax of the view as far as the security of the people is concerned.

The other thing we noticed that was so important was: the house of David is supposed to be God's representative on earth, the leaders of God's people. Here is Ahaz and others who are degenerate, who are not following God's desire. God will replace them. He will send his own son. He will send the one who is the true king, the true Son of David. We looked forward to that in chapter 7, a little in chapter 8, a great deal in chapter 9, and we will a great deal in chapter 11.

Now I want to turn rather hurriedly to Isaiah 31 which I asked you to look over for today. I asked you to look at chapters 30 and 31 and to make an outline of them and I believe that everyone realized quite fully that these two chapters are parallel. He goes through certain material and then he goes through a good bit of it again. So we will look at the second of them first since it is shorter. One paper said it looked like a summary of the previous chapter like a survey. Well in chapter 31, we have a situation which is a little later than the situation in chapter 7. Ahaz has looked to Assyria for deliverance. Assyria has removed the border states and they are right next to Assyria. Assyria has overrun a considerable amount of the land. There is danger of the Assyrian army coming and doing worse than they did 30 years later under Sennacherib. Now, what shall we do? Well, Ahaz says, my plan to get Assyria to help deliver me from the others alright, but now I'm in worse danger than ever. But don't worry we will get Egypt to help us and we will play off one great power against another. God says that sort of playing off evil powers against each other will never work.

So in chapter 30 and 31 both, he immediately starts with showing the folly

of this sort of alliance with wickedness in order to accomplish God's purpose or to keep yourself going. So Isaiah says in 31:1, "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses", and in those days Egypt was the great land of the horse. Strong horses were often secured from Egypt. Solomon had gotten great numbers of horses from Egypt. "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or seek help from the Lord, yet he too is wise and can bring disaster" (Isa 31:1-2). No matter how strong you think the Egyptians are, God can send the disaster if he chooses. "He does not take back His words, he will rise up against the house of the wicked, against those who help evildoers. The Egyptians are men and not God, their horses are flesh and not spirit. When the Lord stretches out His hand, he who helps will stumble, he who is helped will fall; both will perish together" (Isa 31:2-3). So we have three verses here in which they are strongly warned against looking to Egypt for help.

Then however the Lord says in the rest of the chapter, "Egypt will not protect you, but I am going to protect you." So he looks forward now to the coming of Sennacherib with his great army. The Lord says, "You humanly could not possibly be delivered from Sennacherib and the Egyptian force would not be sufficient in delivering you from him. But I am going to do it in a supernatural way. I am going to deliver you in ways you would never dream of." So in chapter 31 verses 4-9 he speaks about that, and you notice the emphasis on supernatural means of deliverance. Look at the end of verse 4, "So the Lord Almighty will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and all its heights, like birds hovering over head the Lord Almighty will shield Jerusalem." Some people may say there is a prediction of the modern Israeli war planes delivering them from the attack of the Egyptians and by the Syrians. In the context, I don't believe it has any direct relevance to our day. The principles are there: God can protect and will protect His own in His own way and His own time. But hear then the birds hovering to people

in those days to people even a hundred years ago. The idea of protecting like birds hovering. Here the bird's flying overhead, but what harm can they do you and what harm can they do the people who are trying to attack you? It is by means that are absolutely beyond your control that God is going to deliver you. "Like birds hovering over head, the Lord will shield Jerusalem, He will shield it and deliver it. He will pass over and rescue it" (Isa. 31:5).

Then there is a plea in verse 6. "Return to him whom you have so greatly revolted against, O Israelites. For there is a day coming," Now this phrase, "in that day" one of these times I may assign to you to look at all the occurrences in the book of Isaiah of the phrase "in that day." If you do so, I believe you will agree with the conclusion I reached, that the phrase "in that day" in Isaiah may mean in the day I have just been talking about, but it is more apt to mean that there will be a day and since that fits equally in both cases I think in all cases we should, when we find a statement "in that day" expect something will happen, I believe we should interpret, "In the day I am going to speak about," which may be the day I have just been speaking about or may not. But I feel that in idiomatic English we would say, "There will be a time when" and so he says "a time is coming when everyone of you will reject the idols of silver and gold your sinful hands have made." Now perhaps the time he is speaking of is the time when Sennacherib comes and when the people see the folly of trusting in the East. Or perhaps he is looking forward to the fact that after the exile, that is one thing that became characteristic of the Jews though they often fell into sin and to wickedness, they were delivered after the exile from the sin of idolatry which they had so easily fallen into so many times before. Through the years since, Jews have been noted for their deliverance from the sin of idolatry.

Well, at any rate, he says "the time is coming." Of course to some extent this time would come when Sennacherib's army was all around. People can talk very much as if there is no God, no higher force. We just depend on the strength of our own arms. When they get into a crisis, you will find that most of them will try

to look to some supernatural power. May we realize that the forces of the universe are far beyond our control. If we know about God, if we know about Christ, God uses that situation to turn our attention to Him. So there is an important principle to this verse and prediction regarding Israel.

But then he continues showing the supernatural deliverance from Assyria in chapter 31 verse 8. “Assyria will fall by a sword that is not of man, a sword not of mortals will devour them.” When do you find another prediction like that? How will that be fulfilled? It was fulfilled when an angel of the Lord came and slew a great multitudes of the Assyrians. That was one of the greatest miracles in the Old Testament. Now that doesn’t mean that necessarily God caused an angel to come with an invisible sword and simply smite all of them. It is not impossible that God did that, that that’s the method he used. It is also equally possible, I believe, that he caused a pestilence to come and there are those who think it might have been the Bubonic plague which would spread rapidly through the army and would kill great multitudes of them. We do not know the precise method God used, but it was something the Israelites had absolutely no control over, no way of doing, no way of foreseeing, something that was hardly paralleled in any other similar war situations in ancient times. The Scripture tells us how this great miraculous deliverance came as God delivered them from Sennacherib. So he says in verses 8-9, “ Assyria will fall by a sword that is not of man, a sword not of mortals will devour them. They will flee before the sword and their young men will be put to forced labor. Their stronghold will fall because of terror at sight of the battle standard. Their commanders will panic.” You remember Sennacherib had to go back to Nineveh quickly because the small force he had left was not enough. If people learned of his situation he could have been attacked and destroyed.

“Declares the Lord who’s fire is in Zion, whose furnace is in Jerusalem.” I was in Berlin in 1959, not long after the end of the blockade by the Russians and just before they put up the wall to cut off West Berlin from the rest of that part of Germany. I went to a lecture there. The man called it, “Berlin: the burning point of

Europe” He used the very word in German “burning point” of Europe. To them at that time it appeared as if Berlin was the place where things were going to come to a crisis. Western forces were determined to keep Berlin from being overrun by the Russians even though they had already allowed 1/3 of Germany around it to be taken over and made slaves of by the Russians. It is interesting the very words used here, “The Lord whose fire is in Zion, whose furnace is in Jerusalem.” In other words, many things of importance were going to center in Jerusalem in these days just ahead. Of course, when Sennacherib came about 20 or 30 years after Isaiah spoke, he took all the cities of Judah, we read. I don’t know if that “all” is to be taken as absolutely everyone, at least everyone of great importance and he overran most of the country. But of Jerusalem he could only say that "he shut Hezekiah up like a bird in the cage." He had to admit defeat by a supernatural force in that situation.

But in chapter 29 which we won’t look at for two weeks, but right in this connection, it begins, “Woe to you Ariel,” the city where David settled. What does "Ariel" mean? There are two ways of taking that word “Ariel.” One is there is a word called “Arie” which means “lion” and it could be "the lion of God." “Woe to you, Lion of God.” But as he goes on talking it doesn’t sound much like a lion, there is another word that sounds just about the same, “Ari” which means a “hearth” and most interpreters think that it means the “hearth of God.” Like the furnace, the term we used at the end of this other chapter. "The furnace," is the place that God is going to show His might in supernatural power. Well, we won’t be looking at that for two weeks, but it fit right in at this point so I wanted to call your attention to it.

Now, we look back to chapter 30, and chapter 30 is much longer than chapter 31, but it begins exactly like 31 does with the exact same idea, different words and it ends exactly where 31 does. It begins rebuking them, “Woe to the obstinate children, declares the Lord to those who carry out plans that are not mine. Forming an alliance, but not by my spirit. Heaping sin upon sin who go

down to Egypt without consulting me. Who look for help to Pharaoh's protection. To Egypt's shade for refuge. But Pharaoh's protection will be to your shame, Egypt's shade will give you disgrace" (Isa. 30:1-2). Actually only about 50 years after this, an Assyrian army overran all of Egypt. Egypt had a tremendous reputation for its great power in previous time, but was now in a decline which they did not recognize.

Nations go into decline and often it is not recognized at all. Back in 1898, when the United States declared war on Spain, practically everyone in Europe said, "How silly this little group of colonies over there in America declaring war against the mighty power of Spain!" They thought it was ridiculous. But when the war started the Spanish forces just melted away like nothing. Spain had been the greatest power in Europe a century or two before. It still had the reputation. Egypt still had the reputation, but Egypt's power was, as the Lord says here, it was minimal. It was just a great reputation they were trying to put their trust in. See, it's a different situation, but the same principle. They trusted Assyria and trusting Assyria brought more harm than good. They tried to trust Egypt, but Egypt is unable to give them any real effective support. So "they form an alliance, not by my Spirit. They look for help from Pharaoh. But Pharaoh's protection will be to your shame, Egypt's shade will bring your disgrace. Though they have officials in Zoan and their envoys have arrived in Hanes, everyone will be put to shame because of a people useless to them, who bring neither help nor advantage, but only shame and disgrace" (Isa 30:4-5).

Now in the NIV the next verse begins an oracle concerning the animals of the Negev. This brings very vividly before us the problem of translation. The King James Version says, "the burden of the animals of the Negev." The Negev is the area in the southern part of Palestine between the settled area and the real desert. It is a semi-desert area: the Negev. Literally it is "the burden of the animals in Negev." Now earlier in Isaiah there are several chapters that begin, "The Burden of Babel," "The Burden of the Phillistines," "The Burden of different places" and

it is inevitably a message of doom that God is bring against that nation. That is what "the burden" means in those cases. So if the NIV in those chapters, I haven't looked at it but I imagine they translate it "oracle," it is not a strictly literal translation, but it certainly gives the idea of the original and gives the correct idea to us today. It's a little bit in the direction of a paraphrase when you give a word that is not quite literal, but gives the idea. It's a very hard problem in translation to stick to exact words when they don't convey much meaning. It is at that point some choose to paraphrase using more meaningful terms but less literal.

But here they have been influenced by the cases earlier where the burden of this and the burden of that, they translated "the oracle of" which would be meaningful to people today. In this particular case, I think they are wrong. An "oracle concerning the animals of the Negev." Well, why does he want to bring rebuke against the animals of the Negev. Does he want to say that the animals of the Negev are going to be destroyed? I believe that here it should retain its original literal sense. It's "the burden of the animals of the Negev." He goes on and tells about their burden. "Through a line of hardship and distress, of lions and lionesses, of adders and darting snakes, the envoys carry their riches on donkeys backs, their treasures on the humps of the camels" (Isa. 30:6). They are carrying big heavy loads. And he refers to the "burdens" that are carried by these animals through the Negev. It is to be taken strictly literally, I believe here. Slightly figuratively in the other cases where he means "the message" or "oracle" the prophet raises against forces that God wishes to rebuke. He is showing that Ahaz has sent great amounts of stuff to Assyria to get them to come and deliver him. Now he is sending great amounts down to Egypt to get them to come and deliver him from Assyria the animals carrying the stuff are burdened. They are carrying all that stuff. He says their treasures are being sent on the humps of camels to that unprofitable nation "to Egypt whose help is utterly useless therefore I call her Rahab the Do-Nothing" (Isa. 30:7). Just why he calls her Rahab, I don't know, it has nothing to do certainly with the Rahab in Jericho. But the term is used two or three times in the

Old Testament to refer to Egypt so it may very well be a sort of slang term that was used in those days of which we have no precise record of.

“Go now, write it on a tablet for them inscribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness” (Isa 30:8). Now here he has spoken against Egypt through verse 7.

Now he goes on here with verse 8 to 17 to give rebuke to the unfaithful who he has just been criticizing for looking to Egypt for help instead of looking to God for help. "Go now, write it on a tablet for him, inscribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness. These are rebellious people, deceitful children, children unwilling to listen to the Lord's instruction. They say to the seers 'See no more visions of what is right. Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions. Leave this way. Get off this path, and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel.'" Therefore this is what the Holy One of Israel says, because you have rejected this message, relied on deception, and depended on deceit, this sin will become for you like a high wall, cracked and bulging that collapses suddenly in an instant. It will break in pieces like pottery, shattered so mercilessly that among its pieces not a fragment will be found. For taking coals from a hearth or scooping water out of a cistern" (Isa. 30:14). Is he looking to the utter failure of the attempts to deliver themselves from Sennacherib or does the prophet here look still beyond that to see how eventually they are going to go into exile and even further along in 70AD they are going to find themselves unable to resist the power of the Romans as they go on in their ungodly ways instead of trusting God and following his Savior whom he sends to them.

Then in the next verse, the NIV says, “This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel says,” but there the Hebrew says, “This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel has said,” and I believe the “has said” is a better translation. Very often you cannot tell whether it should be “has said” in the sense that it was then said or “has said” in the sense of he “has said and is still saying” so “says” is a good translation of such a case. Actually there is no Hebrew word

exactly corresponding to our “says.” It is either “has said” or “will say” in practically all cases. You could say “is saying,” but that is comparatively much less frequent.

But here is what God said “In repentance and rest is your salvation. In quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it” (Isa 30:15). He is saying to us as He said to them, “we cannot win our salvation. It is only through trusting in Christ. Through quietly trusting in him. Throwing our sins on him. Looking to him for salvation and then looking to him to either give us a happy life to show forth his glory or a life of many disappointments in which we can show his glory by the way we bear them and the way we take them. We don’t know what His specific will is for us, but we know that he wants us to have quietness and trust whatever he sends.”

So he says to them, “This is what the Lord said, but you would have none of it. You said, ‘No, we will flee on horses’” (Isa 30:16). See first, Ahaz said, “No, we won’t trust the Lord. We will get Assyria to help us. Well then the Assyrians became a bigger danger than Israel was to Judah. Now he says, I’m going to get help from Egypt. Now, Egypt is going to fail. What are you going to do next? Well, we will flee on horses. God says, “therefore you will flee.” They say, “you said we will ride off on swift horses,” he says, “therefore your pursuers will be swift. A thousand will flee at the threat of one. At the threat of five you will all flee away until you are completely destroyed” (Isa 30:17). I hope you have your Bible, I don’t know what version you have, but it does not say, “You will flee until you are completely destroyed.” That’s not what he says. He says, “You will flee until you are left like a flag staff on a mountain top like a banner on a hill” (Isa 30:17). Now when somebody is fleeing, they don’t go up on a hill and put up a big sign so everyone will see them. They don’t do that. They go and hide. They try to get away. But he says, “You will flee until you are left like a flag staff on a mountain top like a banner on a hill.” Here is a specific prediction of the long, secure future for the Jews.

All the other nations of antiquity have disappeared. We talk about Egypt today, but they call it an Arab Nation. How much of the old Egyptian blood is in it? We don't know. But its culture is almost entirely Arab. There is a little group today called the Assyrians, but whether they have any connection with the ancient Assyrians, we don't know. The area where the Assyrians were is called northern Iraq today. The powers of ancient times: Greece, Rome, all the powers have disappeared. But today, there is still found Jews in just about every nation. They have been scattered through the world. They have fled. They have been persecuted. They have been mistreated. Hitler was perhaps as much interested in destroying the Jews as he was in winning the war. Perhaps if Hitler hadn't bothered to destroy the Jews, he might have won the war, because the Allies couldn't understand the fact that during the bitter days of crisis during the war, there were great German trains needed for transporting troops that were going nowhere near where the troops were needed, they were carrying Jews out to Auschwitz to be destroyed. Hitler said that he was going to make a final solution of the Jewish problem by completely destroying them. I don't know whether it was five or six million that he destroyed I read of a man who went to Auschwitz shortly after the war and he saw the glasses that had been taken off the dead bodies from when they had been heaped with many, many thousands of glasses that had been taken off people when they were destroyed. Hitler wanted to destroy the Jews completely. He thought that was one of his great objects in life and he completely failed.

But Isaiah says "You will be left like a flagstaff on a mountain top, like a banner on a hill." Well that of course was a partial fulfillment, but they didn't actually flee then. They stayed in Jerusalem. Some may have fled into Jerusalem. You could say that people who were able to get to Jerusalem fled there and Jerusalem was protected. Jerusalem stayed. But then why would you say like a banner? Like a flagstaff on a mountain? You are visible. The ancient world did not care an awful lot about Jerusalem, it was one of the hundreds of great cities, most

of which were destroyed by the Assyrians (some of which they didn't get to). I believe that it does not find a complete fulfillment in those days, but that the prophet had a vision clear on through history. The word language he uses suggests that they will be terribly punished, but not destroyed. But not merely "not destroyed," but there is going to be a remnant but they will stand up as a sign. It will be like a flagstaff, like a banner.

Fredrick the Great, the great German leader of two to three hundred years ago, who took a comparatively small and weak area of Prussia, and built it into the great force that eventually became dominant in all that area. Fredrick the Great once scoffingly said to his chaplain, "Give me in one word some evidence that Christianity is true," and the man said, "The Jews," and the fact of the Jews scattered throughout the world, and yet the one nation from antiquity that has survived. It is a sign of the fulfillment of God's prediction. Persecuted, suffering, and yet standing true to their opposition to idolatry and continuing their existence I don't believe there has been a single generation since the time of Christ which there have not been a considerable number of Jews converted to Christianity and some of them have become great Christian leaders. Yet there has remained a separate group through all this time as a flagstaff, as a banner, as an indication of the truth of God's word.

The selection of these particular words in this place, I think, goes far beyond the tremendous prediction that the rest of the chapter gives about the deliverance, the supernatural deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib who was a seemingly invincible force. But they say "Oh well, we will look to something else for help. We will flee." Well, he says, "you will flee." "We will flee on swift horses." People who pursue you will be swift too. You cannot humanly continue. You cannot humanly survive. But there will remain a remnant, and not only a remnant, but a remnant that will be visible. It will not be hidden away in a cave, it will be up on a mountain. It will be like a flagstaff, like a banner. It will be an evidence to the world of the truth of God's word.

Well, I thought we'd get through this chapter. We will continue there next time. But you will be familiar with the chapter and we'll look at chapter 28 next time. I think that there will be some interesting things that will emerge as we look it.

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