

Allan MacRae, Isaiah 7-12, Lecture 13

This is lecture 13 delivered by Dr. Allan MacRae at Biblical Theological Seminary on Isaiah 7-12:

We were looking last time at the ninth chapter of Isaiah, where we have that poem in four stanzas. Which begins with rebuke of the Northern Kingdom, rebuked for their determination, which would be good if it were not for the wickedness with which it was connected. Therefore what would be diligent and most commendable becomes arrogance and deserving condemnation. The Lord predicts the destruction that is to come in the near future to them. Then he looks at Judah and he looks further ahead describing the wickedness of the people, declares that God is going to punish but the punishment will proceed still further. So the third stanza begins in verse 18 and there he says, "Wickedness burns like a fire, it consumes briars and thorns," even the small things are consumed by it. "It sets the forest thickets ablaze so that it rolls upward in a column of smoke." And the Lord is going to put His wrath out upon them, and they will reach the condition where they will be feeding on one another and will be eating and not satisfied "Manasseh will feed on Ephraim, together they will turn against Judah. Yet for all this, His anger is not turned away, His hand is still upraised (Isa 9:23)."

Then the fourth stanza, which in our arrangement is chapter 10, begins again with the speaking of the leadership that makes the unjust laws, makes widows their prey, and robs the fatherless, criticizes the injustice among the people. He says, "To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches? Nothing will remain but a cringe among the captives, or fall among the slain. Yet for all this, His anger is not turned away, His hand is still upraised (Isa. 10:3-4). "

After that there of course should be a new chapter division, because there we turn to another subject, and the rest of chapter ten is very similar to the book of Habakkuk, except that the book of Habakkuk, written more than a century later around 600 B.C., deals with a similar situation at a later time and deals with the Chaldeans, who are eventually to destroy Judah, whereas Isaiah deals with the Assyrians, who conquered the

Northern Kingdom and who reduced the Southern Kingdom to such a bad situation for a considerable time around 722 B.C. But yet God promised he would deliver Judah from the Assyrians, but he did not later from the Chaldeans.

So we begin here in chapter ten verse five, “Woe to the Assyrians, the rod of my anger, in whose hand is the club of my wrath.” A very remarkable concept, a very striking idea. The wicked Assyrians, the terrible aggressor, the one who is doing such terrible damage in the world is nevertheless God’s instrument to the world for performing His purpose. He doesn’t say, “Woe the Assyrians,” those wicked people who are doing such great harm in the world, He says, “Woe to the Assyrians, the rod of my anger, in whose hand is the club of my wrath.” Whether it should really be "woe to the Assyrians" or whether it is the "woe that comes from the Assyrians" is a matter of interpretation here. What the sense of the verse is that the Assyrians are God’s instrument. There are some things in the world that seem to be very very bad that we cannot control, but we can know that God is still in control and He has His purpose in that.

He continues in verse 6, "I send him against a godless nation, I dispatch him against a people who anger me, to seize loot and snatch plunder, and trample them down like mud in the streets." So these terrible things that had occurred are actually produced by God. As he sends the Assyrians as his instrument, but then in verse seven, he looks at another aspect, "but this is not what he intends, this is not what he has in mind, his purpose is to destroy, to put an end to many nations." Then he quotes the Assyrian Kings in Isaiah 10:8-11 telling of their boasting. “Are not my commanders all kings? Has not Calno fared like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad, and Samaria like Damascus? As my hand seized the kingdoms of the idols, kingdoms whose images excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria--shall I not deal with Jerusalem and her images as I have dealt with Samaria and her idols?" So there’s a picture of the arrogance of the Assyrians. The Assyrians are God’s instruments but that does not excuse Assyria for the wickedness that it perpetrates.

So he says when the Lord has finished all His work, against Mount Zion and Jerusalem, he will say, “I will punish the king of Assyria for the willful pride of His heart

and the haughty look in His eyes (Isa. 10:12).” How ready we are to feel that some way we must be God’s instrument to punish iniquity and wickedness. How ready most human beings are to try to find ways to get even with those who injure them in any way. Yet we must realize that those who injure us, may be God’s instrument to punish us for our sins and maybe his instrument to chastise us and if they’re not, we must leave their punishment in God's hands. That does not mean that the government should not deal with those who break the law; God has established government for the purpose of maintaining what is right and proper and putting down violence. But those who injure us, it is God’s will that we should forgive; for we should remember that vengeance is his; he will repay.

So the Lord says He will punish the kingdom of Assyria and then he quotes him again where the King of Assyria thinks he succeeded in doing all of this because of his great strength. Chapter 10 verse fourteen "As one reaches into a nest, so my hand reaches for the wealth of the nations, as men gather abandoned eggs, so I gathered all of the countries." But God says in chapter 10 verse 15, “Does the ax raise itself up above him who swings it, or the saw boast against him who uses it? As if a rod is to wield him who lifts it up, or a club brandish him who is not wood! Therefore the Lord, the LORD Almighty, will send a wasting disease upon his sturdy warriors, under his pomp a fire will be kindled like a blazing flame." And of course this was fulfilled when the Lord sent what was possibly a plague, at least some way he used to destroy a multitude of the Assyrian army and to deliver Jerusalem from the great danger that it was in when the Assyrians had overrun most of the land of Israel. They were expecting any day, they might come to attack, Jerusalem.

"So the Lord will send a wasting disease among his sturdy warriors, under his pomp a fire will be kindled, the Light of Israel will become a fire." He looks along further to the ultimate, complete destruction of Assyrian empire, as a complete destruction that any nation has ever suffered in all history.

"The Light of Israel will become a flame, their Holy One a flame" (Isa. 10:17). He doesn't say Israel will become a light of flame. He says God who is the Holy One a

flamed and "in a single day it will burn and consume his thorns and his briers. The splendor of his forest and fertile fields it will completely destroy, as when a sick man wastes away. And the remaining trees of his forest will be so few that a child could write them down" (Isa. 10:18). So thus far he has dealt with the Assyrians very specifically and given several different aspects of the problem and explains God's will and its relation to them. As far as he has looked now, it is to the immediate disaster of the Assyrians when they desire to destroy Jerusalem. But before the chapter is over he will still look further into the future, a century later to the complete destruction of the Assyrians around 612 B.C.

However in chapter 10 verses 21-22, he returns his attention to Israel. "A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob, will return to the Mighty God." Israel is not to be destroyed like the Assyrians are. Israel is to have a remnant that remains. God is going to make sure that they do not perish. "Though your people Israel, be like the sand by the sea only a remnant will return. Destruction has been decreed, overwhelming and righteous. The Lord, the Lord Almighty will carry out the destruction decreed upon the whole land. Therefore this is what the Lord, the LORD Almighty says, 'O, my people who live in Zion, do not be afraid of the Assyrians, who beat you with a rod and lift up a club against you as Egypt did. Very soon my anger against you will end, and my wrath will be directed to their destruction. The Lord Almighty will lash them with a whip, as when He struck down Midian at the rock of Oreb, and he will raise his staff over the waters, as he did in Egypt. In that day their burden will be lifted from your shoulders, their yoke from your neck, the yoke will be broken because you have grown so fat" (Isa. 10:26-27). So here is a promise which looks towards the destruction of Sennacherib's army and gets a glimpse of the ultimate complete destruction of Assyria.

Then in 10:28, there should be a minor break. There is quite an important paragraph division there, and from verse 28 to verse 32, we have a very vivid imaginary picture. A picture of what the people of Jerusalem would naturally expect was going occur. It pictures the situation if the Assyrian army comes and attacks Jerusalem itself. Now the Assyrians had sent a considerable army up, that is they would later on the time

this is given, but at the time of Sennacherib's invasion, they sent a captain with a considerable army up from Lachish, which is southwest from Jerusalem. They came up from the border of Jerusalem and there they called on Hezekiah to surrender. But then they went back, and it was probably two years after that, that they still were in the land of Israel, conquering various cities living off the land, destroying and devastating. The people in Jerusalem were expecting at anytime the army would come against them. But when the final attack would come, they would not expect it to come from that direction. They would not expect it to come from the southwest, from the area of Lachish, where Sennacherib's headquarters had been because that would be the area, in which it would be easier to defend Jerusalem against them because they would have to come up rather steeply up the mountain side. The natural way to attack would be from the north. It would be very easy for the Assyrians to go up the plain to the north and then come down on the northern ridge which gives a very easy approach to Jerusalem. So that's what they expected.

We have a picture of their expectation here in chapter 10 verses 28 to 32, a very vivid picture of what they thought was going to happen. They imagine that the Assyrian army comes, and they name here places beginning a few miles north of Jerusalem and coming nearer and nearer all the time. "They enter Aiath, they pass through Migrom, they store supplies at Micmash. They go over the pass, and say, 'we will camp over night at Geba.' Ramah trembles, Gibeah of Saul flees. Cry out O daughter of Gallim! Listen O Laishah! Poor Anathoth!" Anathoth is the town just a few miles north of Jerusalem from which Jeremiah was to become a prophet a century later, that is getting very close to the city. "Madmenah is in flight; the people of Gebim take cover. This day they will halt at Nob," just short north of Jerusalem. "They will shake their fist at the mount of the Daughter of Zion, at the hill of Jerusalem." This is a vivid picture of the expected coming of the Assyrian army. But the Assyrian army did not come, this is only what they expected would happen. We do not know where the army was encamped when God defeated the great number of the force. He made it necessary that Sennacherib give it up and go back to Assyria, but we have no reason to think that the Assyrian army actually

did begin an attack on Jerusalem in this way. This is what actually did happen a little more than a century later when the Chaldeans came and they came from the north just the way described here, through these various towns. Just the way an invader would naturally come who has attacked Jerusalem. So this is a vivid picture of the fears of the people, of their expectation, of that which seemed absolutely certain to occur one of those days, but they did not know when.

But then the Lord gives his answers, “You don’t have to worry about this.” Chapter 10 verse 33 says, “See the Lord, the LORD Almighty will lop off the boughs with great power, the lofty trees will be filled and the tall ones will be brought low.” These are figurative expressions describing the great Assyrian empire under the figure of a great forest, the Lord will lop off the boughs, the lofty trees will be filled, the tall ones will be brought low, He will cut down the forest thickets with an axe. Lebanon will fall before the mighty one." Lebanon here is a picture of a great powerful empire outside the land of Israel, and here is a figurative expression to describe what was laid beyond Lebanon in that direction the great Assyrian headquarters.

So about a century after Isaiah wrote, the Babylonians rebelled against the Assyrians, and the Medes joined with them, and they attacked Nineveh, the great capital city in 612 B.C. It was defeated. The Assyrian army continued on, and the Assyrian empire tried to maintain existence and succeeded for another eight years, until Nebuchadnezzar completely smashed it in the battle of Carchemish, and that was the complete end to the Assyrian empire as a force in history. It fell as completely as any nation ever has in history more than most, of course, they have extended themselves very widely during the previous three centuries conquering an area of many times as large as their own area. The empire had been becoming increasingly weakened as they over extended themselves so much and finally they put up a desperate fight and it took eight years to destroy them, but when they were ended they were completely ended.

The only thing I can think of similar to it as complete a destruction as that would be the Ostrogoths in Italy. In Italy in the fifth century AD the Ostrogoths, the Eastern Goths had settled in the country and it was the Visigoths who originally had conquered

Italy, but then they went over to Spain, but then the Eastern Goths came in and Theodorich their king established a headquarters at Ravenna. He ruled over Italy, he had all this complete control over the nation, he established so much of an empire there that during the second World War with Hitler needing every resource he could in order to win the war, he nevertheless sent a group of archeologists down there to Ravenna in order to make charts and maps of Theodorich's palace and his capital, in order that after the war was over he would hold the reins of his first great German empire that had been established. But after Theodorich's death, Justinian the emperor in Byzantium in Constantinople tried to re-conquer Italy. He sent a force there to Italy which attacked the Ostrogoths and they fought for twenty years, and battle after battle they fought until finally practically every one of the Ostrogoths was killed off. They left absolutely no trace in the Italian language of their language and culture. Justinian thought they had reestablished Roman power over Italy. But what he actually did was to bring in a large number of other German tribes as mercenaries in his army and after the Ostrogoths were all killed, they eventually took over. So Constantinople didn't actually hold it for more than ten or fifteen years after they defeated the Ostrogoths, but the Ostrogoths -- about to establish a great empire were completely destroyed and annihilated. Well now they had only been powerful for less than a century while the Assyrians had been for several centuries. But that's the nearest parallel to this that I know of in history.

So we have this vivid description "he will cut down the forest thickets with an axe, Lebanon will fall before the Mighty One" (Isa. 10:34). Then we have a minor division between this and chapter 11. I would say that before that it is primarily looking at the destruction of Sennacherib's army with an occasional glimpse of the ultimate destruction but in these two verses it is very definitely focusing on the complete destruction of the Assyrian empire, which, as he explained in the beginning, was God's instrument the rod of his anger but yet it thought of itself as doing all these great things all these terrible things and was so arrogant and God said "shall the rod boast himself against him who wields it" and now he is going to completely destroy them and punish them for their

wickedness. So Lebanon falls before the Mighty One but a shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse from his roots a branch will bear fruit.

Here between the last verse of chapter 10 and the first verse of chapter 11 we have a transition. We have a comparison between this mighty force, the tremendous Assyrian empire, which falls before the Mighty One under the figure of the forest of Lebanon crashing as God destroys it, but here is the stump of Jesse. Here is the empire of David which has been reduced to a tiny thing. Just a stump. It looks as if practically nothing remains of it and yet from the stump of Jesse a shoot will come up from his roots, a branch will bear fruit. Here we have the contrast between the mighty Assyrian army represented by the great forest of Lebanon falling with a tremendous crash and the little remains of the kingdom of David seeming to have disappeared and yet from "this stump from its roots a branch will bear fruit." So out of David's lineage the house of David which we have seen so much stressed in chapter 7, here we have it again, from it a branch will bear fruit and here we have this wonderful description of him.

The next two verses is not a picture of something that happened at a specific time it is a description of a character. One who comes into this world upon whom the Spirit of the Lord rests: "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord and he will delight in the fear of the Lord" (Isa. 11:2). We still continue the description of him. "He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears." This is a description of him and applies to all kinds of his activity. "But with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked" (Isa 11:4). What does this mean? Is this a general description of his character now or is this a specific mention of a specific action that he will perform.

We find that the Apostle Paul quoted this verse and looked forward to what is described in this verse as something that is still future. He says in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 8 looking forward beyond Paul's time he says "then the lawless one will be revealed whom the lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy

by the splendor of his coming." So the picture here which is given might be considered perhaps as a description of continuing activity of Christ in overcoming wickedness but Paul takes it as a specific description of a specific thing that is going to happen and that had not yet happened in Paul's time but was to happen in the future when one would appear who Paul called "the lawless one." This one he said Christ would "slay with the breath of his lips."

Then it goes on to describe his character after describing this specific thing he is to do which he had not yet done in Paul's day. "Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist." Then there is a description of the situation that will come into existence after he slays this wicked one with the breath of His lips, "the wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat" (Isa 11:6). It doesn't mean that the wolf will live with the lamb in the sense that the lamb will be inside of the wolf, it means that the wolf and the lamb can be together without the lamb having any cause for fear of the wolf. "The leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together, and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the vipers nest" (Isa 11:7-8).

Well is this describing something strange that a young child would put his hand into a viper nest or an infant will play by the hole of a cobra? You take a little child and he has no reason to fear the cobra, he won't be afraid of the viper he's apt to stick his hands right up to it perhaps to try and pet it.

I was out in New Mexico at one time for mission work, and I met a man who had lived for quite a while in a little cabin in the desert with his wife and tiny infant. He said that once his wife was away on a visit, and he was in the cabin with his little child. As he sat in the backroom, he heard the child, gurgling with great glee. He wondered what was happening. He said he would hear a loud banging noise, as if the child was hitting something. It was similar to a door opening and shutting violently. The child continued to laugh, and he continued to wonder what was going on. He got up and peeked through the

door to see his child face to face with a rattlesnake through the screen door. The child would hit the screen door, thus swinging it open, and in retaliation, the rattlesnake would strike, shutting the door in the child's face. The child was having great fun. This is not what was meant by the child "putting his hand into the viper's nest." It is the nature of the little child not to be afraid, until he has learned, perhaps by sad experience or by other people's fear communicating itself to him. What is described in Isaiah is a situation where the child need not fear, a situation in which there is nothing that causes danger. The man said, when he saw what was happening, he immediately rushed to get his gun, and shot the snake.

However, as verse 9 states, this is a situation where one need not fear, for the Lord states, "They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the water covers the sea." Just as a sea is covered by water, so the entire earth will be covered by the knowledge of the Lord. So this is a description of a situation in which all violence will be at an end, in which all external danger will be gone.

In Calvin's commentary, when he comes to this passage he says, "There is here a prediction that the conditions that prevailed in the Garden of Eden that will again be established on this earth. There will no longer be violence or fear against this earth because no one will hurt another." But Calvin says a few lines about that then reverts to refer to his immediate situation in his day, that the gospel will take those who are wolves and change them into lambs, it will take a leopard, whose nature is to kill and destroy and change it to one that is peaceful. So Calvin saw the change in character brought about by the gospel, as the great lesson for him of the gospel was presented that specifically there is a time coming when violence will come to an end, a time when after the Lord strikes the earth with the rod of his mouth, and the breath of his lip slays the wicked one, that then there will be a situation in which "they will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9).

So the picture we have from chapter seven, of the virgin birth of the one, and in chapter nine the wonderful preaching of the one who is to come from the house of David reaches a climax here, in the picture of the eventual activity which He will perform, when He brings a complete end to violence and destruction on the earth, and makes it possible for everyone to live in absolute safety.

Then Isaiah says "In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for all the peoples, the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious" (Isa. 11:10). The term "rest" is used in two senses just as it is used in two senses in English, that we find relaxation, and also the notion of something resting on another, such as "a book rests on a table." Ordinarily we stress the idea of recreation in it, but it can also mean to occupy a position, in this case it could be either one. Now the Roman Catholics see here a reference to the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem to which they make pilgrimages. But that is his place of rest, most of us do not think this is a reference to the Holy Sepulcher but rather the place from which he will issue his commands, which will bring forth complete peace and freedom from violence throughout the earth.

Then Isaiah says, "There is a day coming the Lord will reach out His hand for the second time to claim the remnants that are left from his people" (Isa. 11:11). Here there is promised a great gathering of Israel, from Assyria, to lower Asia, to Kush to Elam from Babylonia to various islands in the sea. None of the Israelites had been that widely scattered in Isaiah's day. It was some centuries before they were as widely scattered as this. But here there is a promise, a great re-gathering of the Israelites. "He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel, he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four corners of the earth." The rest of chapter 11 in verse 16 says, "there will be a highway for the remnant of his people from Assyria, as there was for Israel when they came up from Egypt."

Then chapter 12 concludes this section of the Book of Emmanuel with a prayer thanking God for his wonderful promises and goodness, a prayer that you can get a blessing from reading and studying.

Yes, now there is an interesting question of interpretation. You could easily, take it as referring to the place where those nations were if you wanted but, it would seem to me that the more probable is that he simply is looking out at the nations quite a distance away and join a wide dispersion, a dispersion which had not yet then come but which eventually became far wider than these places named here. I would feel that that would be the correct approach here.

Chapter 11 verse 4 is the first. The last phrase is specifically quoted by the apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 specifically quoted as something that is yet to happen. Now it would seem to me that if that is true of the last phrase it probably would refer to the whole verse. Although I would not wish to be dogmatic on that but at least the last sentence in it refers to a specific event which Paul said will not happen until this wicked one becomes known, this wicked one whom the Lord will destroy with the breath of his mouth when He comes.

I would think that chapter 11 verses 2, 3 and 5 all, would describe the character of Christ as displayed both in his first advent and in his second advent. I would think that he looks to the first re-gathering which was the coming back in Ezra and Nehemiah. Then he looks beyond to a far greater recovery gathering to come at a later time, the second time, I would think. I would not feel we can be dogmatic on it. I would think that it is entirely possible that it describes a movement of the Israelites going back to the land of Israel, which anyone a hundred years ago would have thought was extremely unlikely ever to happen. It might describe the great re-gathering that has occurred recently but I wouldn't be sure of that, unless it goes on to become much greater than it is at present. That is to say, it might describe something that is still future, it might refer to the present reestablishment of the nation of Israel. I wouldn't be dogmatic on it. I hope that they won't have to go through a terrible destruction and still another re-gathering but its entirely possible.

I would say that when a term may be used first in a Scripture, it is usually an actual literal term for something that is in existence at the time to which reference is made. But then after a place or a person has become well known for certain

characteristics, then that the term may be used in a figurative way to represent others with similar characteristics. Thus, I would think in the day of Isaiah, it would be very, very, strange to use Babylonia simply as a figure for a great aggressor or a great conqueror, because they were not that yet. They became it later. Assyria was like that during Isaiah's time. But in this particular case, I would think it was simply referring to them as an area, the area to which the Israel of the northern kingdom had been carried off into captivity.

The place of rest, the place of a person's rest is ordinarily his bedroom, it's where he finds his strength restored through resting. The Roman Catholics take this as referring to the tomb where the body of Christ rested. A lot would think that in that case it should be the second use. The body of Christ was placed there it certainly didn't really rest there. But, those are the two uses of the word and there are certain forms if the Hebrew verb which differ as to which of these two is meant, but in many forms it's identical.

Until Christ comes, that of course is a prediction of the first coming of Christ, I would say, until the one comes whose right it is to rule. But, I would not think that this is most certainly when the ten tribes divided from the two tribes, there was war between them for a time, and there were many fights between them. There was much jealousy, much hatred, much division. I would think that as he looks forward to the future, he refers to divisions among the people that they will be restored to a new unity.

Wherever you have sinful people you have jealousy, you have hatred, you have division. He is predicting an end of division. We could extend it to the Christian church and wish that there could be brought about a cessation of the internecine squabbling among real Christians, of which there is all too much. I think there is a promise that God will bring an end to that sort of thing. Of course we can bring it to an end to some extent but if you become pastor of a church or active in almost any group don't count on that there will not be bitter divisions. It is just the nature of sinful man to do it and we've all got a big job on our hands in bringing ourselves into conformity to God's will to the extent where we do not cherish such feelings toward others.

If there is no other question about this first part, Isaiah 7-12, we now turn back to the parallel section which starts in chapter 28. We have taken quite a bit of time on 28

already. I'll just remind you quickly that in 28 he begins with the woes against Ephraim just as he did in chapter 7. But then as in chapter 7 he turns back to Judah to show how they are doing wrong and specifically refers to Ahaz's plan and he quotes the elders of Judah, the Princes of Judah, as they criticize Isaiah for his method of teaching and tells them that their covenant with death, their agreement with the grave, will not last. True peace can be found only through the precious cornerstone that the Lord will establish in Zion. But hail will sweep away their refuge and their covenant with death will be destroyed.

Then in chapter 29 he looked to the danger from Sennacherib, the King of Assyria, and began with showing Jerusalem in the condition where it was besieged. Not actually besieged but where there was danger of a great siege almost any minute as the Assyrian armies were going through the land destroying the other cities of Judah. Jerusalem could expect to be besieged at any time, but in verse 5 the sudden transition, "but your many enemies will become like fine dust." Personally I think the translation in the King James is better than that in the NIV as far as the word "enemies" is concerned. It means not merely "enemies" but it means "foreign enemies." There is not one English word that will give that idea. The King James says "strangers" but it means "hostile strangers," this says "enemies" but it means "enemies who are from a distance away." But the King James certainly is wrong there in the beginning with the word "moreover", which does not give at all the idea of the sharp transition from the terrible situation ahead for Jerusalem to the marvelous deliverance that God promises to bring. "And so He promises", and then there's that figurative language in verse 6 of how the Lord will come with thunder, earthquake, great noise, windstorm, tempest and flames of a devouring fire. It certainly must have seemed so to Manasseh, when his army was so utterly destroyed. "And he became like a hungry man who dreams that he's eating but awakens and his hunger remains" (Isa. 29:8).

Then he goes back to the people of Israel pointing out their failure to follow him, their failure to study His word as they should, their excuses that they give for not doing it and says, "He's going to turn things upside down. And Lebanon will become like a fertile

field and the fertile field like a fort" (Isa. 29:17). Then He will turn to the Gentiles and there will be the reversal of things just as he said to Ahaz where it will not always be such wrong leaders, God will send his own leader, here he says those who have these marvelous opportunities in Israel and fail to take advantage of them there is to be a time when the natural branches will be lopped off and the wild branches will be put in. In chapter 29 verse 22 he points out that "God can do this, the Lord who redeemed Abraham." Abraham was not saved because of his genealogy, he was saved because God called him, and similarly he can call the Gentiles if he chooses. He redeemed Abraham and he says to the house of Jacob "you don't need to be surprised if God can call and make children of Israel out of these stones", as Jesus says. But then I think it very likely that verse 24 shows again the putting in of the natural branches, as Paul says "so all Israel will be saved."

Then in chapters 30 and 31 we had two parallel pictures as you remember, starting with the people looking for help from Egypt instead of from God, and going on to show how God is going to punish this wickedness, looking clear into the future "how they will be left like a banner on a hill." Cut down but still existing, still continuing, continuing as a sign of the truth of God's Word. But the immediate danger will be ended, God will miraculously intervene like birds hovering overhead, the Lord will shield Jerusalem and deliver it, he will pass over and rescue it.

Then, chapter 32 begins, "see a king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule in justice. A man will be like a shelter from the wind, a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in the desert, and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land." I think that's a marvelous picture of Christ and the Hebrew is just like the King James there "a man will be..." but all the recent translations (at least most of them) follow the RSV in trying to get away from that being "a man," which is just what the Hebrew says though, but we'll look at that next time and I would like it if you would glance over chapters 28 following through 35. Just glance over them to get a general idea of their content in preparation for our discussion next time.

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