

ISAIAH

Volume II

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BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK SERIES

ISAIAH

Volume II

by

Paul T. Butler

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College Press

THIS VOLUME

IS

DEDICATED

TO

The Joybells

Carolyn Kern

Cyndi Key Wertenberger

Deanna Streeter

Jeanette Stewart Woods

Linda Hord

for the

fun and joy we had together

serving Christ

“on the road.”

I love them dearly.

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IV. JUDAH AND JUDGMENT - CHAPTERS 24 - 27

A. JUDGMENT ON JUDAH'S ENEMIES, CHAPTER 24

1. JUDGMENT IS SURE

TEXT: 24:1-6

- 1 Behold, Jehovah maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.
- 2 And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer; so with the seller; as with the creditor, so with the debtor; as with the taker of interest, so with the giver of interest to him.
- 3 The earth shall be utterly emptied, and utterly laid waste; for Jehovah hath spoken this word.
- 4 The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the lofty people of the earth do languish.
- 5 The earth also is polluted under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant.
- 6 Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are found guilty; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.

QUERIES

- a. Is verse 1 to be understood literally or hyperbolically?
- b. Why mention all the vocations in verse 2?
- c. How was the earth polluted?

PARAPHRASE

Behold, the Lord is about to bring into judgment the whole world of worldliness. Human governments and institutions which have attempted to thwart God's redemptive program

and usurp His sovereign reign over man will be utterly emptied of their hold upon man. They will be made a vast wasteland of emptiness compared to His kingdom. Human potentates and human schemes, high and low, rich and poor, powerful and weak will all be dealt with. God is no respecter of persons. God is going to deal a death blow to man's attempt to take over the world. The Lord has spoken this word, and it shall be so! The world and its worldly rulers mourn at their demise. They suffer! They refuse to believe and therefore do not understand. The earth is profaned and polluted through the rebellion and sin of these people. Laws are violated and fear of God is scorned. The structures of society collapse, and all that is good is defiled. This curse of God's moral judgment has devoured man's carnal scheme to usurp Him. The downfall of their schemes proves their guilt. Such a judgment consumes multitudes. Only a few men of faith shall escape it.

COMMENTS

V. 1-3 EXTENT OF JUDGMENT: These chapters (24-27) form a close connection with the preceding prophecies against the nations (13-23). They are a climactic conclusion to those prophecies. Isaiah is now uniting into one, as it were, all those enemies of God's people which he had previously (13-23) discussed individually. Judah will also be included because many of her people have rebelled against God's sovereign rule. After this widespread judgment upon man's worldly attempts to rebel against God (and incidentally, the same picture is found in Isa. 2:12ff), there will come a world-embracing salvation (25:6-8; 26:9, 21; 27:1, 6), with the result that the remnant saved from the four corners of the earth will praise the glory and majesty of God, and many will come from the ends of the earth to worship the Lord in Zion (24:15-16; 27:13).

Verse 1 reminds us of God's scattering mankind at the Tower of Babel. There man sought to unite all his worldly

power to build a tower and assault the gates of heaven. It was a rebellious attack upon the sovereignty of God. After that mankind attempted to unite itself in world-empire status, usurp the Creator's directions and rule, and take over the creation to exploit it for its own selfish purposes. One empire after another attempted this—Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. But God triumphed over this scheme of man to wrest the rule of mankind from Him. He did so by establishing His own kingdom among men. It was when this kingdom was established that "the ruler of this world was cast out" (Jn. 12:31; Jn. 16:11) and that God "triumphed over them" in Christ (Col. 2:15). Our comments in the Introduction to *Isaiah*, Vol. I, and *Daniel*, chapters 2, 7, 8, 9, are relevant to this section of Isaiah. We believe the judgments predicted in these chapters (Isa. 24-27) are the same judgments pronounced in Daniel against world-empire rule, and thus their fulfillments began when the church was established. They will have their consummation when Christ returns at His Second Coming, but man's attempt (actually the devil is behind it all) to take over the world and usurp God's rule was judged and defeated at the cross and the empty tomb. God "scattered" that attempt. He "knocked" that image down, ground it to dust and blew it away (cf. Dan. 2). And He did it in the days of the fourth world empire by establishing His eternal kingdom, the Church.

As verse 2 points out, human stature and rank makes no difference to God. All those involved in the great human rebellion will be defeated. All will be judged according to their response to the Sovereign Creator and His program of redemption. Human rulers and the ruled alike must submit to Jehovah. No pillar of humanly conceived society or culture will be able to save man. All man's structures are vulnerable to the inevitable judgments of moral rebellion.

The judgment is inevitable because Jehovah is a God of Absolute Holiness and Justice. He is absolutely Moral. His creation is moral and is morally structured. His word is Absolute Truth. When that word is disobeyed, profaned and

rejected, the inevitable consequences are falsehood and moral disintegration. God has spoken! It will come to pass!

V. 4-6 CAUSE OF JUDGMENT: The cause of the judgment is moral rebellion and disobedience. The judgment takes the form of moral pollution and disintegration of societal structure. The word *pollution* is a translation of the Hebrew word *khanepah*. It is used to denote defiling, profaning, or exploiting something until destroyed. To *languish* is to lose strength or vitality and to droop, wither and fade. Isaiah predicts that the "lofty" people of the earth will languish when God's judgment falls upon human schemes to usurp His rule. The "lofty" people are those pagan rulers and nations (Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander the Great, Caesar and their modern-day counterparts) who think to dethrone God, thwart His redemptive work and accomplish through carnal resources what they have decided man needs.

The earth is pictured as mourning and fading away as a flower fades away. Wars, pestilences, famines, diseases are results of the sins of the people and are causing this wasting away. The sinfulness of men has polluted the earth. Falsehood brings moral disobedience. Moral disobedience inevitably brings social disintegration (cf. Rom. 1:18-32). This moral malady of man has been transferred to the earth itself so that it is also polluted. Injustice pollutes society (cf. Num. 35:29-34). Murder cannot go unpunished (nor other injustices) without polluting society! When man (who has been made lord of creation by the Creator) deliberately chooses falsehood and moral anarchy, he communicates to the creation beneath him the pollution of his own moral failure, with the result that the polluted earth reacts in judgment upon him to his own destruction.

When man selfishly exploits, wastes, profanes and spoils what God has created to be good, he eventually finds he has perverted and cursed himself. He suddenly awakens to the fact that he is the guilty culprit. This discovery repeats itself nearly every 200-300 years. Man in greed and pride perverts animate and inanimate creation until he destroys his culture

and societal structure. He realizes that good men and good things are in the minority. He realizes that he is responsible for his own predicament. But where does he turn? Still, men will not repent! (cf. Rev. 9:20-21).

QUIZ

1. What connection is there between chapters 24-27 to 13-23?
2. Why did God "scatter" the inhabitants of the earth?
3. When did God "scatter" them?
4. Who did God "scatter"?
5. How was the earth and mankind "polluted"?
6. What connection does the pollution have to the "curse" devouring the earth?

2. JUDGMENT IS BITTER

TEXT: 24:7-16

- 7 The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merryhearted do sigh.
- 8 The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth.
- 9 They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it.
- 10 The waste city is broken down; every house is shut up, that no man may come in.
- 11 There is a crying in the streets because of the wine; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone.
- 12 In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction.
- 13 For thus shall it be in the midst of the earth among the peoples, as the shaking of an olive-tree, as the gleanings when the vintage is done.

- 14 These shall lift up their voice, they shall shout; for the majesty of Jehovah they cry aloud from the sea.
- 15 Wherefore glorify ye Jehovah in the east, even the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel, in the isles of the sea.
- 16 From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs: Glory to the righteous. But I said, I pine away, I pine away, woe is me! the treacherous have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous have dealt very treacherously.

QUERIES

- a. Why so much emphasis on "wine"?
- b. Why are houses shut up within the city?
- c. Who is going to glorify Jehovah?

PARAPHRASE

The juice of the grape will be sorry, the grape vine will lose its vitality, and all those who were glad and merry will be turned to mournful sighing. The gay music of tambourines and harps will cease when the people are turned to weeping. Singing while drinking wine will no longer be going on; drinking for the mere sake of intoxication will grow, but it will only bring bitterness to the drunkards. Cities shall become moral wastelands—jungles of crime—where every house has to be locked against thieves and murderers. The streets of the cities shall echo with the cries of wantonness and debauchery. They shall be filled with pessimism, gloom and despair. The great centers of population are filled with desolation and their bulwarks crumble into ruin. This is the way it shall be among all the nations of mankind. Man in rebellion will destroy himself until very little of real value can be found in him—just like an olive tree shaken until few olives are left. But that valuable "little" that is left of every nation will lift its voice in loud shouting, giving praise to the name of

Jehovah, the God of Israel. From east to west, from the uttermost part of the earth, a remnant of believers will sing, Glory to the righteous. But my heart is still heavy with grief, for evil still prevails and treachery is everywhere. Multitudes remain impenitent and positive reactions to God's judgments are hasty, superficial, and soon erased.

COMMENTS

v. 7-12 SORROW IN THE CITIES: The Hebrew word translated "new wine" in verse 7 is *theeroush* and means literally, "the juice of the grape." The prophet is apparently trying to portray the idea that the very means by which men had falsely sought for joy would become occasions of despair and bitterness. There would be no more happiness when the juice of the grape was harvested. All the festivities associated with harvesting the grape, pressing it into juice, singing and drinking, would end among the enemies of God, for He is going to demonstrate once and for all the folly of all that. All the tambourines and harps of the world will play mournful music. Merryhearted singing while drinking wine will cease. Strong drink, *shaikhor* in Hebrew, will be consumed bitterly and in despair. This is a graphic description of unbelieving man's predicament in every generation. The things of the world hold no hope. Ever since God demonstrated in history through Jesus Christ the sharp distinction between spiritual things and carnal things, the line of demarkation has been drawn vividly (Jn. 9:39-41). The folly of sin and carnality is much more in evidence and the blessing of faith and righteousness is much more in evidence since the work of Christ has been accomplished (Jn. 16:7-11). And it is interesting, in the light of this passage from Isaiah, that the songs of unbelieving man graphically portray his despair and disillusionment while the songs of believing man are exceedingly happy and filled with hope.

In the great cities of the nations arrayed against God there is moral, spiritual and economic confusion. They become vast

wastelands of human decadance. People must shut their doors and bolt and lock them against thieves, murderers and other lawless men. In the streets echo the cries of wantonness and debauchery. The streets of the cities are filled with cynical, pessimistic, frustrated people rushing to and fro like sheep without a shepherd. These huge cities, monuments to man's vain illusion that he can create his own utopia, are really concrete jungles of desolation. This prophetic picture of Isaiah applies not only to God's enemies of the prophet's day, Assyria and Babylon, but to all of man's rebellious attempts to structure his own benevolent society and create his own heaven. It could apply to Greece and Rome; to England and Germany and America and Russia; to monarchies, dictatorships and republics. All of man's attempts to govern himself are inadequate at best and destructive at worst. They all are to be supplanted by the just, holy, righteous kingdom of God, the church. That is a "bitter pill" for rebellious and unbelieving man to swallow! In his pride, man does not want to acknowledge that he is unable to transform himself and his society and save himself. So the judgment of God upon man's schemes brings about all the bitterness Isaiah has described here. The surrender of man to God's way is never easy and gentle. Man must struggle violently with his own pride and selfishness if he is to surrender to the will of God and enter God's kingdom.

v. 13-16 SHOUTING IN THE COAST-LANDS: As Isaiah takes in this universal scene of chaos he sees a gleam of light and hears a song of hope coming from the uttermost parts of the earth. It is the Remnant. This Remnant is from among the "peoples," that is, the gentile nations which God has judged. This is probably one of those veiled Messianic prophecies concerning the defeat of God's enemies and the institution of His kingdom which originated at the cross of Christ and the day of Pentecost (cf. Jn. 12:31; Jn. 16:11; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14-15; Luke 1:67-75, etc.). A very small remnant, a tiny minority of righteous and faithful believers will survive God's judgments and form the nucleus of the church. They will be so few they will be like that which is left when the olive tree is shaken and like the

left-overs when the grapes are harvested.

The Hebrew word *meyom* is translated "sea" in verse 14. It usually means "toward the west." The Great Sea was always "west" in Palestine. The glorification of Jehovah which Isaiah foresees is from "east to west," in the "isles of the sea" and to "the uttermost part of the earth." When Jehovah is glorified, so is His "righteous" remnant. The prophet sees in this remnant salvation brought out of judgment to the isles of the sea and the coasts of the nations.

But this note of hope gives way immediately to a declaration of sorrow and caution. It is as though the prophet says, "Do not soon become too optimistic about how men react. Many of the seemingly positive reactions to God's redemptive works are hasty, superficial, and soon erased." It is as though the prophet sees sinners so deeply involved in wrong conduct they will go on, in spite of all the judgments and redemptions God manifests toward them (cf. Acts 13:44-47; 28:23-28; Rev. 9:20-21, etc.). Jesus faced the world realistically. He insisted that discipleship was costly (Luke 14:25-33). "Many are called but few are chosen," said Jesus. Isaiah was the same kind of realist. Many of the covenant people in his day fell away from faith. They rejected God's signs; Ahaz had gone on in his stubborn sullen way; they were still looking to alliances with heathen nations. They dealt in treachery. God had warned Isaiah of almost total lack of "success" from his preaching (Isa. 6:9-13). He would preserve only a small "remnant" by his preaching. Christians may as well face reality—the Bible teaches they will be a minority until the Lord comes again. The Lord is interested in a faithful minority more than He is in a lukewarm, half-hearted and doubleminded majority. The Lord's standards of success and the world's standards of success are very much different.

QUIZ

1. What is "new wine"?

2. Why has all "mirth" ceased?
3. What predicament of sinful man does Isaiah portray here?
4. How does Isaiah pictorialize the great centers of population, the cities?
5. What does the shaking of the olive tree symbolize?
6. Where will Jehovah be glorified?
7. Why does Isaiah "pine away"?

3. JUDGMENT IS FROM JEHOVAH

TEXT: 24:17-23

- 17 Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth.
- 18 And it shall come to pass that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows on high are opened, and the foundations of the earth tremble.
- 19 The earth is utterly broken, the earth is rent asunder, the earth is shaken violently.
- 20 The earth shall stagger like a drunken man, and shall sway to and fro like a hammock; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall, and not rise again.
- 21 And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah will punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.
- 22 And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison; and after many days shall they be visited.
- 23 Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed; for Jehovah of hosts will reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem; and before his elders shall be glory.

QUERIES

- a. Why open "the windows on high"?
- b. Who are the "high ones on high" to be punished?
- c. When will Jehovah "reign" in mount Zion?

PARAPHRASE

When God executes His judgments upon the present world order, man will be confounded like the wild animal who fears its pursuers and falls into the pit; if it avoids the pit, it is taken by the snare. From heaven God is going to overwhelm man's rebellion like the great flood; He is going to shake the very foundations of man's utopian schemes like an earthquake brings down great edifices. Earthly systems and worldly schemes will be utterly broken, rent asunder and shaken violently. Those forces and philosophies of man which have arrayed themselves against God's rule will be caused to stagger and reel under the defeat God brings upon them—they shall sway like a watchman's hut in a blowing storm. The futility of their rebellion and the guilt of their sin will be such a weight upon them they will fall never to regain complete dominance of the world again. On that day the Lord will make a visitation of judgment upon the principalities and powers in the heavenly places who have rebelled against Him as well as those rulers on the earth who have joined with these wicked spiritual beings. God will triumph over them all. He will gather these forces together in their greatest concentration of power, and He shall defeat them and take them captive like prisoners and He shall imprison them. And after a long period of time the Lord will visit all these imprisoned beings with final judgment. Such will be the glory of Jehovah when this is accomplished the brightness of the sun and moon will seem to fade away. The glorious reign of Jehovah will, at that time, be established among men in the form of His kingdom on earth, the church. And His faithful covenant people

will be brought to glory with Him.

COMMENTS

v. 17-20 VICTORY: Admittedly these verses are difficult to interpret. Many want to make them apply to the Second Advent of Christ and the end of the world. It is our view that the prophets spoke almost entirely of Christ's First Advent, and in view of New Testament passages which seem to appropriate these figures of Isaiah, we believe these verses and those following apply to Christ's first coming and the establishment of the church.

These verses are a continuation of the idea begun in the first verse of this chapter. Human efforts to take over God's work of redeeming man are doomed to failure and defeat. There is no escape for man's rebellious attempts to usurp God's sovereignty. God's defeat of rebellion is inevitable! This same figure of inescapability is used in Amos 5:18-20 (see our comments in *Minor Prophets* there). The Lord's judgments are inescapable. His power to defeat man's rebellion is overwhelming and inundating like when He opened the windows of heaven and poured out the flood in Genesis 6. God is going to open the windows on high and send down His Son to defeat Satan and all those powers Satan has to hold men captive (cf. Jn. 12:31; 16:11; Heb. 2:14-15; Col. 2:15; Mt. 12:28-30). His Son will establish the kingdom of God on earth, the rule of God in men's hearts, and ascend to the right hand of the Father taking captivity captive (Eph. 4:8).

In all this we hear the crash and roar of falling governments and crashing empires. God's judgments are upon them. He brings them to naught. His divine judgments will cause rebellious man to reel and stagger. Assyria fell to Babylon. Babylon fell to Medo-Persia; Medo-Persia crumbled before Alexander the Great; Greece was broken and overrun by Rome. Even Judaism will be "shaken" (cf. Heb. 12:25-29)

and "removed" so that what cannot be shaken (the kingdom of God, the church) may remain. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar, "And in the days of those kings (the Roman empire) the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever;" (Dan. 2:44). Isaiah is not picturing the final great judgment here but the overthrow of the worldliness of the world. The destructiveness of rebellion and sin will bring about the downfall of all earthly systems trying to save men. If Daniel's prediction is correct, and we believe it is, world-wide rule by human empires or kingdoms is never to rise again! The "fourth" kingdom of Daniel 2 was the last universal, human empire. That was the Roman empire. The church is now, and ever shall be, the only universal kingdom. Isaiah, in this passage (v. 20), is agreeing with Daniel (see our comments in *Daniel*, College Press).

v. 21-22 VANQUISHING: When God defeats the world of human rebellion and world-government usurpation, He will *visit* the "host of the high ones on high," and the kings of the earth upon the earth, to imprison them. The Hebrew word translated *punish* in verse 21 is *pokad* which is usually translated *visit* (as in verse 22). At the accomplishment of the redemption of man — at the death and resurrection of Christ — the god of this world, Satan, was "cast out" (Jn. 12:31; 16:11). Satan was "bound" (Mt. 12:28-30; Rev. 20:1-3). Satan's power was "destroyed" (Heb. 2:14-15). The New Testament also indicates (as well as Dan. 10:13, 20) the devil had "angels" or "princes" of the abyss to help him lead sinful men in rebellion (II Cor. 11:14; Eph. 6:10-18, etc.). But these rebellious angels have been vanquished to a prison house of God (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6) awaiting final punishment. Christ triumphed over all principalities and powers (Col. 2:15; Eph. 1:20-21; Col. 1:16), and He led captivity captive (Eph. 4:8). Many days after Isaiah penned his 24th chapter, God *visited* the earth in His Son and vanquished the principalities and powers arrayed against His rule over man, freed man from their

power, and bound the rebel Satan and his helpers — whether “hosts on high” or “kings on the earth.” Those who sat in darkness have seen a great light (cf. Isa. 9:1-7). Captives have been liberated (Isa. 61:1-4; Luke 1:68-75; Luke 4:16-30).

v. 23 VINDICATION: The great planets and heavenly bodies are used by the prophets time and again to symbolize cataclysmic changes or portents to be experienced by man during the progress of history. See our comments in *Minor Prophets*, College Press, on Joel 2:31; 3:15. See also Isaiah’s use of the same terminology in connection with the downfall of babylon, Isaiah 13:9-10, and the symbolic language of the Revelation, chapters 6:12 and 8:12.

Here in 24:23, Isaiah portrays God’s triumph over the world at the accomplishment of redemption in Christ as so exceedingly glorious the sun and moon will pale into insignificant shame in comparison with His glory! No created thing in this universe, no matter how magnificent or majestic, can ever be compared with the glory of redemption’s accomplishment and the reign of God in His kingdom finally established. As C. S. Lewis once said, Even the glory of the future heavens and earth will not compare with the glory that is in us. It is not changed circumstances that will so much constitute a glorified existence as changed people. And when Jehovah reigns in Zion (the church, Heb. 12:22ff) people are changed and glorified! Of course, changed people eagerly long for changed circumstances where they, in their changed natures, may serve the Lord without pain, frustration, and death. But right now those who are overcoming the world by their faith and are “beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another”; (II Cor. 3:18). God reigning in Zion is a Messianic term (see our comments in *Minor Prophets*, College Press, Obadiah, verse 17). God is going to reign in Jerusalem when the ark of the covenant is no longer “remembered or missed” (Jer. 3:15-18). That must be when the New Covenant is instituted!

QUIZ

1. How are these verses a continuation of the ideas in the beginning of the 24th chapter?
2. Why is God going to open the windows on high?
3. How do these verses portray the inescapability of God's judgments?
4. What is probably meant by the "violent shaking" of the earth?
5. What other O.T. prophet may be used in comparison here?
6. When did God "visit" the "host on high" and shut them up in prison?
7. How are heavenly bodies used symbolically by the prophets?

B. JUBILEE BY JUDAH, CHAPTER 25

1. JUBILATION FOR JEHOVAH'S POWER

TEXT: 25:1-5

- 1 O Jehovah, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things, even counsels of old, in faithfulness and truth.
- 2 For thou hast made of a city a heap, of a fortified city a ruin, a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built.
- 3 Therefore shall a strong people glorify thee; a city of terrible nations shall fear thee.
- 4 For thou has been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.
- 5 As the heat in a dry place wilt thou bring down the noise of strangers; as the heat by the shade of a cloud, the song of the terrible shall be brought low.

QUERIES

- a. What "counsels of old" has God done?
- b. Who are the "strong people" to glorify Jehovah?
- c. Why the figure of "storm" and "shade"?

PARAPHRASE

O Covenant-God, Thou art my Lord. I will extol and celebrate with thanksgiving Your Name. You have done wonderful things; Your plans formed long ago have been faithfully and absolutely fulfilled. You turn a mighty city into a heap of rubble. Strong fortresses You make into ruins. The castle of aliens You make to disappear never to be built again. Therefore a people of strength will glorify You; ruthless nations and their cities will fear You. To the weak and powerless You have been a refuge; You have been a refuge to the needy in their distress. You have been a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat when the ruthless nations storm and burn down upon us. As heat in a dry and torrid land is cooled by the shadow of a cloud, so You subdue the shouts of the aliens and put to silence the boasting chants of the ruthless nations.

COMMENTS

v. 1-3 SOVEREIGN LORD: Two Hebrew names of God are used in verse 1 — *Yaweh* and *Elohim*. According to the best lexicographers *Yaweh* (Jehovah) denotes God's covenant-keeping nature (faithfulness) while *Elohim* (Lord) denotes God's Lordship or Almightyness. Chapter 25 is the prophet's song of praise following Chapter 24's pronouncement of the doom of world power. The Covenant God has promised He will triumph over His enemies and that He shall reign eternally: Based upon the past faithfulness of God, Isaiah begins his song

of praise thanking Him for the promises of future covenant fulfillment. The prophet seems to thank Jehovah for future triumph as if it had already been completed. God's sovereign deeds are performed supernaturally in history as He carries out His covenanted plan of redemption. Such supernatural sovereignty and faithfulness causes men to marvel (cf. Psa. 40:5; 98:1; Eph. 1:11, etc.). The Hebrew word *yodoh* is translated *praise* in verse 1, and means literally, *celebrate*. Isaiah calls all who will to a celebration of praise for the faithfulness of Jehovah to keep His word.

Damascus (Syria), Samaria (Israel), Nineveh (Assyria), Memphis (Egypt) and Ethiopia threatened God's people. But always God warned and promised their doom. Where are they now? They have all been brought low. Now Babylon threatens. What are God's people to do? Trust in His faithfulness to keep His promise of Babylon's doom also. Verse 2 promises that no "city" of man shall be strong enough to resist the Faithful and Almighty God. No material device, no political ideology, no philosophical system will ever thwart the Absolute certainty of Jehovah's covenant. World systems may deceive some (even with lying signs and wonders) that they are going to eradicate God's kingdom and His covenant. But they shall never accomplish it. World systems have already been defeated (Col. 2:15, etc.) — their obliteration awaits only the Consummation.

In the meantime (while we await the Consummation), some "strong people" (Gentiles) will turn to Jehovah glorifying and fearing Him. Isaiah is predicting the conversion of Gentiles as they see the "wonderful" faithfulness of the God of Israel (cf. our comments Isa. 19:16ff).

v. 4-5 SHELTERING GOD: The Hebrew word *dol* is literally *exhausted* but translated *poor* in verse 4. Another reason for Isaiah's celebration of praise to Jehovah is His being a refuge for the weak and helpless. The Hebrew people had plenty of evidence for this aspect of God's nature. He had taken them as a helpless, infantile people (cf. Ezek. 16:1ff) and rescued them, nurtured them, protected them and blessed them. He sheltered them from their enemies century after century as long

as they depended upon Him. The metaphors of "storm," "refuge," "heat," and "shade" should register vividly on the Hebrew mind. Palestine is subject to some violent natural storms and is a land of torrid heat and arid dryness. The prophets used such metaphors of the land frequently to communicate God's nature and His will to their people. Jehovah is "The Shadow of a Mighty Rock, within a weary land." The storms of world power (cf. Revelation, the Seals, Trumpets, etc.) rage against God's elect covenant people (cf. Psa. 2:1-11) and, looked at from a human perspective, it appears the city of God will fall. But the Divine Perspective shows refuge and salvation and victory for the city of God.

Just as a cloud can obscure the heat of the sun and give refuge to a dry, dusty traveler, so easily will the Lord bring to nothing the torrid rage of His enemies and save His faithful ones. The supernatural deeds of God done in history and recorded by eyewitnesses testify abundantly that He will do what He has promised. Let all who believe Him celebrate in jubilant praise.

QUIZ

1. What two names for God are used in this text and what do they signify?
2. How has God demonstrated in the past that He keeps His word?
3. Why does Isaiah's audience need to be reminded He keeps His word?
4. Have world systems already been defeated?
5. Is God a refuge for people because they are materially poor?
6. What "storms" rage against God's elect?

2. JUBILATION FOR JEHOVAH'S POSTERITY

TEXT: 25:6-9

- 6 And in this mountain will Jehovah of hosts make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.
- 7 And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering that covereth all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations.
- 8 He hath swallowed up death for ever; and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of his people will he take away from off all the earth: for Jehovah hath spoken it.
- 9 And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is Jehovah; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

QUERIES

- a. Which mountain? v. 6
- b. Why feast on "fat things"?
- c. When will the Lord swallow up death forever?

PARAPHRASE

And at the same time the Almighty Covenant God defeats the enemies of His people and provides for them a refuge and shelter, He will make in His Zion a feast of choicest food and most refined drink. He will destroy all that obscures and hinders all men from coming to this feast. He will swallow up death forever and remove the fear and hurt that death has brought upon His faithful ones. He will wipe away all tears from the faces of those who trust Him. He will take away forever all the reproach of their sin. It is as certain as the

person of Jehovah Himself. In that day, people from all nations will proclaim, This now is our God, in whom we trust, for whom we waited. At long last the One for whom we waited is here! He will save us! We gladly rejoice in His salvation!

COMMENTS

V. 6 FEASTED: The prophets spoke glowingly of the coming Messianic age as an age of feasting and rejoicing for the covenant people of God (cf. Isa. 55:2; 61:1-7; Jer. 3:15-18; Ezek. 34:20-24; Zech. 8:14-23). It is apparent that all the feasts of the Mosaic dispensation were "shadows" of the good things to come (Heb. 10:1ff) and were to be fulfilled in the Messiah and His kingdom. Jesus likened the kingdom of God (the church) unto a time of great feasting (cf. Lk. 14:1ff, and Mt. 22:1-14; 25:1-13). Jesus spoke of men eating His flesh and drinking His blood as the Manna that came down out of heaven (cf. Jn. 6:63). The epistles liken the whole Christian life unto a feast (cf. I Cor. 5:6-8; 10:1-5). The present Christian experience to be consummated in the next life in heaven is symbolized as the "marriage supper of the Lamb" to which all who will accept are invited (Rev. 19:6-10). This passage is definitely Messianic and fulfilled in the establishment of the church — to be consummated at Christ's second coming. The Hebrew word for *fat things* here is *shemoneem*. It is used in Gen. 27:28 to speak of the "fatness" of the land. It is a word meaning "richness, delicacy, superabundance, etc." The Hebrew word for *lees* is *shemoreem* which means "settled, preserved, etc." In other words, God is going to provide the richest and choicest in abundance. The Hebrew language in this sentence uses the prefix *lecol* to the word *haameem* to emphasize that this feast is to be for *all the peoples*. In other words, the feast is to be for the Gentiles as well as the Jews — just as Jesus taught in His parables (Mt. 22:1-14; Lk. 14:1-24). The "mountain" is, of course, Zion, but as we have already seen symbolizes the N.T. church (cf. our comments on Isa.

2:1-4, etc.).

v. 7-8 FREED: Two different Hebrew words are used here to denote the coverings. One word, *loat*, means concealment; the other word, *mosokh*, translated veil, means curtain and is used to denote the curtain in the tabernacle. Two Hebrew words are used to denote peoples — *haameem* and, the more specific, *goyeem*, which specifies Gentiles. The covering and veil that is to be removed probably has reference to full and final revelation of God's redemptive program in Christ and the church (cf. II Cor. 3:12-18; Eph. 1:3-10; 2:11-22; Col. 1:24-29, etc.). Those who wish and who "come to Zion" (the church) and acknowledge and worship the true God will have the "curtain" removed that stands between them and knowing, serving and fellowshiping the Holy God. The "curtain" that kept man from the Holy presence of Jehovah was man's guilt for his sin, his fear of death (cf. Heb. 2:14-18) and the incomprehension of his tribulations. Christ accomplished the removing of that "curtain" by His death and resurrection, and now all men have access to the presence of God "through a new and living way which He opened for us through His flesh" (cf. Heb. 10:19-20). There must be some symbolic significance to the rending of the veil in the temple from top to bottom at the crucifixion of Christ (Mt. 27:51; Mk. 15:38; Lk. 23:45) in connection with this Messianic prophecy in Isaiah.

The Old Testament definitely teaches a future life after death. There are actual cases of resurrections from death in the O.T. (cf. I Kgs. 17:22; II Kgs. 4:35; 13:21). There are cases of translation where the individual did not die but was translated by God (Gen. 5:22-24; II Kgs. 2:11). Samuel reappeared after his death and talked with King Saul (I Sam. 28:12-19). David expressed faith in a future life at the death of his infant son (II Sam. 12:15-23). There are other passages too (Isa. 14:9; 26:19; 53:10-12; 65:20; 66:24; Hosea 13:14; Dan. 12:2). But this passage in Isaiah 25:8 is perhaps the most concise and significant statement in all the O.T. concerning life after death.

All cause for sorrow and frustration will have been removed;

therefore, the tender Father will wipe away all tears from the eyes of His children. A parallel promise in the New Testament is found in Rev. 21:1-4. While we are in this world we shall have tribulation, but we may be of good cheer for the Lord has overcome the world. We too, may overcome the world by our faith in Him. We are persuaded that "this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison . . ." (II Cor. 4:17).

v. 9 FELLOWSHIPING: In *the* day when Jehovah makes His "feast" for all peoples, in *the* day when He removes the "curtain" from between Himself and *all* nations and in *the* day when He swallows up death forever, those who have waited in eager faith will enter into a participation of the salvation He has provided. This passage reminds us of the prophecy of John the Baptist's father of the coming Messiah (Lk. 1:67-79) and of Simeon's prophetic prayer (Lk. 2:29-35). Much of the sin-stricken world was searching for fellowship with *The* Divine Being. They had even built altars to the "Unknown God" (Acts 17:23). When the Unknown God became Known, when the Word became flesh and dwelt among men and accomplished His redemptive work and was proclaimed throughout the known world by the apostles, thousands and thousands of men of every tribe and tongue said, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him. . . ." Men are still waiting for Him in places far away and near. He has made Himself knowable and available. But He has sovereignly chosen (Rom. 9-10-11) to become knowable and available through a response of faith to the preached Word (cf. Rom. 10:14-17). If every man is to have the opportunity to "be glad and rejoice in his salvation," then those who know the Word must preach it to every man.

QUIZ

1. What does the N.T. tell us about interpreting God's "feast of fat things"?
2. What is the "covering" or "veil" that is spread over all

nations?

3. How is that covering removed?
4. What does the O.T. say about the future life after death?
5. How do we know the world was waiting for God?
6. How are men who wait for God to be brought into fellowship with Him?

3. JUBILATION FOR JEHOVAH'S PREDOMINANCE

TEXT: 25:10-12

- 10 For in this mountain will the hand of Jehovah rest; and Moab shall be trodden down in his place, even as straw is trodden down in the water of the dunghill.
- 11 And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst thereof, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim; but Jehovah will lay low his pride together with the craft of his hands.
- 12 And the high fortress of thy walls hath he brought down, laid low, and brought to the ground, even to the dust.

QUERIES

- a. Why single out Moab for judgment by Jehovah?
- b. Why is Moab depicted as "swimming"?

PARAPHRASE

Yes, in Mount Zion the victorious, festive presence of God will be residing. But all His enemies, like Moab, will be crushed and cast down in their own filth like straw is cast out and kicked into the miry dungpit. Jehovah's enemy, Moab, will make great effort to save herself; like a swimmer to keep from drowning spreads her arms and makes frantic effort to save herself. However, Jehovah will make a mockery of Moab's

pride by humiliating her and foiling all her crafty plots to save herself. Yes, Moab, your walls, high and fortified, will be thrown down, completely laid low, scattered over the earth and ground into dust.

COMMENTS

v. 10 **STAGGERED**: "This mountain" has as its antecedent Zion. The tender hand of God will rest in mercy upon Zion, wiping away every tear. But, and the contrast is the point, the hand of God's judgment will rest upon Mount Moab. Those in covenant relationship with Jehovah will be protected, sustained and feted. Those not in covenant with Him will be defeated. Moab had a long history of opposition to Jehovah's sovereignty (cf. our comments on Isaiah chapters 15 & 16, Vol. I). Moab probably represents all the enemies of Jehovah's covenant people. God will use secondary agents to bring about Moab's downfall — Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans will successively conquer and ravage the mountains and valleys east of the Jordan river. It will become a desolate, deprived and despised area — a haunt of jackals and other wild animals. It will be crushed and cast off like barnyard straw pitched into the dung pit. There it will be trodden under foot.

v. 11 **STRUGGLING**: Moab, in the midst of its own desolation and despicability, will make frantic effort to save itself. Like a swimmer in danger of drowning, Moab will call upon every device and crafty plot it knows to save itself. But none of it will avail, for Jehovah is omnipotent. This is the point — the contrast between the high and exalted joy of Zion in its festive victory and the utter degradation and defeat of Moab.

v. 12 **STRUCK DOWN**: Moab was as proud as Edom of her fortifications. There, east of the Jordan, in the high cliffs and mountains of that region they built their walled cities. Military strategy has always been and always will be in troop-warfare, to occupy the "high ground." Ancient cities and villages invariably sought hills and rises in the terrain upon which to

COME TO THE FEAST . . . R. S. V. P.

build. But Moab's arrogance and threatening need not be feared by God's elect for He will bring their enemies down to the dust of the earth. And so it has been through the ages. The faithful Covenant-God has protected and sustained and fed His kingdom upon the earth and it is alive and flourishing today. In contrast, those enemies who have threatened and warred against God's kingdom have come and gone and dissolved into dust, one after another. So shall it ever be.

QUIZ

1. Which "mountain" is referred to in v. 10?
2. What is the point of this passage in connection with the rest of ch. 25?
3. How will Jehovah accomplish the demise of Moab?

SPECIAL STUDY

COME TO THE FEAST . . . R.S.V.P.

Enjoyment of God's provision is limited
only to the invited guest's response

by Paul T. Butler

"You are cordially invited . . ." or, "The honor of your presence is requested. . . ." This is the way an invitation to a special festal occasion usually starts. It may conclude with "R.S.V.P." *Repondez, s'il vous plait* (French for "Please reply").

"Come to the feast!" has been the invitation of man to man since time began. There is no better opportunity for men to integrate their personalities, show their regard for one another, and help one another than at the festal table. Man has also

learned to use the word "feast" in a figurative way to express the joyful experience he knows when he has nurtured his soul on something aesthetic or spiritual.

God, the omniscient Father, fully aware of man's frame of experience, sent His messengers in times past inviting men, "Come to my feast!" The amazing fact is, millions have rejected His invitation and most of those few who accept the invitation somehow miss the festivities.

The Christian life a feast

God ordained the physical feasts of the Jews for a purpose deeper than mere satisfaction of the flesh or of national pride. Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, and all the lesser festivities provided by the law pointed to a time of profound spiritual feasting when the Messiah was to come with His kingdom.

The prophets spoke figuratively and glowingly of the festal nature of the coming kingdom (Christian dispensation).

And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined (Isaiah 25:6).

Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness (Isaiah 55:2).

The Jewish nation, with the exception of a small remnant, misunderstood their own prophets and the typical nature of their own law. They were looking for a literal fulfillment of the types and prophecies. It was their desire that God should give them literal feasts, literal peace, literal prosperity, and a literal king.

Then Jesus came! He took up the figurative way of the prophets in speaking of the coming kingdom. He taught in parables that the kingdom-time would be a time of feasting. He intended that the people should anticipate a spiritual feast, but

again most would not receive His words, for they looked for a literal fulfillment as their fathers had before them.

In Luke 14:1ff Jesus gives one of His longest dissertations on this subject. He had been invited to a Pharisee's home to dine. While there He healed a man of dropsy. And as He observed men wrangling and striving over seats of honor at the Pharisee's table, He taught that humility marked the proper decorum for dining. He also attacked the social injustices against the poor.

The miraculous healing; the talk of honored seats; the attack upon social injustices; all caused one of the Pharisee's guests to jump up excitedly and cry, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."

This guest was sure the Prophet of Nazareth was giving instructions in protocol for the soon-to-be-established kingdom of the Messiah in Jerusalem, and he was overcome with the anticipation of it all. So Jesus took this occasion to teach that the call to the kingdom of God was a call to a great feast, but those who were first bidden refused to come. Others, out in the highways and hedges, were "constrained" to come. Those who were first bidden and refused shall not taste of His supper.

On several other occasions Jesus spoke of the kingdom in the figure of a feast (compare Matthew 22:1-14; 25:1-13).

Jesus spoke also of men eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and said that He was the manna come down out of heaven. In this He referred, of course, to men assimilating His word into their hearts and minds (compare John 6:63). He spoke of men drinking from the effervescent water of life, meaning the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (compare John 7:37-39).

The epistles testify to the festal nature of the Christian life. In I Corinthians 5:6-8 we are exhorted to keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Paul did not mean to limit "the feast" to the Lord's Supper. In I Corinthians 10:1-5 Christians are told that they eat and drink the same spiritual food the Israelites shared in the wilderness.

Our spiritual feast

Now feasts are to be joyfully festive. Yet some Christians live the Christian life as if they were being force-fed some bitter medicinal compound. Christianity for them is a diet of unpalatable rules and regulations—of “dos and don’ts.” This is because some Christians, like the Jews of Jesus’ day, still have a materialistic concept of Christianity. That is, unless their Christianity affords some worldly joy, worldly fame, or worldly satisfaction, they “all with one consent begin to make excuse.” But, as Paul says, the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit (compare Romans 14:17). Or, as Jesus put it, man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from God (compare Matthew 4:4).

When we become Christians we “have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come” (Hebrews 6:1ff). We join with angels in festal array when we come to Zion (the church) (Hebrews 12:22, 23). Paul said he fed the Corinthians on the milk of the word (I Corinthians 3:2) and the book of Hebrews speaks of the word in the same way (Hebrews 5:12-14). Peter writes, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (I Peter 2:2, 3). Paul wrote, men should not become drunk with wine, but they should be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). Jesus is the living water, and none shall ever hunger or thirst if they come to Him (John 4:13, 14). For, “blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).

Studying and receiving the word is not all there is to the “feast.” Jesus tells us, “My meat (food) is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (John 4:34). We must not only contemplate the festive table of Christianity, we must become participants. We shall never taste nor be filled until we partake.

R.S.V.P.

There are at least three reactions to Christ's invitation to the sumptuous Christian feast.

Some refuse to come at all. Most of these seem to feel they have more satisfying things to do. Some think to satisfy their souls with power and the temporal security. Others think they may satisfy their souls with pleasures of the flesh. Still others seek to satisfy their souls with the vain glory of fame and pride. Little do they know that they are starving to death spiritually while feeding on "husks." Isaiah in a Messianic context said, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed" (Isaiah 65:13).

Why do people spend their money (life's energies and soul's desires) for that which does not satisfy? Some discover—and most of them too late—that the bread of rebellion and worldliness does not satisfy the soul. Christ said that everyone who drinks of the water that is temporal will thirst again. Sooner or later the worldling finds that surfeiting himself on worldliness and sin has left only the taste of wormwood and bitterness in his heart. Jeremiah wrote, "I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall."

A second kind of response to the invitation is made by those who come to the feast but partake only of the rudimentary things. These are the Christians who stay on the same diet week after week. Rich fare is spread before their hearts and minds but they are so lazy they wish only to partake of that which is "spoon-fed" to them. They never know the thrill in going on to new heights of spiritual knowledge and experience. They never grow. They are satisfied to remain on their milk diet, never to partake of the meat of the word. For this reason many become spiritually weak and sickly, and some actually die a spiritual death (compare I Corinthians 11:27-32). They will never mature into full-grown men in Christ (compare Ephesians 4:11-16). It is not a lack of available food that causes

so much sickness and trouble in the Christian "body" (the church). It is rather the laziness of the "body" to partake. Finally, there are those who come and are eager to partake of every rich dish set before them in this heavenly feast. Here is one place where a person can never eat too much! Before him are such tasty dishes as the joy of salvation; the peace and security found in Christ; the thrill of soul winning; the challenge of having a wisdom and knowledge which transcends the vastness of the universe or even our own thoughts; the satisfaction of having an eternal purpose; the eagerness of hope in sharing a future glory with Christ; the boldness we have in Christ our high priest; the anticipation of a heavenly inheritance; being in partnership with God—a colaborer in His eternal scheme of redemption; and comradeship with the redeemed both in heaven and on earth. These are just a few of the satisfying, rich dishes in the Christian feast. The table is prepared before you, there is heavenly bread and living water; there is fruit from the tree of life and the fruit of the Spirit. All things are ready, come to the feast!

If your Christian life is lacking in joy and festive spirit, it is not God's fault. His table is bountiful and you are an invited, honored guest.

Perhaps in the past you have been pushing away His bountiful provision and have been eating at the devil's table. Have you found that the devil's table is filled with ashes and bread of mourning—with husks and pigs' food? If you are a prodigal son, you need to return to the Father's table. You need to "come home" rededicated, reconsecrated, ready to hear the Father as He commands to bring forth the robe, the ring, and the shoes, and to kill the fatted calf so that we may feast together.

Perhaps you have been sitting too lazily at the table and need to rouse yourself from your milk diet and partake of the rich satisfying, strengthening food that is there.

It may be that you have never accepted the King's invitation to come to His feast at all. Would you refuse an invitation to dine with the President at the White House? I tell you a greater

than the President has sent you a special invitation. The invitation of King Jesus is not to a select few. The invitation is printed, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."

The only requirement is that you put on the festive garment. In the parable Jesus told (Mt. 22) one was found at the king's feast without the proper garment and he was banished from the feast. But thanks be to God, our King has provided not only the feast but also the white robe to wear. You may put on this garment by faith and obedience to Christ, for it is through faith and obedience that we are "united with His death," and there have our robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

All things are ready, come to the feast! R.S.V.P.!

C. JUSTICE AT LAST FOR JUDAH, CHAPTER 26

1. JUSTICE'S ORIGIN

TEXT: 26:1-6

- 1 In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah:
We have a strong city; salvation will he appoint for wells
and bulwarks.
- 2 Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth
faith may enter in.
- 3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed
on thee; because he trusteth in thee.
- 4 Trust ye in Jehovah forever; for in Jehovah, even Jehovah,
is an everlasting rock.
- 5 For he hath brought down them that dwell on high, the
lofty city; he layeth it low, he layeth it low even to the ground;
he bringeth it even to the dust.
- 6 The foot shall tread it down; even the feet of the poor, and
the steps of the needy.

QUERIES

- a. What "day" is referred to in verse 1?
- b. What two cities are contrasted (v. 1 and v. 5)?

PARAPHRASE

In that day when Jehovah makes a feast and removes the covering spread over all nations and swallows up death forever, this jubilant song of praise to Jehovah will be sung by Jehovah's people: Zion, our everlasting city, is strong; her strength is in the salvation He has made. Those of you in the city already, open the gates that all who are righteous and those who keep faith may enter in. Thou, O Jehovah, will keep in complete peace the man who bases his thinking on Thy will, because such a man has put all his reliance on Thee. Rely totally and eternally on Jehovah; for it is the Covenant-God, Jehovah, who is exclusively the eternal rock-of-hiding. He humbles the proud and brings the haughty, antagonistic world of opposition down to dust and oblivion. The poor and lowly, once scoffed at by the world and the lofty city, will walk on the ruins of the enemies of God.

COMMENTS

v. 1-2 **STRONG CITY:** "That day" has as its antecedent the day of 25:9. On the day when God makes a feast for all nations, removes the covering from all nations, swallows up death forever, and when those who waited on Him rejoice in His salvation—they will sing this song! The "land of Judah" then must be symbolic of the covenant people of God, the church, in the Messianic age. The "new Zion," the "Jerusalem that is preeminent," (cf. Heb. 12:22-24; Gal. 4:26-27), the Church, will be God's city of divine strength and power. Her strength and power will be in the divine salvation God

and walk across the rubble-heaps of the once haughty enemies of God. A remnant of faithful ones endured the Babylonian captivity and walked upon the ruins of once proud, powerful, pagan Babylon. Christians today may go to Rome and walk among the ruins of the once cruel, calculating, Roman empire which vowed to exterminate Christianity from the face of the earth.

So the contrast in this section is between the "city of God" which we take to be the righteous, faithful covenant-keeping people of God, especially those of that day when God makes them a feast, removes their veil and swallows up death forever—the church—and the "high and lofty city" representing all that is Satanic and human and stands in opposition to the redemptive purposes of God. Justice, salvation and peace will come to the remnant in the new order to be brought by the Messiah. When it comes, the messianic people will sing about it.

QUIZ

1. What does the "land of Judah" probably symbolize considering the context in which it is used?
2. What makes the "city" "strong"?
3. What character is possessed by those invited to enter the city?
4. Where does "perfect peace" originate?
5. How are we to get "perfect peace"?
6. Why use "rock" as a figure to represent God?
7. What is meant by the "poor" treading down the high and lofty city?

2. JUSTICE'S OBJECTIVE

TEXT: 26:7-15

- 7 The way of the just is uprightness: thou that art upright dost direct the path of the just.
- 8 Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Jehovah, have we waited for thee; to thy name, even to thy memorial name, is the desire of our soul.
- 9 With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee earnestly: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.
- 10 Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal wrongfully, and will not behold the majesty of Jehovah.
- 11 Jehovah, thy hand is lifted up, yet they see not: but they shall see thy zeal for the people, and be put to shame; yea, fire shall devour thine adversaries.
- 12 Jehovah, thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou hast also wrought all our works for us.
- 13 O Jehovah our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.
- 14 They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all remembrance of them to perish.
- 15 Thou hast increased the nation, O Jehovah, thou hast increased the nation; thou art glorified; thou hast enlarged all the borders of the land.

QUERIES

- a. What is the "memorial name" of Jehovah?
- b. How has Jehovah wrought all their works for them?
- c. Who are the "other lords" v. 13?

PARAPHRASE

The way of the righteous is straight and smooth because the Righteous Jehovah smooths the righteous man's way. Indeed, in Your divine judgments have we waited hopefully to see You. To see Your name glorified in judgment upon Your enemies, as in ages past, is the earnest desire of our soul. With my soul I have longed for You in the night. Indeed, in the depths of my being I am earnestly seeking You because when Your judgments descend upon the earth the world learns what is right. When Your goodness is enjoyed by the wicked man he does not learn to do right—he only keeps on doing wickedness because he does not become aware of the omnipotence of Jehovah. Although You have raised Your hand threatening them, they refused to give heed. Show them Your zealous protection for Your covenant people and they will be humiliated. Indeed, Jehovah, let them be consumed by the fire You reserve for Your enemies. Jehovah, You will establish peace for us. You alone are the source of everything good that has ever come to us. Jehovah, You alone are our God. Other lords we have allowed to have dominion over us, but we acknowledge only Your name as sovereign. Those other lords we served before are dead and shall not come again because they are like the deceased. You came against them and destroyed them, causing us to forget them completely. You have made our nation great, O Jehovah. You, indeed, have made our nation great! You receive the glory for it! You extended the borders of our land by Your judgments!

COMMENTS

v. 7-10 GOVERN: The first objective of Jehovah's justice is to govern His creation. He governs the earth and mankind through His providential and revelational manifestations of justice. This passage very evidently relates to all that has been said thus far in chapters 24, 25, and 26. Jehovah is

going to bring in a new order (the Messianic order) by judging the old order and establishing justice which was so glaringly absent from the covenant people in Isaiah's day. God will reign in justice in His new order, and citizens of His new order will be men of justice. All this will redound to His glory.

The true Israelite will be a man of righteousness and justice. He will long for God's justice to be manifested because that will be his way of life. Changing men into just men is the purpose of God's just judgments. So, God makes the believer's way *upright* (Hebrew, *meysbareem*, meaning; *even, level, smooth*). God's justice works for the good of the believer and makes him the kind of man God can govern in God's new-order-kingdom.

In ages past God showed Himself to be just and the justifier of him who believes. He punished rebels and delivered believers. That was the very essence of His character. He always acted faithfully, consistently and as He said He would, He established a *memorial* name (reputation) of absolute justice. Memorial is the Hebrew word *zekreka*. It is translated simply *name* in Ex. 3:15; Psa. 30:4; 135:13; Hosea 12:5. It is the same Hebrew word from which the name *Zechariah* ("whom the Lord remembers") comes. The true man of God desires with all his heart to see the God of justice act justly in the affairs of men, not for some selfish end but that all men might learn righteousness and justice.

The true man of God must have a deep and abiding desire to see justice done in order that men might learn righteousness. The true man of God cannot condone lawlessness and injustice in the name of indulgent mercy. Of course, every man of God must learn to be merciful, but he must also learn that justice is often the most merciful thing that can happen to a lawless man. The collapse of justice and punishment for evil was precisely the major cause of the downfall of the Hebrew people in the days of the divided kingdom! (Read Amos, Hosea, Micah and Isaiah.) The man who does not eagerly and passionately search for truth, honesty, justice and fairness is not the kind of man God calls into His kingdom.

So, you see, this entire context is related to the new order that is being prophesied, (cf. Rev. 6:9-11; 15:2-4; 16:4-7; 19:1-3). God's saints praise Him for His justice and judgment.

If the Lord resorted only to kind treatment of the wicked, indulging them in their self-destructive rebellion, such men would never learn righteousness. Severity and punishment is often times the only warning some men will heed. Even then, some will never repent (cf. Rev. 9:20-21; 16:9, 11). Pampering and indulging wicked men will only intensify their appetite for wickedness, (cf. Hosea 4:1-3; 4:12; 5:3-4; 7:1-7; 10:3-4, etc.).

The greatest manifestation of God's hatred for sin and the divine extent to which he would go to judge sin and accomplish divine justice is when He punished man's sin in His Sinless Son. At the cross God was both "just and the justifier of Him who believes" in Christ (cf. Rom. 3:21-26). That tremendous revelation of God's judgment and justice should "draw all men to Him," to be governed by Him as He rules their hearts.

v. 11-15 GLORIFY: The second important objective of God's judgments is to glorify His name. *To exalt the name of Jehovah is the most fundamental need of man!* If the name of Jehovah is not supreme, nothing is safe! If God's integrity and faithfulness can be successfully impugned, man is lost! So, all of God's actions are "for the sake of His name" (cf. Ezek. 20:9, 14, 22, 44, etc.). All that man holds to be true, real, valuable, right or wrong, good or bad, depends upon the integrity of God and His Word. If God is not Absolute, everything is false! God's most factual, arresting method of proving His Absoluteness is in His just judgments.

So, the true man of God prays for God's justice to be done. The true man of God waits upon the Lord to carry out His judgments in His own time and in His own way (cf. Rom. 12:14-21). And the true man of God does all within his own power to support God's ordained structures of human government through which God executes some of His judgments (cf. Rom. 13:1-10).

God's zealous deliverances of His people and His judgments

upon His enemies so glorify His name His people are moved to praise His name over and over.

God's people praise Him expressing their absolute faith in Him to establish peace for them. They willingly confess that He has "worked all their works for them." They, like David, realize that even their offerings to God came from Him (cf. I Chron. 29:10-19). All the good that any man has done is possible only as that man allows God to work in him and through him.

Verse 13 is interesting because it contains the three major Hebrew names for God: *Yaweh*, *Elohim*, *Adonai*. In this verse *Yaweh* and *Elohim* denote God while *Adonai* denotes "other lords." *Adonai* is parallel to the Greek word *kurios* (lord). Whether the "other lords" are human masters or idol-gods is uncertain. The Israelites allowed both human masters and idols to have dominion over them. When Jehovah has demonstrated once and for all His sovereign majesty in divine judgment and justice, and when He has brought in His new order men will never again call idols or human masters "lord." While the church is in the world it will, of course, be subject to every human ordinance (not disobedient to God) for the Lord's sake. But no human or idol will be called "Father" by a citizen of God's new-order-kingdom.

God purged Israel of its idolatry once and for all through the Babylonian captivity. Israel, so enamored of idolatry during the time of the divided kingdom, was cast into a veritable sea of paganism and idolatry in Babylon and Persia. There they saw the cruelty and corruption that idolatry results in, and they cried out for deliverance. God erased every desire for idolatry from the true heart of the man of God. All over the world in this age when the gospel is preached and men love Christ and obey Him they throw away their false gods. The gospel has power to cast down "strongholds and every imagination that exalts itself against God and to bring every thought into captivity to Christ" (II Cor. 10:3-5).

God took a comparatively small and disorganized mass of nomadic slaves known as Hebrews, delivered them from the

world-powerful hand of the Egyptian emperor, established a "beachhead" for them in the land of the Canaanites, and enlarged them numerically and geographically at the very center of world commerce and politics until their influence was felt all over the world. Miracles and providence were so evident in all this, the true believer had to acknowledge God's working as the source of it all.

The establishment of God's new-order-kingdom, the church, is even more spectacular and demonstrably divine in origin. One despised Galilean took twelve assorted fishermen and tax-collectors plus a tent-maker and conquered men from every tribe and tongue and nation on the earth.

In the days of Samuel, the people of God cried out for "a king like the nations." Many "lords" came and went, exercising dominion over God's people. For the most part, they led God's people into idolatry and captivity. Through it all the Lord, Jehovah, was seeking to bring His people back to His own dominion over them. After long centuries of "troublesome times" (cf. Dan. 9:24-27, our comments in *Daniel*, by Paul T. Butler, College Press), God came to earth incarnate in human flesh, in His Son, and re-established His rule and His kingdom among men. So, now, God has "increased the nation" and "enlarged all the borders of the land" to include all who have and all who will believe Jesus and obey His commandments. And it all redounds to His glory!

QUIZ

1. What is the first purpose of God's judgments?
2. How does this work for the smoothing of the righteous man's way?
3. Why should the true man of God earnestly desire God to judge in justice?
4. Where is the apex of God's justice and judgment shown?
5. How does God work all man's works for him?
6. How may the release from idolatry and the increasing of the nation have a fulfillment today?

3. JUSTICE'S OPERATION

TEXT: 26:16-21

- 16 Jehovah, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.
- 17 Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been before thee, O Jehovah.
- 18 We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.
- 19 Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead.
- 20 Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.
- 21 For, behold, Jehovah cometh forth out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

QUERIES

- a. Why were God's people in such agony? v. 16-18
- b. What "dead" are going to be made to live?

PARAPHRASE

O Jehovah, during their distress and oppression, your faithful remnant visited You, pouring out their hearts in prayer when your correcting discipline was upon them. As a pregnant woman writhes and cries out in her pain as her time to deliver draws near, so were we when we came to You, O Lord, in our

prayers for deliverance. We too were in labor; we writhed in pain, but we brought forth wind—nothing! No deliverance has come from all our pain; no inhabitants of the earth have come to birth through our agony. But, O remnant, those who account themselves dead and cast off will live—they will rise again from oblivion. Those who dwell in dust shall awake and sing, for God's light of life will fall like refreshing dew upon them. Come, my remnant, enter your rooms and shut your doors behind you. Hide yourselves for a little while until the anger of God is satisfied in the captivities. The Lord is going to come down from his place in heaven to punish your captors and those who oppose you because of their rebellions. The earth cannot hide their guilt—their murderous deeds will be revealed—and all those they have slain will be accounted for.

COMMENTS

v. 16-18 JUSTICE IS SLOW: *Batsar* is the Hebrew for *in trouble* and primarily means to *bind up, distressed, oppressed*. In verse 16 also is the Hebrew word *musareka*, translated *chastening*, which literally means, *correction* or *discipline*. We conclude then that verse 16 is speaking of the corrective discipline by which the Lord had oppressed the Israelites in the past and would afflict them with in the future (the Babylonian captivity). This latter affliction is apparent when one compares the term "indignation" in Isa. 26:20 with Daniel 8:19, 11:36, which we shall do later.

These verses represent the prayers of the faithful remnant, in all its history, making known its frustration of looking for justice and deliverance in the midst of its trials and unable to deliver itself. The remnant is driven to hope in God's justice. God's justice seems to walk with leaden feet (cf. Hab. 1:1-4; Isa. 59:14; Ezek. 9:9; Rev. 6:9-11). So the saints of God cry out, but God is trying them, purging them, building endurance and character, if they will believe

and hold fast their hope.

Like a pregnant woman, Israel had endured pain, much anxiety and now, trouble like a woman in the pangs of labor was upon Israel, and she had produced nothing. She knew from her prophets and patriarchs she was to bring to birth a new order, but now all she has is pain and in her anxiety she cries out again. Facing the captivity of the northern kingdom (Israel) and the disintegration of the southern kingdom (Judah) and its inevitable captivity, the faithful remnant (Isaiah, their spokesman) was gripped with frustration and anxiety about its Messianic destiny through which it was to bring deliverance to mankind.

Verse 18 contains the Hebrew word *naphal* which means *birth*, or as Leupold says, "is used of beasts *dropping* their young in birth." A better translation of the phrase, "... neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen" would be, "... no inhabitants of the world came to birth through us." This is better word usage and contextual harmony. The remnant's agonized concern was that God's covenant people had experienced nothing but pain and sorrow when their destiny was to produce a Messianic new-world-order. Thus far they had given birth to nothing at all!

v. 19-21 **JUSTICE IS SURE:** But the answer from God through His prophet is, slow as His justice may seem, absolutely and divinely certain. What they think is dead shall live. God's remnant is a living kingdom, not a dead one. There is some disagreement as to whether verse 19 refers to personal, individual, physical resurrection from the dead or to a resurrection of the redemptive program of God through the deliverance of the covenant people from the captivities and its subsequent Messianic fulfillment. We tend to accept the latter view. We feel it fits the context more clearly, and such figure is used elsewhere (cf. Hosea 6:1-3; Ezekiel chapter 37; and see our comments, *Daniel*, College Press, Dan. 12:1ff). Those who dwell in the dust of death (in captivity) shall awake and sing. English translators translated the Hebrew *'oroth* as *herbs*, but it would better be, *light*. Thus we have paraphrased

it: “. . . for God's *light* of life will fall like refreshing dew upon them.” See Hosea 14:4-7 for the life-giving refreshment of dew.

It is specifically God's people, the remnant, who are promised more than warned to hide themselves for a little while until the “indignation” is past. God *invites* them, Come, enter into thy chambers. He will protect them during the indignation. The Hebrew word used here for indignation is *zaam* and is the same word used in Daniel 8:19; 11:36; and also Dan. 11:30 where it is translated “enraged” (RSV). See our comments on Daniel 8:19, *Daniel*, College Press, pg. 313. The time of the *indignation* is the same as the “troublesome time” of Daniel 9:24-27—the time for God's accomplishing through the Jewish nation all that He is going to accomplish which will come to a culmination at the birth and death of the Messiah. In other words, the faithful remnant is going to have to endure a time of indignation/trouble from the time of the Babylonian captivities, through Persian domination, Greek domination, Seleucid domination, Roman domination until Christ is born. At His birth comes the long sought for deliverance (cf. Lk. 1:67-79; 2:25-38). At His birth comes the “resurrection” of the remnant's Messianic destiny—its very life. The indignation, though it will last some 600 years, is only a “little while” with God. All during that time God is chastening, delivering, preparing them to become a people through which He can bring to birth His new order, His new covenant, the church.

God is going to do it. The guilty world cannot hide itself or its guilt. It cannot forego Jehovah's deliverance of the remnant. God's word is sure!

QUIZ

1. What kind of trouble were these people suffering?
2. How intense was their trouble?
3. Why were they perturbed that they “had brought forth

nothing”?

4. What did they expect to “bring forth”?
5. How will the “dead” live?
6. What is the “indignation”?
7. What is the message about God’s justice here?

D. JOINING OF JUDAH AND GENTILES, CHAPTER 27

1. JOINED BY DIVINE PROTECTION

TEXT: 27:1-6

- 1 In that day Jehovah with this hard and great and strong sword will punish leviathan the swift serpent, and leviathan the crooked serpent; and he will slay the monster that is in the sea.
- 2 In that day: A vineyard of wine, sing ye unto it.
- 3 I Jehovah am its keeper; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.
- 4 Wrath is not in me: would that the briers and thorns were against me in battle! I would march upon them, I would burn them together.
- 5 Or else let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; yea, let him make peace with me.
- 6 In days to come shall Jacob take root; Israel shall blossom and bud; and they shall fill the face of the world with fruit.

QUERIES

- a. What is a “leviathan”?
- b. Who is to “take hold of” Jehovah’s “strength”?

PARAPHRASE

In that day when Jehovah makes a feast and removes the covering spread over all nations and swallows up death forever, He will take His hard, great and strong sword and will bring judgment upon the monster, the swift, serpent-like one and upon the monster, the winding, serpent-like one. He will slay the monster that is in the sea. In that specific day, the Lord will have a delightful vineyard. O sing of it! I, Jehovah, am its Sustainer. My concern for it is constant and I will refresh it and protect it every day against those who would harm it. I, the Lord, harbor no spiteful resentment against My remnant. If enemies, like thorns and briars, stubbornly set themselves against My remnant, I will come upon them and destroy them. However, if these enemies cast themselves upon My mercy and make effort to come to terms of peace with Me and Mine, then they shall have My strength. Indeed, I invite all My enemies to make peace with Me and Mine. The day is coming when the true Israel of God will be established and it will certainly prosper. This true Israel of God will fill the earth with its offspring.

COMMENTS

v. 1 MONSTER DEFEATED: Two Hebrew words in this verse may be translated *monster*; they are *liveyathan* and *thaniyn*. *Liveyathan* is translated *crocodile* in Job 40:25 (RSV) and *thaniyn* is translated *serpent* in most uses. In Ezek. 29:3; 32:2, *thaniyn* is translated *dragon*, referring to Egypt. Some commentators have concluded that the first leviathan, since it is swift, symbolizes Nineveh (Assyria) built upon the swift, serpent-like Tigris River, while the second, winding, crooked, leviathan symbolizes Babylon built upon the winding, serpent-like Euphrates River, and the monster that is in the sea symbolizes Egypt.

It is evident from the context (chapters 24-27) the prophet

is speaking of *that day* of the Messianic fulfillment (the first coming of Christ and the establishment of the church). Then what is the leviathan to be punished or slain? Obviously it refers to all the enemies of God and His people who were defeated at the first coming of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:8; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14-15; I Jn. 3:8; Jn. 12:31; 16:11; Mt. 12:29; Lk. 10:18, etc.) In the book of Revelation the Roman empire is referred to as the beast, false prophet and harlot, who is allied with Satan (called the great dragon). (cf. Rev. 13 through 20) But the beast, false prophet, and harlot are defeated and cast into the lake of fire. The dragon (Satan) is bound for a thousand years, then loosed for a short time and finally cast into the lake of fire forever with the beast. Daniel chapters 7 and 8 refer to the enemies of God as various beasts. Wherever the spirit of opposition to God has appeared, in whatever kingdom it may be, Satan is the author of it. He is the motivating spirit in all the forces that oppose God's rule in the universe. Perhaps in one area he assumes one characteristic, while in another he assumes still another characteristic. In Isaiah's day great world empires (Assyria, Babylon and Egypt) were the leviathans standing opposed to God's rule in creation (cf. Ezek. 29:3; 32:2; Jer. 51:34; Isa. 51:9; with Dan. ch. 7 & 8). The leviathan's (monster, serpent, dragon) strongest and most potent weapon against God and His people is deception. Isaiah points, in this section, to *that day* when the feast will be made, the veil is removed from all nations, and death is swallowed up forever. Leviathan, with all his power to deceive and hold man in bondage to the fear of death will be "cast out, judged and triumphed over," when the Messiah brings "life and immortality to light through the gospel."

v. 2-6 MERCY DISPENSED: At the same time, on the same day, Jehovah defeats the "monster" He dispenses mercy to *all* men. God's vineyard (the covenant people) in *that day* (the church) will be producing according to His wishes. It will produce "wine" not "sour grapes" like the vineyard of Isaiah, chapter 5. Its fruitfulness and pleasantness will motivate a response of rejoicing. The Hebrew word *ahnu*

means literally, "to answer, respond to by singing." Songs of praise, honor and rejoicing for God's church are appropriate human responses for the mercy God has provided through His new covenant relationship.

Jehovah Himself is the *notsrah* (keeper) which has the connotation of *preserver*. He will refresh it constantly. He protects it constantly (cf. Psa. 121:4). The Lord watches over this new vineyard (the church) in such a manner that even the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. There are many enemies ready to destroy the church but not one shall succeed. God's new vineyard will be invincible. Whatever wrath Jehovah once held for His rebellious vineyard (Isa. 5), He does not hold for His new vineyard. God's wrath against His covenant people is removed and punished in Christ. His wrath is still abiding on those who do not believe (cf. Jn. 3:18, 36), but those who believe are made "branches" in the "Vine" (cf. Jn. 15:1-11) and God cherishes them, prunes them, they produce much fruit and have much joy. Since this vineyard is symbolic of the Messianic kingdom it is a prediction of *that* day when *all* nations (Isa. 26:5ff) are part of it. It is a prediction of the joining (grafting, cf. Rom. 11) of the Gentiles with the Hebrews.

If briars and thorns attempt to choke out the vineyard, God will step upon them and crush them, then burn them. There is the challenge of the sovereign God here to His enemies. Nothing foreign to His vineyard can enter and take His vineyard. He will protect and purify it. Destruction is inevitable to the enemies of His vineyard.

There is one alternative open to His enemies. They may "take hold of His strength." God bids His enemies take refuge in His *maozyi*, or His *fortress*, *refuge* or *stronghold*. If the enemy comes into God's fortress (the church) he does so only after he has made peace with God. The Hebrew word translated *make* is the most fundamental Hebrew word for *make*, *ashah*, and therefore indicates a significant part of the peace between man and God is action initiated by man in *making* peace with Him. That action is belief, repentance and

obedience. When an enemy of God believes, repents and obeys, he is no longer an enemy but has come into God's stronghold (the new vineyard, the new covenant, the church). The repetition of the phrase, "let him make peace with me," serves to emphasize God's merciful grace in offering the invitation to His enemies to come to peace lest they be crushed and burned like weeds (cf. Psa. 2:1-11; Lk. 3:7-9; Jn. 15:6, Jer. 12:10ff, etc.)

In days future to Isaiah, Israel will take root. How many days in the future this promise is we are left to surmise from the context. It is obviously speaking of *that* day of Isaiah 25:6, 9; 26:1; 27:1, 2, in other words, the day of the Messiah. The Messiah is to be the "shoot" and "branch" out of the stump of Jesse (cf. Isa. 11:1ff). The Messianic people will take root, flourish, produce fruit and fill all the earth with its fruit (cf. Hosea 14:4ff). In the missionary proclamation of the gospel this passage finds its fulfillment, the Israel of God (cf. Gal. 6:14-18).

So, as before in these chapters (24-27), we see the focus of God's purging, chastening judgments on Judah is the preparation of a remnant through which He may accomplish His Messianic redemption of all mankind. Jews and Gentiles, all enemies of God, will be given opportunity to come into His stronghold (the church) when they have made peace with Him. God's judgment on Judah in her captivity was not capricious nor malicious but loving and purposeful—God aimed it all at calling to Himself a people zealous of good works.

QUIZ

1. What do "leviathan" and "monster" symbolize?
2. Where is God's vineyard mentioned elsewhere in the Bible?
3. When is all this going to take place?
4. Why is God's wrath no longer upon the vineyard?
5. How do God's enemies make peace with Him?
6. When is "Jacob" to take root and fill the earth with fruit?

2. JOINED BY DIVINE PURGING

TEXT: 27:7-13

- 7 Hath he smitten them as he smote those that smote them? or are they slain according to the slaughter of them that were slain by them?
- 8 In measure, when thou sendest them away, thou dost contend with them; he hath removed them with his rough blast in the day of the east wind.
- 9 Therefore by this shall the iniquity of Jacob be forgiven, and this is all the fruit of taking away his sin: that he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, so that the Asherim and the sun-images shall rise no more.
- 10 For the fortified city is solitary, a habitation deserted and forsaken, like the wilderness: there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof.
- 11 When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off; the women shall come, and set them on fire; for it is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have compassion upon them, and he that formed them will show them no favor.
- 12 And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah will beat off his fruit from the flood of the River unto the brook of Egypt; and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.
- 13 And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great trumpet shall be blown; and they shall come that were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and they that were outcasts in the land of Egypt; and they shall worship Jehovah in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

QUERIES

- a. How does "taking them away" forgive the sin of Jacob?

- b. Why does Jehovah not have compassion on them?
 c. What is the "trumpet" that is to be blown?

PARAPHRASE

Has Jehovah stricken His own people as severely as He has stricken their oppressors? Have His people known death as those who killed them have known it? No! He has dealt with His own people by driving them from their land and dispersing them. He has driven them by His fierce blast, it is true; like the scorching wind from the desert He has come upon them. Yet only in this purging shall the guilt of His people be removed. Only in this way can the people's forgiveness be accomplished—if they smash their pagan altars into pounded chalk, and leave no idols standing. Look at most of the fortified cities of Israel to the north; they are desolate like a deserted house and as forsaken as the desert. Calves graze there; animals make them their habitations and feeding grounds. The limbs of the trees of these cities wither, dry up and break off and women come and use them for firewood. These northern neighbors of yours are foolish, stupid and rebellious people. This is the reason their Creator cannot have pity upon them or show them His favor—they do not want it. In that day when Jehovah begins to make His feast and remove the covering spread over all nations and swallows up death forever, He will gather His chosen together one by one like hand-picked grain, selecting them from the far reaches of the world—from Mesopotamia and from Egypt. In that same day a great beckoning shall be made like a trumpet blast and those who were lost in the far reaches of the world will come and worship the Lord in Zion.

COMMENTS

v. 7-11 CALL TO REPENTANCE: In view of *that day* (Isa. 25:6-9, etc.) and all Jehovah proposes to do with His people,

the Lord now calls Judah, through Isaiah, to repent. First the Lord reminds His people that He has dealt with them mercifully. God has not smitten His own people as He has others. It is true He has handled them roughly, but this was for their good, that they might repent. Others (like the Canaanites and Amalekites) were extinguished as a race by the sovereign permission of God working through secondary agents. But He would not allow the covenant people to suffer extinction. He purposed to bring redemption to the whole world through them. However, He cannot work through any people unless they are willing. His firm, often severe, chastening hand rested upon them and will again rest upon them in exile to bring them to repentance. The Hebrew word for *measure* is *saah* which means *a third part of an ephah*. This enforces the idea that God does not *extinguish* Judah but only carries them away into exile, purifying for Himself a remnant through which He will yet work His redemption.

Verse 9 shows that the *effect* of the exile will be the expiation of Judah's sin. The captivity was the *means* by which the nation was brought to repentance—not the grounds of their forgiveness. There was no merit in their suffering. The suffering was a means to bring them to repentance. Only when they repented and turned to God could they be forgiven. The fruit worthy of repentance in their case was to be the breaking asunder of their idols and pagan altars and grinding them into chalky obliteration.

Secondly, the Lord directs the attention of Judah to most of the now desolate and ruined cities of Israel, the northern kingdom. The Assyrians have overrun and destroyed most of Israel—only the capital Samaria is left, and it is under siege. Assyrian armies now appear headed for Judah. To refer to a future desolate Jerusalem would have little impact on Isaiah's audience. But to point to most of Israel already lying in desolate ruins where dead trees and grazing animals are the only inhabitants of its cities would serve as a graphic warning. The accusation that the "people" of these "deserted" cities are "without understanding" fits very well the description

of the people of the northern kingdom as Hosea pictured them (Hosea 4:1-6, etc.).

v. 12-13 CALL TO RESTORATION: The predicted exile will have its effect in producing repentance and turning from idolatry back to Jehovah—at least in a faithful remnant. Out of, and through, that remnant restored to Palestine in the days of Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel will come the fulfillment of the Messianic order idealized and symbolized in this section. *That day* of verses 12 and 13 are obviously still integral parts of the whole context of this section (ch. 24-27) and refer directly back to *the day* when the feast is made, the covering is removed and death is swallowed up forever.

Jehovah will have *fruit* (Hebrew, *parah*; *produce, offspring*) from the far reaches of the world as a result of the exiled penitent, restored remnant. The Hebrew word translated gathered is *lakat* which means literally, *collect, pick up*, the same word as is used in Exodus 16:5, 16, 26, 27, to describe the Israelites *collecting* manna and quail. He will collect His own one by one, selectively. As Leupold says, "The point is, God's fatherly care for His own will appear in this that the scattered ones will be most faithfully gathered and made a unit again. Their unity however will express itself in their united worship at the sanctuary . . ."

If our interpretation is correct and *that day* refers back to the messianic program predicted in chapter 25, then "the great trumpet" to be sounded on *that day* must be the gospel proclamation which gathered (and is still gathering, collecting, picking) the true Israel of God from the far reaches of the world and uniting them in the worship of Jehovah in Zion, the real and abiding Zion (the church), not the earthly and passing Jerusalem, (see our comments on Isaiah 19:16-25, Volume I, College Press).

Thus closes a very significant section of Isaiah's message. It is a message to the last, remaining segment of the covenant nation. They are to be judged for their sin and idolatry. But it is the judgment of a merciful and sovereign Lord. He is

judging for a purpose. That purpose is to purge the covenant people of their sin in order that they may progress toward the goal Jehovah has for them. That goal is the redemption of all mankind through their Messiah and through them as a messianic people.

QUIZ

1. Why ask if He has smitten his own people as He has others?
2. How does their removal relate to their being forgiven?
3. What does the "fortified city" have to do with their forgiveness?
4. What day is referred to in verses 12 and 13?
5. How is God going to gather them?
6. Where are they going to worship?
7. Summarize this entire section.

EXAMINATION

CHAPTERS TWENTY-FOUR THROUGH TWENTY-SEVEN

DEFINITION

(Define the following words or phrases as they were discussed in the comments.)

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. <i>lofty</i> people | 10. <i>perfect</i> peace |
| 2. <i>new</i> wine | 11. mind is <i>stayed</i> |
| 3. isles of the <i>sea</i> | 12. <i>Trust</i> ye in Jehovah |
| 4. <i>punish</i> the host of the high ones | 13. <i>everlasting</i> rock |
| 5. I will <i>praise</i> thy name | 14. <i>uprightness</i> |
| 6. stronghold to the <i>poor</i> | 15. thy <i>chastening</i> |
| 7. feast of <i>fat things</i> | 16. <i>indignation</i> |
| 8. over <i>all nations</i> | 17. <i>leviathan</i> |
| 9. keepeth <i>faith</i> | 18. <i>gathered</i> one by one |

MEMORIZATION

“And in this _____ will Jehovah of hosts make unto all _____ a feast of _____, a feast of wine on the _____, of _____ full of marrow, of wines on the _____ well refined. And he will destroy in this _____ the face of the _____ that _____ all peoples, and the _____ that is spread over all _____. He hath _____ up _____ for ever; and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away _____ from off all faces; and the reproach of his people he will take away from of all the earth: for Jehovah hath spoken it.” Isa. 25:6-8

“Thou wilt keep him in _____ whose _____ is _____ on thee; because he _____ in thee. Trust ye in Jehovah for ever; for in Jehovah, even Jehovah, is an _____.” Isa. 26:3-4

EXPLANATION

1. Explain how the Lord will punish the “host of heaven” and the “moon is confounded” and the “sun ashamed” when He manifests His glory before his elders. Isa. 24:21-23
2. Explain how God keeps men in “perfect peace.” Isa. 26:3-4
3. Explain how “Jacob’s sin was expiated” in the captivity. Isa. 27:7-9

APPLICATION

(In its context every scripture has one meaning—the author’s intended meaning. How may the following be applied in the believer’s life?)

1. How does transgression of God’s laws and breaking His covenant relate to pollution of the earth? Isa. 24:4-6
2. How does Isaiah’s prediction that God will make a feast on Mt. Zion apply to the Christian’s experience? Isa. 25:6-9
3. How does the yearning of the prophet in 26:7-12 for God’s just judgment apply to the Christian character?

V. EMANCIPATION NOT FROM EGYPT

CHAPTERS 28 - 35

A. FOUNDATION THAT IS FIRM, CHAPTERS 28-29

1. STUPIDITY

TEXT: 28:1-13

- 1 Woe to the crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim, and to the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley of them that are overcome with wine!
- 2 Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one; as a tempest of hail, a destroying storm, as a tempest of mighty waters overflowing, will he cast down to the earth with the hand.
- 3 The crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden under foot:
- 4 and the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be as the first-ripe fig before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.
- 5 In that day will Jehovah of hosts become a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people;
- 6 and a spirit of justice to him that sitteth in judgment, and strength to them that turn back the battle at the gate.
- 7 And even these reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink, the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they stagger with strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.
- 8 For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.
- 9 Whom will he teach knowledge? and whom will he make to understand the message? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts?
- 10 For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little.
- 11 Nay, but by men of strange lips and with another tongue will he speak to this people;

- 12 to whom he said, This is the rest, give ye rest to him that is weary; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.
- 13 Therefore shall the word of Jehovah be unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little; that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

QUERIES

- a. Who is the "mighty and strong one" the Lord has?
- b. Why are priests and prophets drinking strong drink?
- c. How would God speak to that people by "strange lips and other tongues"?

PARAPHRASE

Woe to the crowning glory of Israel, the city of Samaria. It is a city of drunkards. Its glory is about to fade into nothing like the withering flowers. She sits as a crowned head of a lush-green valley but her inhabitants have become slaves to wine. Beware! The Lord has an agent, Assyria, mighty and strong, and His agent comes like a devastating hail storm, a destructive storm, and like a roaring flood. His powerful hand is able to cast everything down to the ground. Yes, Samaria, the glorious fortress in which the drunkards of Israel boast is going to be trampled under the foot of this agent of the Lord. I repeat, This city of Samaria which sits at the head of the rich valley is nothing but a rapidly fading flower. In fact, Samaria shall be to the Assyrian like the fig ripe before its time is to the traveller. He will eagerly pick it and immediately devour it. He will not hold it in his hand. When Samaria has fallen, at last the Lord of the Covenant Himself will be the crowning glory of His remnant. To the remnant, He will be beautiful. To the remnant the spirit of justice He restores to the leadership of the nation will be beautiful. He will restore to the remnant

the strength, courage and faith to stand against their enemies. But, here in Jerusalem, even its leaders reel and stagger in drunkenness. Priests and prophets, the very shepherds of God's people, men who are to declare God's message, are drunkards. They are alcoholics! They are in such a stupor they cannot understand anything nor make a sensible judgment. They are so depraved and debauched they vomit all over the tables and floors and furniture where they carouse and there is hardly a clean place to be found.

Yet these are the people who are saying, Whom does Isaiah think he is teaching; to whom does he think he is explaining God's revelation? Let him search as widely as he wishes, he will not find any who is in need of such teaching. Is it to babies he thinks he is speaking? Isaiah's teaching is childish. It is nothing but repetitious, command upon command and rule upon rule, and there isn't enough of it anywhere to make any sense.

As a matter of fact, God is going to treat the people of Jerusalem like babies and speak a message of chastening to them through a nation whose language they do not understand. God is going to make believers out of these unbelievers by delivering them to the Assyrians. They are too immature and unbelieving to heed Isaiah's teaching, so they will have to be dealt with as immature babies. God repeated over and over His plea to the covenant people to walk in the way of true rest—obeying His commandments—but they would not do so! So, now, they are going to learn through chastening and hardship the will of God is to be obeyed. That revelation of God given through the prophet in command upon command and rule upon rule is going to come to pass and they are going to realize they have stumbled over it when they are broken and trapped and taken captive. That word of God which they mocked is going to mock them!

COMMENTS

v. 1-6 DRUNKARDS: Ephraim, as Isaiah uses it here probably represents the northern kingdom of Israel (cf. Isa. 7:2-17;

Hosea 9:3-16). The "crown of pride," "the fading flower," and "the head of the fat valley," all are descriptive synonyms of Samaria, captial city of Israel, which lasted until the bitter end of Israel's subjugation by the Assyrians. The city of Samaria was situated geographically upon a high rise making it the "head" of a lush-green valley. Omri's intention when he built it was to make it so well fortified it could not be captured. It took the Assyrians three years (723-721 B.C.) to capture it.

This section was probably written in the early years of Hezekiah's reign in Judah when most of Israel had been overrun by the Assyrians and Samaria, the capital, was under siege and would soon fall. There was intense political pressure put upon Hezekiah to make treaties with Assyria and/or with Egypt to keep Judah free from foreign invasion. Isaiah was sent to Hezekiah, and the nation of Judah, with a revelation from God that no alliances should be made with either Assyria or Egypt, but that the nation and its leaders should trust in God for deliverance. This is the thrust of the chapters in this section (28-35). Isaiah begins by showing false foundations and the true foundation.

Isaiah intends to remind Judah that Israel's predicament (foreign invasion and destruction) is a consequence of Israel's debauchery. Drunkenness causes ruin—individually and socially. Of course drunkenness is only a symptom of a much more critical problem—self-indulgence or permissiveness. This stems from a fundamental rebellion against the word of God called sin! Drunkenness, or any other form of debauchery and self-indulgence is not sickness—it is sin. God created the grape and the juice of the grape and alcohol. All that God created is good. Wine, alcohol, food, clothing, houses and lands can all be perverted, misused and become objects of idolatry. But if used properly, within the will of God and with temperance and self-control, they are blessings from God.

The trouble with the leaders of Israel in its capital city Samaria was that they allowed themselves to be "overcome" with wine. They were alcoholics—enslaved to wine. They were incapable of making sensible judgments or of leading others to

do so. Drunkenness has the effect of completely incapacitating a person both mentally and physically. Alcohol is highly addictive as a depressant. It affects the ability of a human being to make proper moral judgments. Indulged in excessively it causes deterioration of the liver and other vital organs as well as destroying brain cells. When administered in controlled situations, by physicians as medicine, it may have some healing effect. In some situations, mild, diluted alcoholic beverage such as wine may be more physically safe to drink than the water available. This was certainly not the problem in Samaria. It is not the problem in America and the world in general today. The problem is excess, self-indulgence, sin—drunkenness. There are approximately 9,000,000 alcoholics in the United States today. That is more than the total population of both kingdoms of the Jews put together in Isaiah's day! Of course people can be obsessed with other things and indulge themselves to the point of idolatry and lose the ability to think properly and function as they should—gluttony, pride, greed, hate, sexual promiscuity all lead down the same path to ruin.

The Hebrew word translated *Lord* in verse 2 is *Adonai* and emphasizes *sovereignty*. The sovereign Lord has an instrument of judgment He is going to use against Ephraim (Israel). This instrument is a "mighty and strong" one. We take it to mean Assyria. The Assyrians were devastating in their warfare. They took no thought to preserve anything or anybody. Their method was to conquer, kill, loot, burn, destroy. In order to dispense with the necessity to occupy foreign nations they conquered with garrisoned troops, they simply took the conquered people captive back to their own land and imported their own trusted citizens to occupy conquered land. This is what they did to Israel, and the ancestors of the "imported" Assyrians later became hated "half-breeds" known as Samaritans in Nehemiah's day. The Assyrian army was aptly described as "a tempest of hail, a destroying storm, and a tempest of mighty water overflowing." They stormed upon the land and flooded it with destruction. That great fortress city, Samaria, the crown and pride of the once arrogant and rebellious northern kingdom

Israel would very soon be trodden under foot of thousands of fierce, pagan Assyrian soldiers. Let Hezekiah and Judah take warning! Assyria is going to gobble-up Samaria like a hungry traveler who sees an early-ripened fig, snatches it from the tree and gobbles it up from the palm of his hand without hardly looking at it.

When Samaria falls there will be a *shear*, Hebrew for *remnant*, or *that which is left*, which will reaffirm its faith and trust in Jehovah. Those few remaining faithful to the Lord, when they see Samaria fall, will reenforce and renew their stand for righteousness, justice and faithfulness. They will take new courage and strength from the Lord's actions and reenter the battle for truth and faith.

So the true foundation is the God of Justice, not self-indulgence or permissiveness. Judah had better know this! So the church of God today must know this!

V. 7-13 DEMENTED: Now Isaiah turns his attention to the people of Judah. "Even these" are "swallowed up of wine." It is the theologians who are pointed out—priests and prophets. Priests were to represent man to God and prophets were to represent God to man. The two primary functionaries through which men came into contact with God were, for the most part, drunkards. These religious leaders often times functioned also as advisors to the Hebrew king and his noblemen. Inebriated and intoxicated, completely overcome with drunkenness, they either misrepresented God's will to man or did not represent it at all! Thus the nation was left without religious instruction and leadership at all except for Isaiah and Micah and a few faithful souls known as the remnant! Hebrew religious life was so closely united with its civil structure when religion decayed, civil life became chaotic. Justice and morality dipped to a dangerous low. The drunkards lost their senses and were unable to make sensible, honest judgments. Sin itself is insanity (cf. I Cor. 15:34).

Isaiah paints a vile and repulsive picture of drunkards, but it is a true picture. Distillers of liquor in America often picture users of their product as "men of distinction," etc. The truth

of the matter may be known by anyone who wants to spend a little time around places where their product is excessively and indulgently consumed. It is a picture of behavior worse than the vilest animal. Vomit, cursing, lewdness, violence, incoherence and delirium is the environment created by drunkenness.

The drunken priests, prophets and other citizens of Judah and Jerusalem manifest their utter depravity by mocking Isaiah's attempts to instruct them in the revelation of God. They say in effect, "Who does Isaiah think he is to talk to us like one would talk to children. Are we babies?" The Hebrew word translated *teach* is *yarah* and means, *instruct, inform*. The Hebrew word translated *message* is *shemoah* which means, *something heard or report*. This verse (9) emphasizes the fact that Isaiah's major ministry was in teaching, instructing the nation concerning the report he had heard (revelation) from God. He evidently spent a great deal of time at teaching. While the nation resented being taught as one would children, that is how they were behaving.

The phrasing of verse 10 in the Hebrew is interesting: *tsav latsav, tsav latsav, qav laqav, qav laqav*. Leupold thinks, "it is sarcastic talk, done in monosyllables to make the simplicity of the prophet's message ridiculous." Thus Isaiah is represented as playing the part of the pedantic teacher treating them like stupid children. He doles out his lessons in a repetitious, sing-song, rote method. The drunkards are making great sport of Isaiah's sincere attempts to penetrate their wine-addled brains.

The prophet's reply in verse 11 is: As a matter of fact, God is going to treat the people of Jerusalem like babies and speak a message of chastening to them through a nation whose language they do not understand. God is going to make believers out of some of these drunken unbelievers by delivering them to the Assyrians. They are too immature and unbelieving to heed Isaiah's instruction, so they will have to be dealt with as immature babies. They will have to be *shown!* Their minds are too addled. They cannot reason—they can only understand harsh, punitive action. The Lord himself will speak unwelcome words to them which may also in a way be likened to

“stammering lips” and a “foreign tongue.” He is going to speak to them in a way they were not accustomed to be spoken to, and probably, in reference to the Assyrians, through a people whose language was foreign to them. The apostle Paul paraphrases Isaiah 28:11 in I Corinthians 14:21. Paul uses it, we are convinced, in the same way Isaiah meant it here. The church at Corinth, in its mania for the “charisma” or gift of tongues (speaking an understandable foreign language unknown to the speaker but miraculously empowered to do so by the Holy Spirit) was acting like a child. The Christians there clamored for this spectacular and showy gift more than they did for prophecy which instructed. Foreign tongues, miraculously uttered, was simply a *sign* for unbelievers who had to have a demonstration of the supernatural in order to make believers of them. Foreign tongues were not to edify, instruct or reveal anything to believers. The problem of “tongues” would be to a great extent solved if Bible students would make the connection Paul makes in Corinthians with Isaiah’s warning here to Judah. The connection is that the showy, spectacular, manifestation of the supernatural is for the immature and unbelieving. While teaching, instruction, prophecy is for the mature and spiritual.

God had reiterated His invitation again and again through the prophets. Time after time He sent prophets and teachers to guide them to Him wherein they might find rest for their souls (cf. Jer. 6:16-21), but they *deliberately* refused to walk in His restful and refreshing way. The way of rest is in believing and keeping His commandments (cf. Mt. 11:28-30; Jn. 15:1-11, etc.). But to those who are self-indulgent when the way of God is preached, it is to them like babbling (cf. Acts 17:18).

They mocked and scoffed at Isaiah’s sincere, untiring, repetitious and simple instruction of God’s revelation of Himself. They refused to comprehend that God was about to judge them. But within two generations the revelation given through Isaiah in command upon command is going to come to pass, and they are going to realize they have stumbled at the truth and are trapped by it and taken captive. That which they

mocked is going to mock them. God is not mocked—whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap!

QUIZ

1. What is the "crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim"?
2. Why is drunkenness so destructive?
3. What era of the history of Judah is portrayed here?
4. What is the attitude of the people of Judah toward Isaiah's teaching?
5. What is the connection between Isa. 28:11 and I Cor. 14:21 and "tongues"?
6. What is Isaiah's answer to the mockery of the people of Judah?

2. STABILITY

TEXT: 28:14-29

- 14 Wherefore hear the word of Jehovah, ye scoffers, that rule this people that is in Jerusalem:
- 15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we are at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:
- 16 therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone of sure foundation; he that believeth shall not be in haste.
- 17 And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.
- 18 And your covenant with death shall be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol shall not stand; when the overflowing

- scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.
- 19 As often as it passeth through, it shall take you; for morning by morning shall it pass through, by day and by night: and it shall be naught but terror to understand the message.
- 20 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.
- 21 For Jehovah will rise up as in mount Perazim, he will be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon; that he may do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act.
- 22 Now therefore be ye not scoffers, lest your bonds be made strong; for a decree of destruction have I heard from the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, upon the whole earth.
- 23 Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech.
24. Doth he that ploweth to sow plow continually? doth he continually open and harrow his ground?
- 25 When he hath levelled the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and put in the wheat in rows, and the barley in the appointed place, and the spelt in the border thereof?
- 26 For his God doth instruct him aright, and doth teach him.
- 27 For the fitches are not threshed with a sharp threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod.
- 28 Bread grain is ground; for he will not be always threshing it: and though the wheel of his cart and his horses scatter it, he doth not grind it.
- 29 This also cometh forth from Jehovah of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom.

QUERIES

- a. What is a "covenant with death"?

- b. What is the "foundation stone" to be laid in Zion?
- c. Why use the figure of a "short bed" and "narrow covers"?

PARAPHRASE

Listen, you rulers of Judah that sit in Jerusalem and scoff—listen to the word of Jehovah! You scoff at the predictions of God's judgment and say, We have insured ourselves against death—death cannot harm us, neither can Sheol—and the flood of Assyrian invasion that is upon Israel shall not come to Judah, for we have protected ourselves with deceptive diplomacy and international sophistry. Because your foundation of deceit and intrigue will crumble, the Lord says, I am laying in the midst of My faithful remnant, the foundation of Zion. This foundation will be a rock, the tested and precious rock, the promise of the Messiah, which will be a solid and sure foundation for every one who believes. Whoever believes this will not panic when my judgment comes. Not only will there be a secure foundation but the standards of measuring men will be according to God's standards—justice and righteousness. Your refuge of deceitful diplomacy will be swept away as by a fierce hail-storm or raging flood. All the covenants and agreements you have made to insure against disaster will be cancelled out by the overwhelming might of the Assyrian invasion when it tramples down your land. The Assyrians will conquer your land swiftly and advance toward Jerusalem daily. You will hear news of their advance every day and night and every message will strike terror into your hearts. Your "bed is too short" and your "covers too narrow." Your preparations for security are inadequate. Just as Jehovah rose up against the Philistines in David's day at mount Perazim and Gibeon, he is going to rise against Judah, strange as it may seem, and bring to pass His word spoken by the prophets. So do not scoff at the warnings of God's word, but give heed to them and repent or your destruction by the Assyrians will intensify because I have heard a revelation from God of the powerfulness

and universality of their conquests.

Now listen very closely to my words! Is the plowman so stupid that he plows his land over and over again without sowing his seed? No! When he had prepared the ground doesn't he broadcast the dill, scatter the cummin and plant the wheat and barley in rows? Yes, he does, for God has made him to use common sense to see and understand what needs to be done. The farmer never threshes all grains the same. A sledge is never used on dill—it is beaten with a stick. A cart-wheel is never rolled on cummin—it is beaten softly with a flail. Bread grain grinds easily so he does not pulverize it into dust. Once the cart-wheel has driven over it and ground it the farmer stores it. This is not only good common sense but it is true wisdom and comes from the Lord of Hosts who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom.

COMMENTS

v. 14-22 FOUNDATIONS: The rulers of Judah, sitting in their fortress city Jerusalem, scoffed at Isaiah's prophecies of Judah's judgment. They had made agreements and covenants with Egypt to insure their protection from Assyria—they thought! This is probably the meaning of "covenant with death," and "agreement with Sheol." It is very doubtful that there is anything here associated with mysticism or black magic, etc. The context is an entire section devoted to Isaiah's denunciation of alliances with Egypt. The government of Judah had been dealing in political subterfuge and deceitful diplomacy, trying to manipulate Egypt against Assyria and Assyria against Egypt. Judah was trying to deal under the table—to play both ends against the middle. And they were trusting in their skill at such sophistry. Little did they know they were dealing with world powers much more deceitful than they—and more skilled at it! Political chicanery and international double-dealing is disastrous. No nation can build its security and prosperity on deceit.

Because of their sin and depravity, the rulers of Judah were trying to perpetuate the kingdom of God by deceit and falsehood. Such schemes destroyed the very purpose for which God had called them to be a kingdom—the redemption of men and women. So, because man could not make a proper foundation upon which to build redemption, God lays a true, tested, solid foundation. The Hebrew word *yisad* (lay) is past tense. God had already started the foundation. It was the Messianic promise. It was started at least as early as David (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12ff). The completion of the foundation would be found in the Messiah Himself (cf. Mt. 21:42, 44; Lk. 20:17; Acts 4:11; Rom. 9:33; Eph. 2:20; I Pet. 2:4-6). But God was laying in “Zion” (the faithful remnant) even then the beginnings of that Messianic hope through the prophets. The foundation stone then is the Messianic hope. The faith of a faithful few in Isaiah’s day in these promises (and others to come after them) resulted in the coming of the Messiah and the building of a holy kingdom and habitation of God in the Spirit—the church. Christ, the Person, the Incarnate God, was the chief cornerstone. That God was going to come in *A Person* to the earth to establish His kingdom was rejected by sinful men of the prophet’s day. They wanted “the vineyard” for themselves, and so they killed the messengers of God who came seeking God’s fruit. Then when they saw the Son coming, they killed Him because He was the heir (cf. Mt. 21:33ff). The foundation being laid by God, the Messianic hope, had already been tested and tried and men did believe in it. Their belief in it made them fit for God’s kingdom because it redeemed them. The standards of citizenship for God’s Messianic kingdom are belief, justice and righteousness. That small band of believers paying attention to Isaiah’s preaching would cling to the Messianic hope and their lives would be characterized by justice and righteousness. Upon that foundation and measured by those standards they would overcome the despair, confusion and spiritual destruction that the impending storm of Assyrian invasion would bring to the scoffers.

Isaiah promises the scoffers all their cherished plans and

schemes for protection from Egypt (built upon deceit) would be cancelled, wiped out. Whenever the Assyrians passed through the land the people of Palestine would be conquered—Judah as well as Israel. The Assyrians marched relentlessly, morning by morning, night after night, toward Jerusalem. Nothing hindered them (until of course, Hezekiah repented and prayed and Jerusalem was spared, cf. Isa. ch. 35-36). Every new day brought news of the Assyrian approach and terror began to grip them.

The prophet now turns to a proverb or parable probably very familiar to the people of his day. A bed too short for a man to stretch himself full length on and covers too narrow to wrap himself in on a chilly night are, to say the least, inadequate. As a matter of fact, they are a vexation! Judah's political intrigues with Egypt were like too short beds and too narrow covers. They were inadequate and would later vex their souls when God's judgment fell.

Jehovah will break through all the foolish and fallible schemes of Judah and her alliances with Egypt and execute His wrath on sinful Judah just as He did against the Philistines in David's day (cf. II Sam. 5:19ff). *Perazim* in Hebrew means "break through." David named the place where he brought the Lord's justice on the Philistines Baal-Perazim, "Lord of breaking-through." The Lord judging His people will be a "strange" work. Most of the Jews in Isaiah's day refused to believe the Lord would judge them (cf. Isa. 5:12, etc.). The work of the Lord is to purify for Himself a holy people (cf. Mal. 3:1-5, etc.). It may seem strange to men, but to God it is a part of His plan.

Isaiah now inserts a strong warning. The attitude of the rulers at Jerusalem seems to have been one of scoffing at the Word of the Lord as proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah. So Isaiah warns them what he has preached is a revelation from the Lord—not his own prediction. The more they resist it, the more inevitable and severe will be their doom at the hands of the Assyrians.

v. 23-29 FACTS: Not only were the rulers of Jerusalem

building on a false foundation, they were not even using good common sense and logic in their thinking. They did not have their facts straight. They must not only build on a stable foundation, they must think sensibly. It is tragic to watch sin throttle a man's ability to think logically and properly. Isaiah begins by calling for close attention to his words. Then he attempts to penetrate the calloused and crooked thinking of the rulers by illustrations from everyday experience. This is the way things work, says Isaiah; men do not continually plow a field. Once the field is plowed and prepared a man sows seed and later reaps a crop. God is going to "plow His field" to prepare it. But He will not continually plow it. The plowing is preparatory. Then He will sow and reap. But the plowing must be done. Verse 26 indicates preparing the soil; sowing and reaping is a systematic way things are done by men because such a systematic order of things comes from God. It certainly is a fact of experience that a man does not first go out and sow seed on fallow ground and then break up the sod and harrow it.

The same common sense and discretion is used in threshing. A man threshes the crop only as much as it needs to be threshed to extract the grain. He does not go on threshing it after the grain is separated and grind the grain into dust. God certainly will use the same reasonableness and discretion in dealing with His people. He will plow and thresh—this is needful—but He will not do so forever. He will reap also.

QUIZ

1. Why do we think the "covenant with death" has no reference to black magic?
2. What does the "agreement with Sheol" mean in its context?
3. When did God lay the "foundation stone" in Zion?
4. What is the meaning of the "short bed" parable in verse 20?
5. Why would Isaiah refer to plowing and threshing to illustrate his message?
6. How does it apply to God's dealing with Judah?

SPECIAL STUDY

THE CHRISTIAN AND WAR

by

Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTION

I. A Continuing Christian Concern

- A. As long as there are unregenerate people there will be wars, James 4:1-4
- B. Viet Nam "cease fire" and end of the draft do not necessarily mean the Christian will never have to face the problem again.
- C. In addition, when we broach this subject we have entered the whole area of the Christian and civil government (laws, taxes, politics, social welfare, etc.).
- D. If I read the N.T. correctly at all, I am convinced the Christian cannot ignore these problems. We may not be "of" the world, but we certainly are "in" the world.
- E. To a larger extent than we may realize, unbelievers may be watching our Christian witness in this area (government) more than they watch it in the religious rituals we perform!

II. A Coherent Christian Certitude

- A. Christians, of all people, should have the most coherent answers to these problems.
- B. Christians, because they have regenerated their minds and they are no longer prejudiced by sin, should think logically, reasonably and sensibly.
- C. But more important than that, Christians have the written, revealed mind of Christ in the N.T.—the Divine Will settles the question.

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- D. We will approach the subject on these two bases:
1. Reason
 2. Revelation

DISCUSSION

I. Reason (Natural Law; Conscience)

- A. All men, even those who do not have a special-revealed law of God (O.T. or N.T.) have a revelation in the natural order of God's creation and in their reasoning capabilities which tells them
1. God's wrath on ungodliness and wickedness and suppression of the truth (Rom. 1:18ff); and His eternal power and deity.
 2. They are either doing or not doing God's law (Rom. 2:14-16)
 3. Of course, sinful men may wilfully refuse to recognize truth and may deliberately ignore historical and rational facts (II Pet. 3:5; II Thess. 2:9-12; I Cor. 15:34).
 4. But Christians are commanded to use logic (Rom. 12:1-2) as a result of having their minds transformed. **CHRISTIANS ARE NOT PERMITTED THE "LUXURY" OF IRRATIONALITY! CHRISTIANS ARE NOT PERMITTED THE ESCAPISM OF REFUSING TO FACE REALITY!**

B. Axioms

1. Necessity of law and order (local, national and international)
 - a. In order to the maintenance of any kind of society (and man is by nature and necessity a social being) there must be law and order.
 - b. If this is doubted, just *universalize* a few actions which are presently considered anti-social:
 - (1) What if there were no sanctions against murder, i.e., that anyone and everyone were free to take anyone else's life violently, indiscriminantly, without cause or for any cause, at any time.
 - (2) What if there were no laws against theft and

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- robbery. What if any man were free to rob or steal from any other at any time, for any cause or without cause.
- c. The two above are, in effect, what wars of aggression and imperialism are all about. What if all nations acted as described above?
 - d. I Tim. 1:8-9 Law is not for just but lawless . . . etc.
2. Where there are no sanctions or penalties and where penalties are not executed, **THERE IS NO LAW!**
- a. We may enact and write local and national laws against murder, draft-dodging, theft, etc., until we are blue in the face but if we have no penalty or the penalty is not executed, we have no laws—we just have reams and reams of paper!
 - b. We can join United Nations bodies, debate, enact, sign and proclaim eloquently the international laws controlling our nations all we want, but if there is no penalty and no enforcement, there is no international law!
 - c. Eccl. 8:11; "Because sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil."
 - d. As Socrates reasoned: An unjust law is bad, but *no* law is worse!
3. Punishment must fit the crime
- a. Senator Taft (Robert Sr.) reportedly said: The war criminals at the Nuremburg trials were tried and punished after fact, i.e., they were tried and sentenced for a crime for which there was no law. Perhaps, technically speaking, there are no *written* international laws by which political leaders of nations which perpetuate international murder (war) may be tried and punished, but there certainly is a natural moral law—**JUSTICE**.
 - b. Justice is the action according to which one renders to another that which is the latter's *right* or the latter's *due*.

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- c. To sustain the majesty of the law there must be just and commensurate punishments (national or international).
 - d. In the realm of civil or national law, capital punishment is a vindictory sanction; that is, it vindicates the majesty and justness of the law against taking of life in cold blood. A murderer, when he takes another person's life, has taken something out of the totality of being which cannot be restored, namely, the victim's greatest good (his life); hence the state (society acting through its government), in order to restore the balance of justice, takes the murderer's greatest good (his life) in reciprocity.
 - e. Man is a person by virtue of the fact that he is a rational being. By heinous crimes which are offenses against the law of reason, he withdraws violently from the society of reason and sets out wilfully to destroy society. Therefore he forfeits his right to continue to live in that society.
 - f. Crimes of murder, robbery, aggressive war, etc. are all crimes against SOCIETY . . . not merely crimes against individuals. THE WHOLE STRUCTURAL FABRIC OF SOCIETY IS AT STAKE!
 - g. This principle of justice, punishment commensurate with the crime, has to be applied to international criminal acts. WHEN ONE NATION COMMITS VIOLENT, HEINOUS CRIMES (WARS) AGAINST INTERNATIONAL STRUCTURES OF SOCIETY, COERCIVE, PUNISHING, RESTRAINING FORCES OF DEFENSIVE WARS MUST BE WAGED TO VINDICATE THE INTERNATIONAL LAWS AGAINST WAR!
 - h. A punishment which is not commensurate with the crime will not vindicate the law against the crime!
- C. Conclusions
1. Man must have government to exist.
 2. Without government there would be social chaos.
 3. There can be no government without law.

4. If obedience to government or law is determined individually or subjectively, then no law would be immune from some people's disapproval or disobedience. The result would be anarchy.
5. It is a greater evil not to resist an international aggressor than to fight against him. "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing."

II. Revelation

A. Government, in general

1. Is ordained by God (Rom. 13:17)
 - a. No Christian is exempt from obedience to government just on the grounds that he is a Christian.
 - b. He who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed.
 - c. The O.T. teaches the authority of civil government as a God-ordained institution (Ezra 7:26; Ex. 22:28; Prov. 24:21-22).
 - d. The N.T. is plain and specific (Mt. 22:21; Titus 2:15—3:2; I Pet. 2:13-17).
 - e. Society must have government. God has provided it and preserves it—even "pagan" government (Jer. 27:5-7; Isa. 10:5ff).

"He (the Christian) may exert his effort to have unjust laws changed and unjust national objectives withdrawn. He may use every legitimate effort to convince the ruler that the laws are unjust or the war is unjust. But he has absolutely *no scriptural* authority to incite anarchy. Anarchy is satanic. God does not will anarchy in this present world; He wills order. Satan is the one who seeks anarchy, in order to oppose the will of God." Wm. LaSor, C.T. 1-30-70.

Anarchy is satanic whether it be by Bolsheviks, Red Guards, Black Panthers or Weathermen (see Reader's Digest, November 1970, *The Destruction of Diana*).

2. Originated for God (Rom. 13:1-7)

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- a. As a terror to bad conduct—to restrain evil and to punish the wrong-doer (the unrestrainable)—to execute the wrath of God upon the wrongdoer. Government is God's executive!
- b. "Now we know that the law is good, if any one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient . . ." I Tim. 1:8-9
- c. I Tim. 2:1-4
- d. Rulers do not wield the sword (instrument of execution) in vain! There is a purpose, a God-ordained purpose, in punishment—even in *capital punishment!*
- e. "It seems to me that those who advocate abolition of all capital punishment ignore three vital factors (1) The absolute sovereignty of God as the creator and giver of human existence on earth; (2) the malignancy of sin which left unchecked would destroy the universe; (3) the divinely delegated authority to human society to remove from its fabric those who are incorrigibly devoted to the destruction of that fabric by acts of violence against the innocent.
It is not the distance from animals but the proximity to God which makes man unique . . . Man abdicates his responsibility when he gets on the animal level or when he seeks to dethrone God. And he does both when he becomes a wilful and malicious murderer. He attempts to be under what he is over (animal)—and aspires to be over what he is under (God). AND IT IS HERE THAT GOD DECREES THAT MAN FORFEITS HIS RIGHT TO CONTINUE TO LIVE WITH THOSE WHO REMAIN WITHIN THE STATUS FOR WHICH MAN WAS MADE." Carl Ketcherside, *Mission Messenger*, Vol. 31, August 1969, p. 118ff.
- f. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man." Gen. 9:6 (the first book of the Bible)
- g. "He that killeth with the sword must be killed with

- the sword." Rev. 13:10 (the last book of the Bible)
- h. "Some object that capital punishment is action so utterly final and irretrievable, but it is not any more so than the death of a victim shot in the heart by a robber, or the death of a woman choked or bludgeoned to death in her own home by a rapist. Why is it that modern morality seems always to be on the side of the criminal aggressor without taking account of the rights of the innocent victim . . . Capital punishment for murder is to be exacted because it is the divine judgment to keep the land from being drenched in innocent blood. The forfeiture of one's right to continue in the land of the living is conditioned upon his blatant disrespect for the person of one made in the image of God. 'Mercy but murder, pardoning those who kill.' " Ketcherside, *ibid*.
 - i. People against capital punishment always quote the Decalogue "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13). This is ridiculous because just 27 verses later in the same book, God said, "If a man come presumptuously upon his neighbor, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die." (Ex. 21:12-17). **GOD HAS ALWAYS DISTINGUISHED BETWEEN MURDER AND JUDICIAL EXECUTION. . . . ALL MURDER IS KILLING BUT NOT ALL KILLING IS MURDER!**

"He (the Christian) has no Biblical authority to tell the state it must renounce the use of force in order to preserve law, or to demand that the law of the state be changed to disarm policemen. This would be to take the 'sword' from the magistrate—and the bearing of the sword by the magistrate is recognized and approved by the Word of God." LaSor, *op. cit*.
 - j. The great apostle Paul stood for the fair and just execution of capital punishment—even if it meant his own death! Acts 25:11

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- B. Government in International relationships (war, etc.)
1. The erosion of the public conscience against capital punishment and against international policing (war) against aggression is a device of Satan to take the sting out of rebellion, anarchy and social chaos.
 2. “. . . it seems to me that nothing is more unrealistic in the present state of the world than to say that war must never be used as a means of thwarting wilful and deliberate aggression. This position ignores the fact that God employed war as a judgment upon nations, and even upon Jerusalem (Ezek. 14:21). Surely He was not immoral. This does not mean that God likes war any more than I like it. I did not punish my children because I derived pleasure from the experience but in order to produce ‘the fruit of real goodness’ in their characters . . . Gen. Sherman said that ‘War is hell,’ and I concur, but I do not forget that God also made hell. And it was made as the result of war in heaven! If Michael and his angels had been pacifists, the devil might have taken heaven over, and if this had happened those who went to heaven would have been in hell. . . . Certainly war is an evil, but it is not necessarily a *sin*. All sin is evil, but not all ‘evil’ is sin. Obviously not every war is justified, but that is not the question . . . it will be necessary for all nations to desist from lifting up the sword against each other, for so long as one learns war with a view to the destruction of others, the others will have to defend themselves . . . God will turn those nations which hate Him and His rule into hell. War is the judgment of God upon such sin here, and hell is the judgment of God upon such sin hereafter. When I assist in the work of rewarding good or in striking terror into the hearts of evil men, I am abiding God’s minister to fulfill a responsibility to God.” Ketcherside, *op. cit.*
 3. Some scripture references: (additional to ones already cited)

- a. Genesis 14:21-24; Abram's going after and defeating the kings of the East who had kidnapped his nephew, Lot, and the blessing of God's great high priest Melchizedek.
 - b. Joshua 8:1-29; Joshua's conquest of Ai, even instructed by God to *ambush* the warriors of Ai.
 - c. I Sam. 30:1-31; David inquired of the Lord about avenging violent aggression done upon his people by the Amalekites, and God commanded David to do so.
 - d. Eccl. 3:8; "a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace." Eccl. 8:8; "No man has power to retain the spirit, or authority over the day of death; there is no discharge from war, nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it." Eccl. 8:11 "Because sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil."
 - e. Jer. 48:10; "Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord with slackness; and cursed is he who keeps back his sword from bloodshed."
 - f. Daniel 5:17-28; Daniel informed Belshazzar of God's providential maintenance of Nebuchadnezzar's policing of the world and that all rulers, even pagan ones, when they usurp God's sovereignty, God brings them down.
 - g. Obadiah, verses 10-14; Obadiah tells the Edomites they should not have "stood aloof" when their neighbor nation (Israel) was being plundered by aggressors. **GOD HOLDS ALL NATIONS (EVEN PAGAN ONES) RESPONSIBLE TO HELP OTHER NATIONS DEFEND THEMSELVES AGAINST AGGRESSION!**
 - h. Amos 1:9; Amos says God will judge Tyre because Tyre broke a "covenant" she had made with Israel by allowing Edom to plunder Israel. **GOD HOLDS NATIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TREATIES AND COVENANTS THEY MAKE WITH ONE ANOTHER!**
4. Some examples:

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- a. Cornelius, a devout Roman soldier became a Christian and was not (so far as we know) forbidden to continue as such (Acts 10 and 11).
- b. John the Baptist and the soldiers (Luke 3:14). John the Baptist did not tell them to give up soldiering.
- c. Sergius Paulus became a Christian and continued as a proconsul. Acts 13:5-12
- d. It appears that Paul may have converted some of the elite military personnel of Caesar's own body guard (Phil. 1:13 and 4:21).
- e. Erastus was city treasurer in Rome (Rom. 16:23); this meant he was an official of a "pagan" government.
- f. Paul did not command the jailer at Philippi to resign when the jailer became a Christian (Acts 16:25-40).
- g. Angels, servants of God, moral beings with power to choose to obey or disobey God, serve God by engaging in war and in killing rebellious aggressive oppressors (Isa. 37:36-38; Dan. 10:1ff, etc.).
- h. Heaven protected itself by entering into a war of self-defense (Rev. 12:7-17; 19:11-16).

C. Conscientious Objection

1. The only conscience a Christian should have against compulsory military service in a world with continued aggressive pressures like ours which demands a ready military establishment as a deterrent, would be if he were a missionary or a minister actively preaching the Gospel . . . and even then there may come a time when all able-bodied men might be needed to hasten the overthrow of evil aggressive forces at work in the world.
2. Conscientious objection to war or military service cannot be based on personal desires, but on the direction of God's expressed will in matters. Romans 13 (and all the other scriptures and reasons we have cited) is a clear expression of God's will for Christians in regard to war and the use of force and killing, if necessary, to check and punish aggression!
3. The Christian has a right to only one conscience. A

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conscience directed by God. The non-Christian must be forced to do right and justly by laws (conscription/draft) if he will not do right otherwise (cf. I Tim. 1:8ff). This is exactly what government and law is for! Men cannot be left to do only what they feel is right (especially unregenerate, lawless men). The main function of government is to force the immoral and ungodly to be as moral as is necessary to maintain society. Government was instituted by God to protect and enforce this fundamental necessity.

CONCLUSION

“In America, a man stood up in a free pulpit to preach; he quoted detached sentences from the Christ whose hand held the lash when His Father’s House was a den of thieves, and whose eyes were often as a flame of fire. The preacher declared that evil, no matter how diabolical, was never to be resisted with any physical weapons. Rhetorically, he asked, ‘What has a sword ever accomplished worthwhile?’

“In a pew was a worshipper in whose heart was an aching void and in whose home was a Gold Star, speaking of the valor of a young crusader who marched forth with a righteous sword and came not back. At the church door, following the service, that worshipper said to the clergyman: ‘I can tell you one thing that righteous sword has done.’

“What?” replied the minister.

“Replied the listener with deep feeling: ‘The sword in the hand of those who have resisted militant evil has given you the right to stand here today and to proclaim your convictions without fear of being liquidated.’

“The one who had publicly said that rampant evil was never to be resisted by force paused for a moment and then acknowledged, ‘I am afraid I cannot refute that.’

“There is no refutation in God’s world and man’s for the flash of a righteous sword!” (Dr. Frederick Brown Harris, Chaplain, U.S. Senate, 1943-1969, quoted in *U.S. News and World Report*, October 30, 1972.)

3. SUCCESS

TEXT: 29:1-8

- 1 Ho Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped! add ye year to year; let the feasts come round:
- 2 then will I distress Ariel, and there shall be mourning and lamentation; and she shall be unto me as Ariel.
- 3 And I will encamp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with posted troops, and I will raise siege works against thee.
- 4 And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust; and thy voice shall be as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.
- 5 But the multitude of thy foes shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be in an instant suddenly.
- 6 She shall be visited of Jehovah of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire.
- 7 And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her stronghold, and that distress her, shall be as a dream, a vision of the night.
- 8 And it shall be as when a hungry man dreameth, and, behold he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion.

QUERIES

- a. What is "Ariel"?
- b. What is the "voice as of one that hath a familiar spirit"?
- c. What is the meaning of the use of dreaming as an illustration?

PARAPHRASE

Woe to you altar-city, altar-city, Jerusalem, David's city. Let year follow year and the ceaseless round of feasts and sacrifices continue! But I will bring tribulation upon you, altar-city, and there shall be groaning and grief, and you will indeed become to me an altar of sacrifice! The enemy camp that surrounds you will be My camp; the entrenched troops surrounding you will be My troops; the siegeworks built up around you will be My siegeworks. And you shall be humiliated so that you will no longer boast loudly but you will speak humbly and low—your voice will be but a whisper like the low moaning of a ghost, barely audible. But then suddenly, the multitudes of enemy troops will vanish from their siege against you like dust and chaff when it is blown away in the wind. I, Jehovah of hosts, will come upon them with terrible judgment and power and but multitudes of enemy troops that come upon her will fall short of completing total destruction of Ariel just like when a hungry or thirsty man goes to bed and dreams he is eating and drinking but awakens in the middle of his dream and finds himself only dreaming and still hungry and thirsty. Even so, the appetite of Zion's enemies to devour her will not be satisfied.

COMMENTS

v. 1-4 TROUBLE TO ARIEL: *Ariel* in Hebrew is usually translated "the lion of God." Sometimes it is translated "the hearth of God." However, in Ezekiel 45:13ff the same word with the definite article added (*h Ariel*) is translated *altar*. The context of verses 1 and 2 form the basis for our paraphrase of the word as "altar-city" for it appears Jehovah is speaking irony or sarcasm to Jerusalem. Jerusalem took pride in the multitude of her altars and sacrifices and religiosity (cf. Isa. 1:10-20). Jerusalem trusted in her own self-righteousness and religiosity rather than in God. She, like Samaria, thought she could

solve her own difficulties with her pagan neighbors through deceit, bribery and compromise. So Jehovah, speaking through His prophet Isaiah, warns Jerusalem that He, even the Lord God of Hosts, is going to bring trouble and distress upon Jerusalem. And the city which took such pride in her altars and sacrifices would (v. 2) itself become an altar of sacrifice to be used as such by God. All the troops which come to encamp and raise siege works against Jerusalem (the Assyrians in Hezekiah's day, cf. Isa. ch. 36-39) will be, in a very definite sense, God's army. God uses pagan armies to carry out His will (cf. Isa. 10:5ff; Jer. 27:1ff; Dan. ch. 7-8, etc.). And Jerusalem, proud, arrogant, haughty and self-righteous, will be humiliated. This undoubtedly has reference to the humiliating experience of Hezekiah and all of Jerusalem when the city was besieged by the Assyrians. In verse 4 the Hebrew word *keav* (with familiar spirit) describes the weakened, humiliated and inarticulate condition Jerusalem will find herself in when God finishes bringing trouble upon her. She will be so weak that what she says will come as spoken by one prostrate upon the ground and as indistinct, unnatural, inaudible and inarticulate as that coming from a necromancer or medium in a trance. The point is the extreme weakness and powerlessness that is to come upon Jerusalem at the hand of Jehovah.

v. 5-8 TRIUMPH OF ZION: But in the city of Jerusalem there are a few, a remnant, who have not trusted in self-righteousness. There is a remnant trusting in Jehovah—disciples of Isaiah who have held fast to the "teaching and to the testimony" (cf. Isa. 8:16-22), and God will save Jerusalem from the Assyrians on their account. The instantaneous suddenness with which God will dispose of Jerusalem's enemies is the miraculous event recorded in II Kings 19, II Chronicles 32 and Isaiah 37:36-38. The Lord sent His angel to slay 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night and the king of Assyria "returned with shame of face to his own land," and some of his own sons struck him down with the sword there. Verse 6 uses highly figurative language to describe the terror and the swiftness of God's destruction of the Assyrian siege. It may be that God

used a literal earthquake, whirlwind, tempest and flaming fire to devour the Assyrians. We are not told specifically how His angel accomplished the destruction. It is interesting to note the figure Isaiah uses to describe the frustrated plans of the Assyrians to devour Jerusalem. Nearly everyone has had the experience of dreaming and awakening with the dream only half completed. In fact, most dreams conclude only partially visualized. Some persons even anticipate in their dream the fact that their dream is going to end incomplete! That is the very nature of dreams. So, the Assyrian attempt to consume Jerusalem is going to come to an end just like a dream . . . incomplete! frustrated! Evil and ungodly men have dreamed for centuries of usurping God's rule of the universe. They have dreamed grandiose dreams of eradicating God's covenant people, the church, Zion, from among mankind, but their dreams have always ended sooner or later uncompleted, frustrated and shamed. So shall all be that fight against Zion! God says it is so! History demonstrated it to be so!

QUIZ

1. Why is Ariel most likely to be translated "altar"?
2. How would Jehovah encamp against Jerusalem?
3. What is the point of likening Jerusalem's voice to that of a medium?
4. How do we know God's judgment upon Jerusalem's enemies was sudden?
5. How did God deliver Jerusalem from her enemies?
6. What does dreaming have to do with the downfall of Jerusalem's enemies?

4. SULLENNESS

TEXT: 29:9-16

9 Tarry ye and wonder; take your pleasure and be blind: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not

with strong drink.

- 10 For Jehovah hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes, the prophets; and your heads, the seers, hath he covered.
- 11 And all vision is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed:
- 12 and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned.
- 13 And the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw nigh unto me, and with their mouth and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men which hath been taught them;
- 14 therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.
- 15 Woe unto them that hide deep their counsel from Jehovah, and whose works are in the dark, and say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?
- 16 Ye turn things upside down! Shall the potter be esteemed as clay; that the thing made should say of him that made it, He made me not; or the thing formed say of him that formed it, He hath no understanding?

QUERIES

- a. How is the "book" sealed?
- b. What was to be God's marvelous work?

PARAPHRASE

Yes, go ahead and stand around with that look of incredulity. Go ahead and stagger around in your stupor of blinding

self-indulgence. The Lord has allowed you to drown yourselves in a spirit of deep stupor. The Lord has permitted your prophets and wise men to refuse to see His message. God's revelation has become a closed book to you. When men give it to a learned man and ask him to read it he says, I do not understand it, it is a closed book and I cannot read it. When they give it to the illiterate and ask him to read it, he says, I cannot read. None of you, therefore, know God's revelation. Now the Lord says, because you people pay Me only lip-service while your heart's desire is far away from Me, and because you revere the tradition and ritualism of men about My revelation, I will proceed with My program of judgment. I am going to manifest a miraculous judgment, such as only God can do. I am going to destroy the wisdom of your wise men. I am going to bring you into such difficult and impossible circumstances that none of your counselors will know the solution and their so-called wisdom will be shown to be folly. All this woe is to come upon you people because your leaders have taught you to reject the will of the Lord in your lives and they have taught you to believe the Lord is not the sovereign of your life. Your teachers have caused you to reverse reality! You have gotten every thing in life backwards. The clay vessel does not create the potter—the potter is maker and sovereign of the vessel. The pot does not say of the potter, he has no sense.

COMMENTS

v. 9-12 BROODING: Isaiah represents the people as standing in a sort of stunned, hesitant, stupefied state of sullen disbelief. They think it incredible that Isaiah is predicting Jerusalem will become a bloody altar to the Lord's vengeance. It does not make sense to them. They stare at the prophet like a drunken man stares when he does not comprehend what is being said to him. The Lord has allowed them to fall into a spiritual stupor. They have inebriated themselves and deadened their spiritual comprehension with rebellion against God's revelation and the heady intoxicant of self-exalting, self-justifying

human traditions and rituals. And the Lord has made man a moral being whose choices either make him better or worse. Man's moral choices either blind him or enlighten him. That is the way God made man, so it is ultimately God's doing. The prophet who continues to choose what is false will eventually be blinded to anything true. What a man does not use he loses. When men do not exercise their faculties to choose between evil and good they soon lose the ability to see good as distinguished from evil. The people of Jerusalem have made up their minds that safety and security from the Assyrian menace is to be found in their own political shrewdness and their treaties with Egypt. They have left the Lord completely out of their plans. They do not trust Him. They do not believe He will act in their best interests. They believe their way is superior.

Sullenly they brood over the revelation of God delivered through the writings of Isaiah (cf. Isa. 8:16-22), and when someone asks them what Isaiah's revelation means, their scholars and wise men scoff at it and call it a lot of gibberish and incredible nonsense which no one can understand. Isaiah's writings are like the sealed book of a mystic—they are completely unrealistic and far-fetched. What Isaiah says will never happen according to the wise men of Jerusalem. And, of course, in Isaiah's day many people were illiterate and depended upon priests and prophets and scribes for all their knowledge of what was written in books. The illiterate could not read for themselves, and when the literate would not read Isaiah's writings to them no one knew what Isaiah was revealing from the Lord. The whole nation learned only what the unbelieving, ungodly leaders taught them.

V. 13-16 BELLIGERENT: Now Isaiah turns his attention to the cause of their blindness. Their leaders were teaching them to trust in their religion as it was then being practiced. It was a syncretism of paganism and Jewish tradition. It was a religion of self-merit based on ritual observance and dissociated from any relationship to a personal, righteous, holy, loving God. It was a religion of going through certain

motions and saying certain words, but it had nothing to do with morality, goodness, truth, holiness of life. They had fallen into the same trap the devil has laid for so many men and women—that of compartmentalizing life. Religion is in one compartment; vocation is in another compartment; family relationships in another compartment; recreation in another compartment; none of these compartments of life are supposed to have any influence on the others. These people of Jerusalem gave God lip-service, but their heart—their desires and aspirations—was focused on themselves and the things of the world. The center of their lives was not God and His holiness but their own self-esteem and self-indulgence. They practiced a religion but it had no relationship to their way of life. They did not treasure God so their heart was not with Him (cf. Mt. 5:21). They revered the esteem of men; they treasured the traditions and opinions of men; they believed in man and his ability to solve all his own problems by his human wisdom and so they did not need God. They had simply turned a deaf ear to His prophet and eliminated God from all their plans.

Jesus quoted verse 13 in a confrontation with the Pharisees (Mt. 15:1-20; Mk. 7:1-23) over Jewish traditions. The Pharisees valued their traditions and opinions so highly they were eager to break the commandment of God in order to promote their traditions. It is the same old story of mankind's pride rejecting divine wisdom and sovereignty in favor of its own finite and fallible wisdom. To accept and be guided by divine revelation from The Sovereign God entails human surrender and self-humiliation—a full and complete trust in God's word over one's own wisdom. This is not easy. God has never said it was easy. But man's historic experience, coupled with God's historic demonstration of Himself in His Son, should prove beyond the slightest doubt that man is lost if left to his own wisdom.

Isaiah's prophecy here had immediate reference to the marvelous wonder God was about to do in the Assyrian siege and the deliverance of Jerusalem by the angel of death slaying

185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night. When God sent the Assyrian hordes and they got their strangle-hold on Jerusalem, the wisdom of Jerusalem's wise men was shown to be the foolishness it really was. Judah's leaders had advised that an alliance with Egypt would protect them from Assyria. The leaders discounted all Isaiah's warnings of judgment from Jehovah as so much nonsense. In effect they were saying, Isaiah is a fool and he is wrong; God has nothing to do with our political affairs; what God supposedly advises through Isaiah is foolishness; we know what is right and effective in our own affairs. So, when God allowed them to be brought to utter helplessness and near to being completely consumed by the Assyrians, He was destroying the wisdom of the wise.

The climactic point in history where God demonstrably destroyed the wisdom of the wise was at the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. All the human schemes and philosophies of self-righteousness, self-esteem and self-salvation were thoroughly invalidated and shown to be foolishness. The cross and the resurrection were demonstrated to be the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. That is why the apostle Paul quoted Isaiah 29:14. Every historic demonstration of God's wisdom versus man's foolishness in the Old Testament was a type and a prophecy of the climactic demonstration at the cross and the empty tomb! The Assyrian siege and the deliverance by the Lord's angel was one of those types!

When a man takes it upon himself to exclude God from any area or circumstance of his life, that man has "turned things upside down!" The man who tries to hide his doings and thinkings from the Omniscient God is a fool! His attempt is as absurd as the clay vessel attempting to say that it made itself and the potter had nothing to do with it. And when man gets his relationship to his Creator upside down all of man's existence gets perverted and in opposition to his real self! All man's moral perverseness, intra-personal antagonisms and self-conflicts are directly related to man's rejection of the sovereignty of his Creator in all the areas of life.

God extends Himself in love to reclaim autonomous, belligerent, sullen man. God carries out His program of reclamation through judgments and redemptions. But man, a free moral agent, must make a willing, humble, surrendered response. Man must surrender to God's sovereignty. God's judgment and redemption of Jerusalem at the siege of Assyria accomplished the reclamation of a remnant through which the Messiah was to be born. But the majority of the Jews continued in their belligerence and sullenness rejecting God's wisdom spoken through the prophets until in Jeremiah's day practically the whole nation (cf. Jer. 5:1) was in rebellion.

QUIZ

1. Characterize the people of Jerusalem as Isaiah saw them in this chapter.
2. How was Jerusalem to become an "altar" to Jehovah?
3. What was the response of the people of Jerusalem to Isaiah's revelation?
4. What was the cause of the people's attitude toward God's prophet?
5. What was the climactic demonstration of God's destruction of the wisdom of the wise?
6. What is the cause of man's perverseness?
7. How may man find salvation from his perverseness?

5. SANCTIFICATION

TEXT: 29:17-24

- 17 Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?
- 18 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and

out of darkness.

- 19 The meek also shall increase their joy in Jehovah, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.
- 20 For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scoffer ceaseth, and all they that watch for iniquity are cut off;
- 21 that make a man an offender in his cause, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just with a thing of nought.
- 22 Therefore thus saith Jehovah, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale.
- 23 But when he seeth his children, the work of my hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name; yea, they shall sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall stand in awe of the God of Israel.
- 24 They also that err in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmur shall receive instruction.

QUERIES

- a. What "day" will the deaf hear words of the book?
b. Who are the "children" of vs. 23?

PARAPHRASE

It shall surely not be long before what seems impressive among men, great, forest-like, man-dominating world empires like Assyria will be turned into plowed fields producing fruit for the Lord. And what seems unimpressive among men, the covenant people of God, will be turned into a majestic forest. In that day, many spiritually deaf and blind will hear the word from the book of God's messengers, and they will be brought out of the darkness of falsehood and sin into the marvelous light of God's truth. The meek who have learned patience through discipline and the poor who, having no riches to buy

favours, have had to commit their cause into the Lord's hands, shall all find fulfillment and joy in their trust in the Holy One of Israel. Because at this time, those who have tyrannized God's faithful ones and those who have scoffed at them and shamed them, and all those who have deliberately done evil to them shall be overcome. In that day justice will reign in God's kingdom. Those who try to make the innocent appear to be the guilty, those who try to impugn the integrity of judges, and those who take bribes to pervert justice will be overcome. So, the God who redeemed Abraham from a world of sin, says concerning the progeny of Jacob, the messianic people, You shall never be ashamed of your God again when that day arrives. In that day, Jacob's progeny shall see the work of God in all its fulfillment in their midst in the person of the Messiah, and they shall sanctify themselves unto Him, in reverence and awe to His name. That God keeps His word will be so thoroughly proven then, Jacob's progeny will openly and unashamedly acknowledge Him as the Holy One of Israel. Many of those who had erred will be enlightened, and many who had found fault will learn the truth.

COMMENTS

v. 17-21 REDEMPTION: God predicts through Isaiah that He is going to work a transformation of the people described in chapters 28:1—29:16. This nation of stupid, unstable, sullen people is to form the basis for a changed society sanctified unto the Holy One of Israel. God is going to refocus the ideas of men concerning the value of human structures versus God's kingdom. Human sovereignty and human schemes (such as the world-encompassing empires have formed to build human utopias—from ancient Babylon to modern Communism) are going to be hewn down, brought low and made to be fields from which God's kingdom will reap its citizenry. The helplessness of human schemes of salvation is going to be demonstrated by centuries of judgments and redemptions of the Jewish

nation and by one great historic act of God when He takes what men have counted as common and unimpressive (the covenant believers) and makes them like a majestic forest in the Messiah and His church. Lebanon (a great forest) represents Assyria and all succeeding world-utopian-schemes. It will be brought low. Judah (a fruitful field) represents the faithful covenant people of God. It will be "esteemed as a forest." Part of the sanctifying process is a reorientation of men's sense of values—a regeneration of their thinking. All the history of the Hebrew people between Isaiah and the Messiah will be given to this goal of reorienting the thinking of those who will believe. It will involve all the captivities, oppressions, deliverances, restorations predicted by the prophets (esp. Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah) and will culminate in the death and resurrection of the Messiah and the establishment of His church.

When that process takes place, some of the spiritually deaf and blind (those who have excluded God from their plans and have turned to human programs and rulers, Egypt, Assyria, etc.) will pay heed to the words of the prophets (like Isaiah) who have delivered God's revealed wisdom in books. They will be enlightened and come to know the truth about where man's salvation lies—not in Egypt (or any human-utopia)—but in Jehovah and His covenant. Those who walk in darkness will see a great light (Isa. 9:1-2) and the veil will be lifted (Isa. 25:6-9).

A reorientation of values concerning what kind of people God chooses as His own will be necessary also. The "meek" and the "poor," who have little to rejoice over in relationship to worldly circumstances, are going to have a joyful inheritance. Through a program of decisive reversals of successive human schemes to rule mankind God is going to demonstrate the only viable program of salvation and regeneration. That program will be one of belief and obedience to His beneficent and sovereign will. Kings and kingdoms will crumble into dust. Pagan philosophies and religions will show themselves to be more harmful than helpful. But the meek and poor humble

believers in the Lord will show that keeping his commandments changes man into the image of his Creator and transforms man into a holy, good, honest, true, loving person. The Hebrew word *aoiyts* in vs. 20 may be translated *violent, fierce, tyrannical one*. Three classes of ungodly will be removed from the midst of God's new society (the messianic kingdom). God's redemption will rescue those who trust Him from all who want to destroy their souls—tyrants, scoffers and evil-doers. The prophet is not saying that those who kill the body will be cut off. As long as the present world exists there will be tyrants, scoffers and evil-doers killing and persecuting believers. But they can destroy only the body. Those who trust in the Lord will be rescued from the spiritual destruction these ungodly ones can cause. God's new society will also be characterized by the absence of dishonest, unjust, greedy persons (vs. 21).

V. 22-24 REGENERATION: The Lord, Jehovah, rescued Abraham from idolatrous Ur of the Chaldees. As a result of his redemption Abraham became a changed man. He became a giant of the faith—named by God as "a friend of God" (cf. Heb. 11:8-12; Jas. 2:21-24). Just so, God's redemption of the progeny (house) of Jacob will bring about regeneration, spiritual rebirth. The descendants of Jacob (those who believe and trust God—both Jew and Gentile; cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 3:6ff; 6:16; etc.) will be changed in attitude and deed. Israel oftentimes thought of herself as inferior to the rich, powerful, sophisticated, indulgent pagan nations surrounding her. Her consuming desire was "to be like the nations." She was ashamed of her God. But when God culminates His great redemptive program, Jacob's spiritual descendants will change their minds (repent) of that attitude. The RSV more properly translates the latter half of vs. 22 ". . . Jacob shall no more be ashamed, no more shall his face grow pale."

In view of the context we think vs. 23 could be paraphrased as follows: When the covenant nation sees true children of God, the work of God's hands, in its midst, many of the nation will be converted and set apart in the new, messianic kingdom, the church. Many will sanctify God and revere Him as sovereign

of their lives. The fulfillment of this may be readily seen in the book of Acts of Apostles. When God had completed His great redemptive work in the death and resurrection of Christ, the church was begun on the Day of Pentecost. Those converted Jews began to go into all the world preaching and living the gospel. Thousands upon thousands, seeing true children of God, the work of God's hands, sanctified the name of the Lord in their lives also. This was a great manifestation of regeneration of the house of Jacob from what they were in Isaiah's day!

Those "wandering in spirit" and those "finding fault" (vs. 24) will also be regenerated in their attitude. These are the spiritually blind and deaf. The history of Israel is replete with "wanderers" and "murmurers" (cf. Heb. 3:7ff, etc.). They wandered in spirit because they succumbed to false teachings, and they murmured resisting the truth. Isaiah connects regeneration and sanctification directly to instruction and understanding. Conversion begins in the mind. Sanctification (continuing conversion) is a continuing mental process. Neither conversion nor sanctification comes to any man unless it comes through the process of learning, understanding and practicing the truth! No one can be converted without knowing what the Bible says. No one can continue in the sanctified life without knowing, understanding and practicing what the Bible says. Teaching and preaching the word of God is not just important — *it is crucial!* Knowing and understanding the word of the Lord would be a complete change from the Israel of Isaiah's day (cf. Hosea 4:1-6, etc.).

QUIZ

1. Who is "Lebanon" and who is "the fruitful field"?
2. Why is God going to change the position of the two mentioned above?
3. Who are the "meek" and "poor" and what will be their new circumstances?
4. Why mention the redemption of Abraham?

5. Name three changes of attitude that Isaiah predicts will take place in "Jacob's house."
6. What does instruction and understanding have to do with conversion and sanctification?

EXAMINATION

CHAPTERS TWENTY-EIGHT THROUGH TWENTY-NINE

DEFINITION

(Define the following words or phrases as they were discussed in the comments.)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <i>fat valley</i> | 7. <i>fitches</i> |
| 2. a <i>mighty</i> and <i>strong</i> one | 8. <i>Ariel</i> |
| 3. <i>residue</i> | 9. <i>familiar spirit</i> out of the ground |
| 4. <i>precept</i> upon <i>precept</i> | 10. hungry man <i>dreameth</i> |
| 5. men of <i>strange</i> lips | 11. him that is <i>not learned</i> |
| 6. covenant with <i>death</i> | 12. fruitful field esteemed as <i>forest</i> |

MEMORIZATION

"And the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people _____ nigh unto me, and with their _____ and with their _____ do _____ me, but have _____ their _____ far from me, and their _____ of me is a commandment of _____ which hath been _____ them; therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a _____ work among this people, even a marvellous work and a _____; and the _____ of their wise men shall perish, and the _____ of their prudent men shall be hid." (Isa. 29:13-14)

EXPLANATION

1. Explain the predicament Judah was in as a result of the drunkenness of its priests and prophets (28:1-8).

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2. Explain the people's question, "Whom will he teach knowledge? and whom will he make to understand the message? them that are weaned . . .?" 28:9
3. Explain why and when God's people would sanctify God's name upon seeing His children. (29:23)

APPLICATION

(In its context every scripture has one meaning—the author's intended meaning. How may the following be applied in the believer's life?)

1. How may Isaiah's warning to the immature, unteachable people of his day be applied to the Corinthian church of the New Testament and to the church today? (28:9-13)
2. What lesson will be learned by Judah in its attempt to make lies its refuge and hide itself under falsehood and what application may be made to national politics today? (28:14-22)
3. How did the Lord pour out upon the people a spirit of deep sleep, and how may this whole discussion of their refusal to know God's will be applied today? (29:9-16)

SPECIAL STUDY

UNBELIEF IS DELIBERATE

by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTION

"First of all you must understand this, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own passions and saying, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation.' They *deliberately ignore* this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago, and

an earth formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished." 2 Pet. 3:3-6

I. Unbelief Almost Incomprehensible

A. Faced by what seems so logical and reasonable, so sensible and so beneficial evidence . . . so true and right . . . we do not understand why there is unbelief.

Why do so many people who seem sensible, sincere, reasonable, not acknowledge the same truths we hold to be so self-evident?

Why, in a world of so many intelligent, relatively moral and upright people, is there so much unbelief?

B. Peter, in our text, I believe, shows the primary cause of unbelief—**DELIBERATE IGNORANCE.**

The Bible has a great deal to say about this . . . we will discuss it in just a moment from the aspect of Peter's entire 3rd chapter of this 2nd epistle.

II. Some Unbelief is Due to a Simple Lack of Knowledge

A. "Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ." Rom. 10:17

B. Often times children grow up, even in Christian homes, without ever having been given a faith with foundations in facts or evidence (cf. Deut. 6:6-25).

C. The church has not fulfilled her mission until she has presented the good news founded on the evidences of factual history.

D. But even a lack of knowledge will not be accepted as an excuse by God since all men have had enough knowledge of God revealed to them that they stand condemned by God if they disbelieve (cf. Rom. 1:18ff).

SO, PRIMARILY SPEAKING, UNBELIEF IS MORAL REBELLION.

UNBELIEF IS DELIBERATE

DISCUSSION

I. Unbelief is deliberate.

A. "For this they willingly are ignorant of . . ." another translation says, "They purposely ignore this fact . . ." v. 5

1. Unbelief comes to men because they deliberately choose to ignore the facts as these facts reveal a God to whom they have a moral responsibility.

2. Rom. 1:21 men . . . "became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles." v. 25, "they exchanged the truth about God for a lie . . ." v. 28 "they refused to have God in their knowledge."

"But the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Rom. 1:20

3. Men may deny the facts if they wish . . . but they are without excuse because God is so sufficiently revealed even in nature that unbelief condemns men . . . the evidence, the facts are so abundant that any man who says there is no God is a fool, for only a fool is willingly ignorant.

Dr. G. G. Simpson, famous Paleontologist from Harvard once said concerning some highly improbable evidence as to the origin of the horse "it is so improbable as to be unacceptable *unless* we can find no hypothesis more likely to explain the facts." IN OTHER WORDS, HE IS WILLING TO ACCEPT AN UNACCEPTABLE EXPLANATION IF THERE IS, IN HIS ESTIMATION, NONE BETTER!

4. Jesus once made a most shocking accusation against the Pharisees, "But because I say the truth, ye believe

me not." Jn. 8:45 The very reason they would not believe Jesus was the fact that he told them the truth. There is hardly a worse state man can get himself into than this!

5. Those who hate the truth will be deceived and believe a lie (II Thess. 2:10-12). These do not love the truth; therefore, they are not attracted to it and even when they see it, they hastily reject it and rationalize their reaction.
6. The god of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not (II Cor. 4:3-4). These refuse to listen to the truth when it condemns the unrighteous things in which they find pleasure and which they are determined to continue . . . Thus they seek for some message which will assure them that the unrighteous thing is right and thus permit them to continue in it without being rebuked by their conscience. God sends such people strong delusions in that He has ordained the laws of man's heart and of morality, and that person who has no love for the truth and who lives in and takes pleasure in unrighteousness will unfit his heart for the reception of truth and fit it for the reception of strong delusions which comfort and assure him in his error and unrighteousness.

Dr. Henry Morris, when on the OBC campus for the 1966 Science & Scripture Forum, emphasizing the impact of the 2nd law of thermodynamics upon theories of evolution concluded that ANY SCIENTIST AWARE OF THIS LAW (AND ALL SHOULD BE) WHO REMAINS AN EVOLUTIONIST OR UNIFORMITARIAN, MUST DO SO BY DELIBERATELY IGNORING THIS FACT!

7. Jeremiah put it this way . . . "Behold their ears are closed, they cannot listen; behold, the word of the Lord is to them an object of scorn, they take no pleasure in it." Jer. 6:10 (see also Jer. 6:16-19).
- B. "scoffers . . . *walking after their own lusts* . . ." v. 3
 1. Unbelief comes to men because they choose to walk after their own lusts . . . Rom. 1 . . . "God gave

UNBELIEF IS DELIBERATE

them up to the lusts of their own hearts . . . unto vile affections . . . they not only do these things but even take pleasure in seeing others do them."

2. The people of Israel cried out to Moses as Pharaoh approached, "It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness . . . would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full . . ." Ex. 14:10-12; 16:1-3

Desire to satisfy the flesh chokes out the word, Mt. 13:13-23

3. Unbelief is due to the fact that men choose deliberately to have physical security, or sensual pleasure, or pride.
4. Agrippa's lust for a woman not his own caused him to deliberately refuse to believe Paul. Acts 26:28
5. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and *men loved darkness* rather than light, *because their deeds were evil*. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved (exposed for what they really are)." Jn. 3:19-20
6. "For the time will come when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths." (II Tim. 4:3-4) (cf. also Micah 2:11; Hosea 5:4; 4:6)
7. One of man's lusts which causes him to deliberately disbelieve is **PRIDE**.
 - a. Pride from wealth, Deut. 8:1-20
 - b. Pride from power, Ex. 5:2; Dan. 4:30; 5:23
 - c. Pride from security, Obadiah 3
 - d. Pride in self-righteousness, Job 33:9; Lk. 18:11; Jn. 9:39-41; Rev. 3:17
 - e. Pride from self-sufficiency, Jas. 4:13-17
 - f. Pride is man's desire for human autonomy over against the sovereignty of God . . . a proud man

does not need a Provider, Protector, Guide and Saviour. But he is not free; he hides—one way or another, he hides.

ANIMAL LUSTS OF MEN DECEIVE THEM INTO DELIBERATELY DENYING GOD, THE BIBLE, HEAVEN AND HELL, BECAUSE THEY WANT TO SATISFY THEIR FLESHLY DESIRES . . . THEY DO NOT NEED GOD FOR THEY ARE SELF-SUFFICIENT; THEREFORE THEY “WANDER (deliberately) INTO THE MYTHS OF EVOLUTION, HUMANISM, COMMUNISM, AND JUST PLAIN STUBBORNESS.”

ALL OF US HAVE HEARD PEOPLE SAY, “I KNOW THE BIBLE IS HISTORY AND IT’S TRUE AND I OUGHT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT ITS DEMANDS, BUT I’M NOT READY TO GIVE UP THIS AND THAT, AND SO ON.” . . . OR SOME WILL SAY, “I CAN’T BELIEVE THE BIBLE IS TRUE BECAUSE THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS IT CONDEMNS WHICH I FEEL ARE ALL RIGHT.”

C. “they that are unlearned and unstable *wrest the scriptures* unto their own destruction” II Pet. 3:16

1. Unbelief comes to men when they wrest the scriptures.
2. Satan, the father of unbelief, perverted the scripture at the temptation of Jesus (Mt. 4:5-6).
3. Paul had to contend with the Judaizers who corrupted (II Cor. 2:17) and dishonestly handled the word of God deceitfully (II Cor. 4:2).
4. The prejudiced and biased mind is a form of deliberate unbelief (cf. Jn. 8:12; 7:24); so also is the one who allows himself to be influenced by rumor or opinions of so-called intelligentsia (cf. Jn. 7:12; 7:40-43; Jas. 1:6-7; Eph. 4:13-14).
5. Cowardice or conformity also leads to deliberate unbelief (cf. Jn. 12:41-43; Jn. 9).
6. Liberalism, Modernism—a result of men who have deceitfully and dishonestly handled the Word of God—has infected hundreds of thousands of gullible people who feel they must conform in churches all around us and within the Restoration Movement.
7. Existentialism, by deceit, has duped many into unbelief.

UNBELIEF IS DELIBERATE

8. Men, by their traditions, have made void the word of God and led many unto unbelief.

THE WRESTING OF THE SCRIPTURES TO MAINTAIN DIVISION WITHIN CHRISTENDOM BRINGS UNBELIEF . . . JESUS PRAYED IN JOHN 17 . . . "THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE, THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE THAT THOU DIDST SEND ME!"

WRESTING THE SCRIPTURES IS CERTAIN EVIDENCE OF DISRESPECT FOR GOD AND, ON THE OTHER HAND PRIDE IN SELF!

WHEN MEN EXCHANGE THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR A LIE, THEY BEGIN TO WORSHIP THE CREATURE RATHER THAN THE CREATOR . . . PERHAPS NOT FROGS AND CROCODILES LIKE THE EGYPTIANS . . . BUT MAN WORSHIPPING MAN IS JUST AS DESPICABLE FOR IT IS CREATURE WORSHIP!

9. The Jews of the Prophet's days wrested the scripture by interpreting the promise of the Messiah and His kingdom as one of fleshly indulgence . . . their hearts were filled with unbelief.

10. The Pharisees wrested the scriptures to declare their goods "Corban" . . . they deceitfully handled the Word of God to take oaths by the gold of the altar rather than the altar itself and robbed people and refused to pay pledges (Mt. 23).

THE SEEMING SLACKNESS OF GOD IN BRINGING JUDGMENT UPON DISOBEDIENCE OR PERVERSION OF GOD'S WORD CAUSES MEN TO FEEL THEY CAN USURP GOD AND DO AS THEY PLEASE WITH HIS WORD . . . WRESTING IT TO SERVE THEIR LUSTS.

It is clear that the evidences for Christianity are of such nature that they bring to the surface what is in a man! If one is unwilling to follow Christ because of the demand which such would make on his life, he can think up "reasons" to justify his unwillingness. The real reason—his unwillingness—will be hidden from others by these "rationalizations" and finally even from himself because he does not think beyond these "reasons."

The fact that one must love the truth indicates that the attitude of heart has something to do with whether or not one will believe. He who wants a careless, immoral life will not

want the faith which is a constant rebuke to such a life.

II. Belief is deliberate.

A. Saving faith is voluntary. Had the revelation of God been so strong that anyone beholding could not disbelieve, it would have overridden moral freedom and this would be evidence unsuitable to moral subjects.

B. The true purpose of God is not to produce obedience by force, but to treat men as free moral agents.

C. Belief comes to an informed mind.

1. Peter writes to "stir up their mind and to call to remembrance the revealed word of God." II Pet. 3:1

2. God's revelation was made intelligently, and he expects man to apprehend it with the use of intelligence (Rom. 10:17)

3. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." I Jn. 1:3

Paul "reasoned" with the Jews from the scriptures about the Christ.

WE MUST DELIBERATELY LEARN AND RECEIVE THE FACTS ABOUT GOD, JESUS AND THE BIBLE, BEFORE WE CAN BELIEVE . . . PETER IS ONE WHO PUTS A PREMIUM ON KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST THROUGH THE WORD FOR HE KNOWS THAT BELIEF COMES THIS WAY! (I Pet. 1:22-25; 3:15; II Pet. 1:3-11; 1:12-15; 1:16-21; 3:18)

B. Belief comes to a submissive will.

1. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." Jn. 7:17

2. The Pharisees of Jesus day were filled with unbelief because they would not let the word of Christ "have free course in them." Jn. 8:37

3. THIS SAME STUBBORN UNWILLINGNESS TO DO GOD'S WILL LED THE PHARISEES TO REJECT THE COUNSEL OF GOD, REFUSING TO BE BAPTIZED OF JOHN THE

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BAPTIST (Lk. 7:29-a30).

4. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." I Jn. 2:3
 5. GOD GAVE MAN A WILL . . . HE GAVE HIM A FREE WILL . . . MAN IS FREE TO SURRENDER TO WHATEVER HE WISHES . . . BELIEF OR UNBELIEF.
- C. Belief comes to a pure heart.
1. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Does not Jesus mean believe in God?
 2. The honest and good heart is the soil upon which the seed (the word of God) falls and brings forth much fruit. Lk. 8
 3. "But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." Jn. 3:21

A HEART CALLOUSED BY IMPURITY, GREED, LASCIVIOUSNESS, AND SIN IS HARDENED AGAINST ANY KIND OF BELIEF EXCEPT UNBELIEF! THE HEART THAT IS PURE, CLEAN, AND WHOLESOME IS MALLEABLE, SOFT, COMPASSIONATE, EASILY ENTREATED, RESPONSIVE TO THE HIGHEST AND NOBLEST . . . RESPONSIVE TO THE DIVINE LOVE LETTER . . . GOD'S BOOK OF LOVE!

CONCLUSION

HOW DOES MAN, SNARED IN THE TRAP OF THE DEVIL, BLINDED BY THE DEVIL, DECEIVED BY THE DEVIL INTO UNBELIEF, COME TO BELIEF??

- I. There must be an *a priori* which must be admitted. Man must admit that he is rational and that there are objects and facts to be known. To deny he thinks he must think. Even to represent himself to be irrational he must think rationally!
- II. Many facts (truths) are MORAL FACTS. That is they exhibit form or display moral character or attributes. All of God's works (both natural and supernatural) exhibit His moral

ISAIAH

attributes and character . . . His wrath upon sin; His love for the sinner (cf. Rom. 1:18-22; Acts 14:15-17; Acts 17:22-31; Jn. 3:16, etc.)

- III. The will or the "heart" or the mind of man must be changed or moved or transformed by a presentation of "moral facts" (cf. Rom. 12:1-2; II Cor. 10:3-5; Rom. 10:17).
- IV. Man then makes a choice or gives assent to what he knows to be true and moral and right. An emotion is "an experience brought about by the prospect of some value's being gained or lost. We become emotional about something after receiving the moral facts and reasoning on them—then we make a choice . . . WHICH IS MOST TO BE DESIRED . . . MATERIAL OR SPIRITUAL?"
- V. MAN THEN COMES TO FAITH . . . Faith is trust, love, obedience, commitment. Faith is an experience—based squarely on the foregoing steps.

An infamous woman atheist, speaking on the campus of Drake University, asked why she speaks on college campuses, replied, "To corrupt the youth!"

She said, "I believe this would be the best of all possible worlds if everybody were an atheist or an agnostic or a humanist.

"I don't think the church has ever contributed anything to anybody, any place, at any time. I can't pinpoint a period in history or a place in the universe where religion has actually helped the welfare of man.

"There is absolutely no conclusive evidence that Jesus ever really existed, even as a mortal. I don't believe he was a historical figure at all. Until someone proves otherwise, therefore, these stories about him must be considered nothing more than folk tales consisting in equal parts of legend and wish fulfillment. But there is never going to be any way of verifying them one way or the other.

WOULD YOU SAY THIS WOMAN IS A FREE-THINKER . . . ALWAYS WILLING TO INVESTIGATE EVIDENCE . . . OPEN-

MINDED . . . OBJECTIVE!!!?

“Also, I reject the idea of a life hereafter on the same grounds. Do you know anybody who has come back with a first-hand report on heaven? If you do, let me know. Until then you’ll pardon me if I don’t buy it.

“I agree with Mark Twain, who wrote about the hereafter, that there is no sex in it ; you can’t eat anything in it; there is absolutely nothing physical in it. You wouldn’t have your brain, you wouldn’t have any sensation, you wouldn’t be able to enjoy anything—unless you were queer for hymn singing and harp playing. So who needs it? SPEAKING FOR MYSELF, I’D RATHER GO TO HELL.”

UNBELIEF CAN’T GET ANY MORE DELIBERATE THAN THAT!

It is a matter of choice! Choose ye this day whom you will serve. Why go ye limp between the two sides, if Baal be God worship him. Jesus depicted life as a choice between two ways—not three (no neutrality).

B. FRIENDS THAT FETTER, CHAPTERS 30-31

1. SHAME

TEXT: 30:1-14

- 1 Woe to the rebellious children, saith Jehovah, that take counsel, but not of me; and that make a league, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin;
- 2 that set out to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to take refuge in the shadow of Egypt!
- 3 Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, the refuge in the shadow of Egypt your confusion.
- 4 For their princes are at Zoan, and their ambassadors are come to Hanes.
- 5 They shall all be ashamed because of a people that cannot

profit them, that are not a help nor profit, but a shame and also a reproach.

- 6 The burden of the beasts of the South. Through the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the lioness and the lion, the viper and the fiery flying serpent, they carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the humps of camels, to a people that shall not profit them.
- 7 For Egypt helpeth in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I called her Rahab that sitteth still.
- 8 Now go, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever.
- 9 For it is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of Jehovah;
- 10 that say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits,
- 11 get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.
- 12 Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness, and rely thereon;
- 13 therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly in an instant.
- 14 And he shall break it as a potter's vessel is broken, breaking it in pieces without sparing; so that there shall not be found among the pieces thereof a sherd wherewith to take fire from the hearth, or to dip up water out of the cistern.

QUERIES

- a. What was wrong with going down to Egypt for help?
- b. Why would the people not want "right" things prophesied to them?

PARAPHRASE

I hereby threaten you, you rebellious and stubborn children of mine, says the Lord. You make all your plans without once seeking counsel from Me. You conduct all your business affairs and make political alliances without taking My will into account at all. All you are doing is multiplying your sins against Me. Without seeking the counsel of My prophet you have gone down to Egypt to get aid and security. You think Pharaoh is your friend and is able to help you, but he is neither. In fact, in trusting Egypt and the Pharaoh, you will be disappointed, humiliated and disgraced. Even though Pharaoh's princes and ambassadors are making political overtures and promises to you from Zoan and Hanes, you are involving yourself in useless and unprofitable agreements with them which will only bring shame and reproach upon you. This is My omniscient revelation concerning the Beast of the South: You take big risks going through a dangerous and troubled wilderness, populated by wild and fierce animals and poisonous serpents, carrying your nation's riches by caravan loads in tribute to a government that has not the power to help you! Egypt's promises of help are empty promises because, as much as she pledges to help, she is quite unable to do so. I tell you she is "A Big-Mouth that is a Do-nothing." Now, you Isaiah, go write My revelation concerning Egypt for this people in permanent tablet and book form so that future generations may know of Israel's unbelief and that My word is absolutely true. The people of this generation are rebels, liars and they refuse to listen to the proclamation of My word. They say to the prophets, Don't get any more revelations for us; don't preach your truths to us. If you want us to listen to you, give us what we want to hear—pleasant words, illusions, intrigues. Get out of the way of our dealing with Egypt—leave our path clear. We've heard enough about the Holy One of Israel. Leave us alone!

This is what the Holy One of Israel replies to that! Because you hold My word in contempt and put your faith in force

and intrigue and you are relying on this for your safety, you are going to reap the fruits of such perverseness. Calamity will come upon you explosively and suddenly like a damaged wall falls that has a top-heavy bulge from being breached. The Holy One of Israel is going to smash this nation to pieces like a fragile earthenware pot is shattered when it is broken. God's shattering will be very thorough. Nothing usable will be left when he finishes with this nation.

COMMENTS

V. 1-7 FOLLY OF JUDAH: *Hoy* in Hebrew is sometimes translated *woe* but can also mean *alas, ho!*, and generally presages grief and threatening. In this case the idea of threat is prevalent. Jehovah is threatening Judah with grief as a result of her perverse folly. Judah's primary foolishness was in making plans and instituting programs without considering God's advice. God advised His people through His written law and through revelations given through prophets and other messengers. But the people paid only lip-service attention to these. Judah conducted her commercial, social, national and international relations all without knowing or caring what God's will was in any of these areas. She was just like her sister, Israel, a few years before (cf. Hosea 4:1-6; 5:4, 13; 8:1-5; 8:9-10; 10:3, etc.). Israel was like a silly dove, without sense, calling to Egypt and Assyria (Hosea 7:10-11). Now Judah plays the stupid fool calling to Egypt.

The Jews were a specially called society. Their social, political and cultural structure was uniquely structured. They were called to commit their total existence (political, social, cultural international) to the guidance and glorification of Jehovah; When they did not do so, they forfeited their reason for being. Actually, all human governments are ordained by God in order to serve and minister to His divine purposes in the earth (cf. Rom. 13:1-7). When they refuse to know and be guided by God's will in their national and international

relationships they also forfeit their reason for approval by God. So, we have here a revelation through Isaiah of divine principles for all, both citizens and leaders, concerned with human governments. Governments wishing to have God's approval today must conduct their national affairs and international agreements according to peace with liberty, justice, compassion, truth, righteousness for all men for these are principles for which God ordains human government.

The second violation Judah made of her divine destiny was, having refused the guidance of God, turning to Egypt for help against her enemies. Judah was to find her help in Jehovah. Jehovah had given her plenty of evidence not only of His ability to help, but of His eagerness to help. Egypt would only volunteer to help Judah in order to later exploit Judah for Egypt's profit. However, as willing as Egypt might be to help, she was powerless to do so! Egypt was a "paper tiger."

Egypt's greatness was millenniums old. The Great Pyramid (the greatest and most accurate structure the world has ever known) was built about 4750 B.C. (Abram was not even called by God to begin the Hebrew race until 2700 years later). Probably the most magnificent era of Egyptian culture and power was the 18th Dynasty (1587-1328 B.C.) when Moses and the Hebrew people were there as slaves. Having experienced first hand the imperial power and greatness of Egypt for so many years of her own history (Abraham, Joseph, Moses) Judah would think of Egypt as invincible.

But around 1100 B.C. (near the time of Saul and David), under a succession of Ramessides rulers, Egypt began a cultural and political decline. The self-indulgence and ineptitude of its rulers was mainly responsible for the decline. Ethiopians gained control of all Egypt. For several decades (715-663 B.C.) Egypt was dominated by Ethiopian rule. These new rulers followed ancient political custom of agitating border-states (like Palestine) to revolt against their Mesopotamian overlords. Assyria, which controlled Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine and all the territory to the Egyptian

borders had her hands full squelching one revolt after another. In 720 B.C. the Assyrians appointed Akhimiti governor of Ashdod. In 711 Ashdod revolted against Assyria and deposed Akhimiti and made a Greek mercenary its ruler. Sargon, king of Assyria, dispatched an army to besiege Ashdod and overrun the city. Hezekiah was on the throne of Judah—a good man but not the strongest ruler Judah ever had. He was inclined to listen to those who favored the Egyptian philosophy of revolting against Assyria. Isaiah warned Hezekiah and the nation then (Isa. 20:1ff) that following Egyptian policies would be disastrous. Sargon's annals indicate Judah was a party to the revolt of Ashdod. Sargon writes that the Greek ruler of Ashdod tried to persuade the rulers of Judah, Edom and Moab to join his revolt and also invoked the aid of "Pharaoh king of Egypt, a prince who could not save them." The Assyrians were as accurate in their evaluation of Egyptian powerlessness as Isaiah was! The Greek ruler of Ashdod fled to Egypt when Sargon overran the city—but the Egyptians thought it politically expedient to deliver him up to the Assyrians. Judeans were fools to think they could trust the Egyptians to save them from the Assyrians!

Sargon died in 705 B.C. and was succeeded by his son Sennacherib. As usual, the death of one emperor and the coming to the throne of a new one touched off widespread political revolt among tributary nations. Merodach-baladan returned to Babylon from exile and reclaimed rights to the rule of that area. He also began a program of inciting other tribute-paying nations to revolt against Assyria. He sent an embassy to Hezekiah to prod him into joining the revolt. At the same time Egypt was also busy with her usual promises to help Judah throw off the Assyrian yoke. So our present chapter is a warning from the prophet of God that Judah is not to listen either to Merodach-baladan or the Egyptian king Shabaka, but to God.

But the princes of Judah had already made contacts. They had gone to Zoan, in the northeastern part of the Nile delta and to Hanes (which may have been the Heracleopolis Magna,

fifty miles upstream from Cairo), to meet with Egyptian ambassadors and plot against Assyria. But they are simply tightening the Assyrian noose around their own necks as they discover in a few short years (Isaiah, chapters 36-39). They are going to suffer humiliation and embarrassment when Egypt proves impotent to help them!

They will not heed the prophet's warning. They are obsessed with dependence upon Egypt. They send ambassadors, messengers and caravans laden with Judah's treasures (v. 6) through wild, dangerous, beast-infested country to work out alliances with a decadent, pagan, powerless people. Their troubles and treasures will all be for nothing!

Isaiah calls into play both humor and sarcasm. His oracle ("burden") concerns the *behemoth* (great beast) of the South (Egypt). But in verse 7, he calls Egypt "Rahab that sitteth still." *Rahav* in Hebrew means, *big mouth*, or *puffed up—arrogant*. The Hebrew word that is translated "sitteth still" is *shavvath*, or *sabbath* which means, of course, *rest, inactivity*, etc. So the pretended behemoth is really a big mouthed, do-nothing. Egypt is a "paper tiger." Judah will seek her help in vain.

V. 8-14 FURY OF JEHOVAH: In this section the Lord expresses through the prophet His righteous wrath against a nation deliberately refusing to accept His guidance and deliverance. First, the Lord directs the prophet to make a permanent record of His revelation concerning Egypt's helplessness and Judah's folly. Isaiah is to write this revelation on *lukha*, a tablet of stone or wood (probably wood), and then he is to write it in a *sepher*, a ledger, a book, in epistolary form. This emphasizes two things: the seriousness of the message and the need for its permanency. If Judah will not listen now, as Isaiah is giving the message orally, perhaps future generations will read of Jehovah's guidance, Judah's folly and Egypt's failure, in written form, *after the fact of its fulfillment*, and repent of their attitude toward Jehovah. Written testimony of supernatural revelation, tested through centuries of attack and investigation are much more conducive to creating faith

than experiencing the supernatural events as eyewitnesses (e.g., the difficulty of many of the Jews in believing in Jesus while He was alive, but turning to Him many years after the events of His life were recorded in the Gospels).

Second, Jehovah delivers through Isaiah the indictment He has against Judah. Judah is rebellious, deceitful, and unheeding. A grateful son is expected to be obedient to the Father's guidance, but Judah is an ingrate and a stubborn rebel. She not only refuses to hear the word of God, she presumes to instruct God's messengers what to say to her. They blatantly announce their refusal to want to hear "right" things and their desire to hear *khalaq* (smooth, flattering, slippery) things, and *mehathaloth* (lofty, illusory, deluding) things. It is almost incredible that a people who had vowed so emphatically under Moses, Samuel, David and other leaders, to adhere to the law of God, chose to set themselves so emphatically against His law. It is difficult to believe that a majority of the Hebrew people would instruct their prophets to flatter and delude them. Isaiah is not the only prophet to record such a perverse attitude (cf. Micah 2:6-11; Jer. 6:10-19; Ezek. 2:3-7; 3:4-11, etc.). But the prophet of God was not held responsible for their hearing—only for his preaching (cf. Ezek. 2:5). In verse 11 the people are represented as commanding the prophets to give up walking in the way of Jehovah (the ancient paths, cf. Jer. 6:10-19). And the prophets are commanded to cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from their presence. The word translated *cease* is *hasheveethu* and is another form of the word *shavvath* used in verse 7. They want Isaiah to put the Holy One of Israel to rest. They want a do-nothing God. They are especially agitated at the repeated emphasis on the *holiness* of God. It is a constant stabbing at their consciences to hear of the *Holy* One of Israel.

But the Holy One of Israel is going to act. And He is going to act according to His holiness! Because they have held His word in contempt and trusted in *'asheq* (fraud, violence, injustice, oppression) and in perverseness (ability to deceive, manipulate, despoil) He is going to bring them down. They

had gone so far as to *rely* on these machinations. These evil ways became the base and structure of their whole existence! God is going to allow them to reap the fruit of their evil thinking and doing. A society of moral, conscionable beings cannot hold together on a base of such moral perversity. Human social structures, whether small (as a home) or large (as a nation) must be conducted on a modicum of trust, honesty, purity, truth, respect for authority, compassion. If such values are held in contempt and perverted that social structure will disintegrate of itself. It will become a raging jungle where all inhabitants prey on one another. When the rulers and political leaders of a nation despise and pervert these principles it becomes a "breach" in the wall and soon the whole wall is weakened and falls. The "breach" is unnoticed by many, at first, but it gradually does its weakening work until the wall falls suddenly and everyone wonders why, all of a sudden, the wall falls. Jehovah will also exercise direct judgment upon Judah and smash her into fragments like a broken potter's vessel (cf. Jer. 19:1ff). What a picture of the future of Judah!—smashed and scattered into pieces, good for nothing!

QUIZ

1. How did Judah copy her sister, Israel, in conducting her business?
2. How did the Jews forfeit their reason for being a special nation?
3. Why couldn't Egypt help Judah against Assyria?
4. How intense was Judah's appeal to Egypt for help?
5. How is Egypt characterized by God?
6. What are the instructions of the people to Isaiah and other prophets of God about their messages?
7. Upon what base were the people building their society?

2. SALVATION

TEXT: 30:15-33

- 15 For thus said the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not.
- 16 But ye said, No, for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift.
- 17 One thousand shall flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five shall ye flee: till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill.
- 18 And therefore will Jehovah wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for Jehovah is a God of justice; blessed are all they that wait for him.
- 19 For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; thou shalt weep no more; he will surely be gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear, he will answer thee.
- 20 And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be hidden any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers;
- 21 and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.
- 22 And ye shall defile the overlaying of thy graven images of silver, and the plating of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as an unclean thing; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.
- 23 And he will give the rain for thy seed, wherewith thou shalt sow the ground; and bread of the increase of the ground, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures.
- 24 The oxen likewise and the young asses that till the ground shall eat savory provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and the fork.

- 25 And there shall be upon every lofty mountain, and upon every high hill, brooks and streams of waters, in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.
- 26 Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that Jehovah bindeth up the hurt of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.
- 27 Behold, the name of Jehovah cometh from far, burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue is as a devouring fire;
- 28 and his breath is as an overflowing stream, that reacheth even unto the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction: and a bridle that causeth to err shall be in the jaws of the peoples.
- 29 Ye shall have a song as in the night when a holy feast is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come unto the mountain of Jehovah, to the Rock of Israel.
- 30 And Jehovah will cause his glorious voice to be heard, and will show the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and the flame of a devouring fire, with a blast, and tempest, and hailstones.
- 31 For through the voice of Jehovah shall the Assyrian be dismayed; with his rod will he smite him.
- 32 And every stroke of the appointed staff, which Jehovah shall lay upon him, shall be with the sound of tabrets and harps; and in battles with the brandishing of his arm will he fight with them.
- 33 For a Topheth is prepared of old; yea, for the king it is made ready; he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of Jehovah, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

QUERIES

- a. How will they be saved by rest? v. 15

- b. When would they “cast away” their molten images of gold?
- c. What does Assyria (v. 31) have to do with this context?

PARAPHRASE

This is what the Holy One of Israel, the One from whom you wish to hear no more, says: In turning again unto Me in humility you will find salvation; in calm trust in Me you will find power—but you refuse to do so. You actually said, No, we will find our safety in fleeing to Egypt upon fast horses. Our salvation will be in our swiftness. Yes, if it is swiftness you wish to see, you shall see it, but it will be the swiftness of your enemies coming upon you. If it is fleeing you wish to see, you shall see that also. Indeed one thousand of you shall flee at the threat of just a very few of your enemies. There will be so few of you left after the fleeing before your enemies, those few will be like the solitary mast pole of a ship—standing all by itself. So, because of your attitude, the Lord will wait to show mercy to you until He has first completed His work of judgment. The Lord is a Lord of justice, and therefore He must uphold His exalted name in judgment before He can be gracious. All who wait with endurance upon the Lord to fulfill His purposes will find blessedness. Indeed, you who wait upon the Lord will dwell in Zion, even in the Holy City, where My presence is. There shall be an end to your weeping. The Lord will be gracious to you when He hears your cry to Him. As soon as He hears your cry of repentance and turning to Him, He will answer you. Although the Lord is going to give you a diet of adversity and affliction for awhile, the time will soon come when your God-sent teachers will no longer have to hide from threats to their lives. You will once again be able to see and hear true teachers from God calling you back to the true way where God wants you to walk. They will keep you from erring in walking on the wrong way. And in that day you will despise your expensive and precious idols as repulsive things and cast them away, saying, Good riddance, away with you! Then God

will make you prosperous. He will bless you with rain at planting time and make what you plant produce abundantly and bring forth broad pastures for your flocks. Your livestock will eat the best kind of feed. In that day, when God defeats your enemies, He will give you refreshment like cool, clear streams of water flowing down every mountain and hill. In that day, when the Lord treats the illness of His people and heals them, the glory of God and the abundance of His blessings upon His people will be so magnificent it will be like a sevenfold intensification of the shining of the sun and moon. Behold, the Lord, who before removed Himself because of the sins of His people, will come in the day of their repentance, aflame with wrath, lips filled with fury, consuming His enemies by His word. His wrath will pour out upon them and sweep them away like a flood which drowns; they will be destroyed like chaff from a sieve; they will be led by their errors to their doom as a horse is led by its bridle. But the Lord's people will have a festive song to sing like the songs of their holy feast days. The same kind of gladness of heart exhibited when worshippers go up to the mountain of the Lord playing on their flutes and other instruments will be the gladness that the Lord's people will have at that time. The Covenant-God will cause the majesty of His voice to be heard in the deliverance of His people. He will exhibit the power of His arm to save His people and destroy His enemies. His destruction will be terrible and complete. By the power of the word of God His enemies, the Assyrians, will cease to exist. Every stroke with which the Lord smites His mighty rod of punishment, the Lord's people will rejoice at their deliverance with music and song. In wars of heavenly power God will shake down His enemies to destruction. For ages and ages a cremating of His enemies has been prepared by the Lord. Jehovah has prepared a massive funeral pyre for the ruler of His enemies. Like brimstone which set on fire Sodom and Gomorrah, the breath of the Lord will consume His enemies.

COMMENTS

V. 15-22 REPENTANCE: It is interesting to note how often Isaiah uses the phrase, "the Holy One of Israel," to henceforth refer to God. It is undoubtedly deliberate on the prophet's part to rebuke and bring to repentance those who earlier (30:10-11) insisted they did not want to hear any more of "the Holy One of Israel." The most used Hebrew word for repentance in *nahkam* but in verse 15 the word describing the action involved in repentance, *beshoovah* or, "in turning," is used. The word *nahkath* which means "bring down, or humble" is also used but translated "rest." Isaiah is really saying that the salvation of this proud and rebelling people is to be found in returning to the Lord in humility and penitence. It is going to take drastic action on their part. Isaiah uses the words *sheket*, quietness, and *batahk*, trust, confidence, to inform his people where strength is to be found. The clamness which comes from trust in the Lord is the strength they will need to save their nation from its present corruption and inevitable disintegration and defeat. Judah's rulers are presently in a state of turmoil, indecision, conflict and strife about going to Egypt or not going to Egypt for help against Assyria. Proud and haughty, self-sufficient and carnal-minded, they refuse to trust in the Lord's way because His way demands trial, testing and discipline (cf. Heb. 3:7-19). Christian discipleship is difficult. Jesus always taught those who would follow Him to "count the cost." Few enter because the "way is strait." The majority of people in Isaiah's day deliberately chose to reject God—they "would not" turn and humble themselves (cf. Jer. 6:16-19; Ezek. 2:1-7; 3:6-11).

Quite the contrary to humbling themselves and turning to the Lord, the majority of people are confident in their preparations to flee from the Assyrians on swift horses. People then put their trust in horses (cf. Gen 50:9; Ex. 14:6ff; 15:1; II Chron. 12:3; Jer. 46:4; II Kings 18:24; Deut. 17:16) like people today put their trust in military weapons. Isaiah predicts they will see some swift horses, but they will be the swift horses of the

Assyrians who pursue them. Isaiah's people will also do some fleeing! Their enemies will be so terrible and awesome it will only take a few of them to put hundreds of Jews to rout. There will be so few people left when the Assyrians come, what remains will be so alone they will look like a lonely signal fire in the night—like a solitary flag pole on a hill. This probably refers to the days of Hezekiah when the Assyrians had overrun and devastated all of Palestine except the city of Jerusalem and they had laid siege to that!

Isaiah continues to tell his audience what their relationship to the Holy One of Israel ought to be—repentance. Jehovah is going to "wait" awhile before He has mercy upon His people. Jehovah's "waiting" period will involve an exhibition of His justice in judging the enemies of His people, the bread of adversity and water of affliction for His people, the crying of His people unto Him, their paying heed to their teachers and casting away of their idols. This "waiting" period of Jehovah is His program to work repentance in His people. His people must be prepared to receive His mercy. In their rebellious, ungodly attitude they do not even desire His mercy. They must see His judgment upon themselves and their enemies, cry to Him, listen to His teachers and purge themselves of false gods. Then they are ready to want and appreciate His mercy. Verse 21 seems to indicate that the attitude of the people of Isaiah's day toward their teachers was one of malice and hate. The prophets often were obliged to hide lest the people kill them for declaring the word of God. There must be a complete change of attitude toward who God is and what He says through His teachers, before they are ready for God's great blessings.

This section probably refers initially to the captivities of Israel by the Assyrians and Judah by the Babylonians and the restoration under Ezra and Zerubbabel. It is true the Jews learned their lesson about idolatry in the captivity. They never again worshipped images. However, in Jesus' day the Pharisees had made an idol of their traditions. It is our opinion that the ultimate fulfillment of this passage and the verses that follow

is found in the Messiah and His kingdom, the church.

v. 23-26 RESTORATION: These verses are figurative hyperbole to describe the great way in which God will prosper His people upon their repentance and turning back to Him. It does not seem to be intended to be understood literally. There are things which, so far as history knows, have never happened literally—and should they happen literally they would bring an end to life on our planet, i.e., the moon becoming as the light of the sun and the sun's light increasing sevenfold! It is even doubtful that animals ever ate as well as they are described to eat in verse 24. It is also a matter of record that Palestine has never known literally a time when there were brooks and streams upon every lofty mountain and every high hill! It is apparent that Isaiah is talking in "times coloring" of the great spiritual blessings that are to come as a result of the repentance of God's covenant people when God "binds up the hurt of his people, and heals up the stroke of their wound." It is the binding up and healing that is to come through the Messiah (cf. Isa. 53:4-6). It is through the Messiah God's people are to prosper (cf. Isa. 53:10-12).

v. 27-33 REJOICING: After repentance and restoration comes rejoicing. The Lord's people are portrayed as rejoicing when they see the all-powerful deliverance given to them by Him. He is coming from His place, burning with His anger and He will destroy His enemies with the word of His mouth. If God can bring the universe into existence by His word, He can destroy His enemies by the word of His mouth. His defeat of His enemies is inevitable and all consuming. Their defeat will be complete. Jehovah is going to bring this judgment upon the *goyim* (Gentiles, nations). The nations are brought to Him to be judged as beasts compelled by a halter or bridle are led to sacrifice. God will bring His enemies to judgment even against their will to be brought. When this great victory of God occurs it will result in a great deliverance for His people and this will cause His people to sing and rejoice at their redemption. God's people do not rejoice in a malicious attitude at the destruction of others—they are praising God for His

glory and faithfulness. Their deliverance will be like a great feast!

Verse 30 indicates that the main purpose of judgment and deliverance is to cause God's voice to be heard and His power to be exhibited. The initial focus of this judgment and deliverance will be upon Assyria. God will defeat the Assyrians in a stupendous, miraculous way when they surround Jerusalem in the day of Hezekiah (cf. Isa. 36-39). But it seems to refer to a much greater and more complete victory of the Lord over "the nations" and Assyria is its beginning.

The word *battles* in verse 32 is *tenoophah* which means more precisely, *shaking*. God is going to shake all the nations. All kingdoms of men oppose God's kingdom. He is going to shake them all down and establish a kingdom that cannot be shaken (cf. Heb. 12:25-29). God is going to thoroughly destroy His enemies. He is going to bury them. Topheth was located in the valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem and was the place where unbelieving Israelites offered up their sons and daughters to Moloch. Here, too, the refuse of the city was deposited and burned; the fires burned continually. Thus the place came to take on the name Gehenna, i.e., the valley of Hinnom, and was a symbol of the place of eternal destruction.

The point of all this is found in the key words we have used in each section: Repentance, Restoration, Rejoicing. The Hebrew people had decided to find deliverance from their enemies (Assyria) in human governments and earthly programs (Egypt). Isaiah declares that the true people of God find their deliverance in turning to Him, because God is going to completely destroy all the nations, beginning with Assyria. Daniel symbolizes this so clearly in the vision of the great image (Dan. 2) and the vision of the four beasts (Dan. 7). The ultimate fulfillment of all this is accomplished in that great victory of God at Calvary, the Empty Tomb and Pentecost when God defeated man's greatest enemy, Satan, and established His kingdom on earth, the church.

QUIZ

1. Why does Isaiah begin by mentioning the Holy One of Israel?
2. Name the four things associated with their salvation?
3. How had the people decided to save themselves?
4. Why was Jehovah determined to wait?
5. Why are verses 23-26 probably not literal?
6. What is the point of all this section?

SPECIAL STUDY

OLD TESTAMENT NAMES FOR GOD

by Robert D. Stacy

INTRODUCTION

Hardly has there been a time in which mankind did not seek after a god of some kind. As far back as the eye of history looks, it sees man worshipping. He may be worshipping the heavenly bodies. He may be worshipping the rushing sea or mighty mountain. He may be worshipping another man or even himself. But man is inherently a being who seeks something to worship.

As the eye of history focuses on the small nation of Israel, however, it sees a type of worship which is quite unique. The One God, whom Israel claims to worship, is invisible. He is the Creator and Sustainer of life, the Ruler of the universe. And He cannot be represented by wood or stone images. Before Him there is no other god.

The God of Israel was essentially (1) personal, (2) spiritual (3) sole and supreme, (4) of an inapproachably lofty ethical character. . . . Personality . . . is a distinctive feature of the God of the Old Testament throughout.¹

¹ W. T. Davison, "God," *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (London: T. & T. Clark, 1914), VI, 254.

OLD TESTAMENT NAMES FOR GOD

To Israel the name of God was of major importance. It was in the name of God that Israel walked. It was in His name that she worshipped. In His name she spoke, and to His Name she attached special reverence and significance.

When God is in communication with men, they must have a name for Him. For the Hebrews . . . a name is no colourless appellation serving merely for use. It must be more; it must really express the character of the person indicated and his real importance; or it must embody a declaration of faith, a hope which those who give the name connect with the person named.²

But it is vital to understand, too, that

since God far transcends all human comprehension, He can, strictly speaking, have no name—He is “Nameless,” “Unutterable,” . . . The divine names then are but attempts to express certain facets of God’s being; they teach us what concepts Israel had regarding God.³

One name could never have adequately described the many aspects of God’s nature and personality. And thus it is necessary that the student of the Bible discover the meanings of the most important names given to God in the Hebrew Scripture.

YHWH

There is no name given to God which occurs more frequently in the Old Testament than the personal name, YHWH. This is the name translated LORD in the Authorized or King James Version of 1611 and Jehovah in the American Revised Version

² Hermann Schultz, *Old Testament Theology, The Religion of Revelation in Its Pre-Christian Stage of Development*, trans. J. A. Patterson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1898), II, 13.

³ Paul Heinisch, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. William Heidt (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1950), 48.

of 1901. This name "occurs more than twice as often as the generic term, *Elohim*."⁴ In all, YHWH occurs 6,823 times in the Hebrew Scriptures.⁵ By far, it was "the favorite name for devotion and worship"⁶ among the Hebrew people. The books of prophecy and the books of wisdom and poetry regularly employ this name for God.⁷

The origin for this name is a cause for great disagreement among the etymologists. Though the majority of scholars agree that this is the "... proper personal name of the God of Israel, as contrasted with strange gods. . . .,"⁸ they cannot reach unanimity of opinion regarding its origin. There are those who claim that "... this name was known at Ras Shamra, where it stood in the form of *YW the son of El*."⁹ Very little consideration is given to this opinion, however, in most scholarly circles. Others contend that the Kenites were the first to worship YHWH. Since Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, is identified with the Kenites and is conjectured to have been a high priest of YHWH, it is thought that this accounts for the introduction of the name into the Israelite community.¹⁰ Of this explanation, one author states that it "... is more than dubious."¹¹

The best explanation of the name is found in the Bible account of the burning bush (cf. Exodus 3:1-15) and in the words of God, Himself, revealed in Exodus 6:3, "And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah I was not known to

⁴ H. Wheeler Robinson, "The Characteristic Doctrines," *Record and Revelation Essays on the Old Testament by members of the Society for Old Testament Study*, ed. H. Wheeler Robinson (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1938), 321.

⁵ Nathan J. Stone, *Names of God in the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1944), 19.

⁶ Robinson, 322.

⁷ Richard Lewis Farnell, *The Attributes of God* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952), 106.

⁸ Schultz, 125.

⁹ Stone, 31.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Davison, 254.

them."¹² It is quite obvious from these Biblical passages that this was the official introduction of this name into the Hebrew faith. There are some who would dispute this contention, however, on the grounds that the name, YHWH, is found in Genesis. When this name does occur in Genesis, however, it is the author's intent to show that the same God who manifested Himself to Moses ". . . had directed the destinies of mankind from the beginning."¹³ Because the name appears in Genesis is not proof that the patriarchs were acquainted with the name, or at least with the full significance of the name. "In any case, the fundamental point is that the new name received a very special significance"¹⁴ from the time of Moses onward.

There is as much disagreement among Old Testament scholars concerning the derivation of the name as there is concerning its origin. Some attempt to explain the meaning as derived from the Hebrew root meaning "to fall." According to these scholars, it would then indicate ". . . some sacred object, such as a stone fallen from heaven."¹⁵ Another group holds to the theory that the name is from the same root, also, but this school favors the meaning "to blow." YHWH then would be the god of the wind and the storm. The greatest majority, however, contend that the root of YHWH is *hayah*, meaning "to be." Within this majority there is a division of opinion regarding the verb stem from which the name is derived. One group believes that the form is the hiphil, a causative construction. Thus the name would mean "he who causes to be" and would designate YHWH as Creator.¹⁶ It is held by the other division that ". . . the Hiphil of . . . is very rare . . .,"¹⁷ and these scholars believe that YHWH is the Qal, imperfect,

¹² Scriptural quotations are from American Revised Version unless cited.

¹³ Heinisch, 53.

¹⁴ Heinisch, 53.

¹⁵ J. F. McLaughlin, "Names of God," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidore Singer (New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1905), IX, 161.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis with Introduction and Notes* (London: Methuen and Company, 1904), 408.

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third person, singular of the verb. If this view be correct, then the name emphasizes the existence in His various relationships to Israel as the covenant nation. It can be said with reasonable certainty that the idea of a Being who manifests Himself is to be found in this name. "There is no doubt that the idea of life was intimately connected with YHWH from early times."¹⁸

YHWH is referred to as the "ineffable name" because at some time in the history of Israel the name became too holy to be pronounced. Substituted for the name (in reading) when it stood alone in the Hebrew text was Adonai. When YHWH was compounded with Adonai, however, Elohim became its substitute. The common English pronunciation, Jehovah, is considered a mispronunciation by most scholarship. It arose through pronouncing the vowels of Adonai with the consonants, YHWH. ". . . there is no authentic information¹⁹ concerning the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton (so called because of its four consonants, YHWH).

Although the other names of God may have been derived from the character or work of God, YHWH is the name that expresses His personality. There is no other YHWH. In this name is revealed to man an eternal God, one who is wholly self-existent, one who is righteous and holy in every aspect of His relationships, one who ". . . stands in special covenant relation to Israel,"²⁰ and one who possesses moral and spiritual attributes. YHWH is ". . . the cause and the ground of all being, faithful to His promise, and constant in His relationship with His people."²¹

ELOHIM

The general term for deity in the Old Testament is Elohim, and it is used for foreign gods as well as for the God of Israel.

¹⁸ McLaughlin, 161.

¹⁹ Kaufmann Kohler, "Adonai," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, I, 201.

²⁰ Stone, 59.

²¹ W. T. Davison, 254.

OLD TESTAMENT NAMES FOR GOD

Used to refer to such foreign deities as Dagon, Beelzebub, and Chemosh, it is also the name by which God is introduced in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." From this verse through Genesis 2:4, Elohim is employed thirty-five times. In all, it occurs 2,570 times in the Hebrew Scriptures.

The peculiar aspect of this word, Elohim, is its plural number. It is a masculine plural noun in the original language. Various explanations are given as solutions to this peculiarity. It is quite generally acknowledged by scholars that this plural is a plural of majesty which would indicate eminence and supremacy or ". . . fullness and abundance of power and resources."²² This plural, they agree, also may indicate unity. The plural number then, according to this opinion, ". . . helps to increase the significance of the word, and to express the fulness of power and majesty which is exclusively connected with the unity of person."²³

Others reject this explanation stating that ". . . such use of plural was not known then."²⁴ This school of thought holds that Elohim is ". . . a name usually given in the Scriptures to the ever blessed Trinity by which they represent themselves as under the obligation of an oath to perform certain conditions. . . . Elohim covenanted not only with the creation but, as the Godhead, within itself, concerning the creation."²⁵ Those holding this position believe the plural to be a plural of unity, also, but in this unity, they claim is the Holy Trinity. Pointing to Genesis 1:26, 3:22, and 11:7, they find proof in the plural "us" that Elohim refers to the three distinct personalities of the Godhead. They further claim that the singular verbs and adjectives used when Elohim refers to the God of Israel point to the unity of the Godhead, the Trinity.²⁶ Many conservative

²² Davison, 254.

²³ Schultz, 126.

²⁴ Stone, 16.

²⁵ Stone, 14.

²⁶ Heinisch, 49.

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scholars, as well as liberal scholars, have found it necessary to reject this explanation because it is based, for the most part, on conjecture.²⁷

Regarding the derivation of this word, there are at least two major explanations. There are, on the one hand, those who hold that Elohim “. . . is derived from the shorter word, ‘El,’ which means mighty, strong, prominent.”²⁸ The name, in that case, would emphasize the great strength and power of God. Recognizing that power and strength are root meanings of this word, it is also believed that Elohim “. . . contains the idea of creative and governing power”²⁹ (cf. Genesis 1:1—2:4 where Elohim is used thirty-five times). There are others, however, who believe this name is derived from the root, “alah,” which means “to declare or swear.”³⁰ This derivation implies a covenant relationship (cf. Genesis 6:18, 50:24, Jeremiah 31:33). Still others believe Elohim is derived from an Arabic verb, “alih,” which means “to seek refuge because of fear.” If this explanation be true, then Elohim would be the God to be revered or feared.³¹ Whatever the correct explanation, Elohim is “more a philosophical than devotional term and corresponds to our term, Deity. . . .”³²

SHADDAI

The name by which God first made Himself known to the Patriarchs was Shaddai. In Exodus 6:2, 3 are recorded these words: “And God spake unto Moses, and said unto Him, I am Jehovah: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ McLaughlin, 161.

³² John McClintock and James Strong (ed.), *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1894), III, 901.

unto Jacob, as God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah I was not known to them." Often the name appears as a compound expression, El-Shaddai. It is used for the first time in Genesis 17:1, 2 where these words are recorded: "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, Jehovah appeared to Abram and said unto him, I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly." Altogether it appears forty-eight times in the Old Testament Scriptures.³³

The derivation of this name is as vague and obscure as are the derivations of YHWH and Elohim. When compounded with El, it is translated God Almighty and when standing alone, it is translated simply, Almighty. There are some who believe Shaddai is derived from "sadam" which means to be powerful. From this comes the translation, "almighty" or "all-powerful one."³⁴ At the same time, there are scholars who ". . . align it with Accadian *sadu*, mountain, and see in the name the meaning, sovereign, lord, highest."³⁵ According to one author, "the studies of Albright, Burrows, and others have definitely established that Shaddai is somehow to be related to the cuneiform *sadu*, 'mountain.'"³⁶ There are some who believe Shaddai is derived from the word meaning, "breast." "Connected with the word for God, El, it then becomes the One mighty to nourish, satisfy, supply . . . the One who 'sheds forth' and 'pours out' sustenance and blessing. . . ."³⁷ The Septuagint translates the Hebrew word, Shaddai, with the Greek, *hikanos*, all-sufficient.³⁸ Whichever root is decided upon as correct, it is true that Shaddai depicts a mighty God, high and lifted up, who is able to supply every human need.

³³ Stone, 31.

³⁴ Heinisch, 50.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Herbert Gordon May, "The Patriarchal Idea of God," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LX (June, 1941), Part II, 122.

³⁷ Stone, 35.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

ADONAI

The name, Adonai, appears some 300 times in the Old Testament. It is used for the first time in Genesis 15:2, "And Abram said, O Lord Jehovah, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and he that shall be possessor of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" In various places, as here, the name appears in a compound form. For instance, "in the prophecy of Ezekiel the name Adonai Jehovah appears some 200 times."³⁹ After the Hebrews became fearful of uttering the personal name of God, YHWH, Adonai became the chief substitute in the spoken language. To this day it is used in place of YHWH in speaking.

Adonai is derived from 'adun, which means "to judge."⁴⁰ It is the intensive plural and possessive, which according to some, suggests the Trinity even as Elohim may.⁴¹ In the Septuagint the common *kurios* is used in place of the Hebrew, adonai.⁴² This name describes God as the Judge or the Master to whom man is subservient. It "signifies ownership or mastership. . . ."⁴³ And it is evident throughout the Old Testament that those who accepted Adonai as Master acknowledged that they were His slaves. It is important to understand, however, that the relationship was not that of a taskmaster over his slaves, but rather it was the affectionate relationship of a loving master who took care of his servants. The use of this name makes clear that which God expects of His creatures. In Genesis 15:2, for example, ". . . Abraham understood what this relationship meant; . . . Lordship meant complete possession on the one hand and complete submission on the other."⁴⁴ This name emphasized, more than any other, the responsibility of the individual to his God.

³⁹ Stone, 51.

⁴⁰ Heinisch, 50.

⁴¹ Stone, 46.

⁴² Robinson, 322.

⁴³ Stone, 46.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 48.

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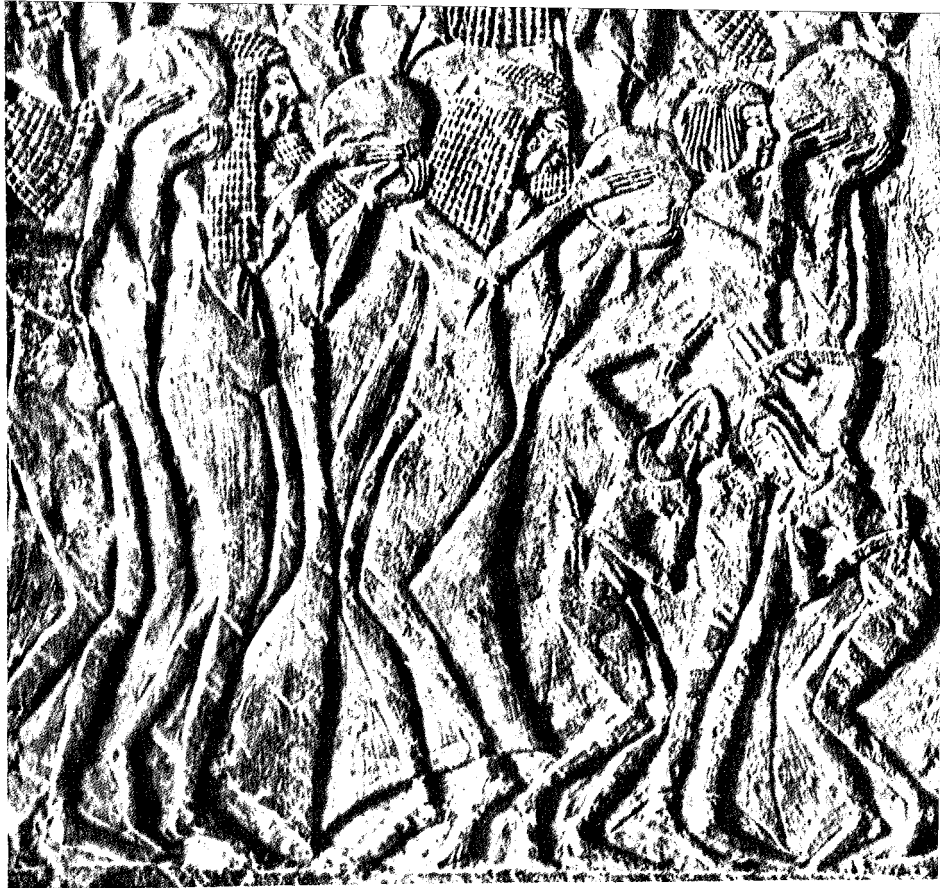
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3. SWORD

TEXT: 31:1-9

- 1 Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek Jehovah!
- 2 Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words, but will arise against the house of the evil-doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity.
- 3 Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit: and when Jehovah shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall stumble, and he that is helped shall fall, and they all shall be consumed together.
- 4 For thus saith Jehovah unto me, As the lion and the young lion growling over his prey, if a multitude of shepherds be called forth against him, will not be dismayed at their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them: so will Jehovah of hosts come down to fight upon mount Zion, and upon the hill thereof.
- 5 As birds hovering, so will Jehovah of hosts protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver it, he will pass over and preserve it.
- 6 Turn ye unto him from whom ye have deeply revolted, O children of Israel.
- 7 For in that day they shall cast away every man his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin.
- 8 And the Assyrian shall fall by the sword, not of man; and the sword, not of men, shall devour him; and he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall become subject to task-work.
- 9 And his rock shall pass away by reason of terror, and his princes shall be dismayed at the ensign, saith Jehovah, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.



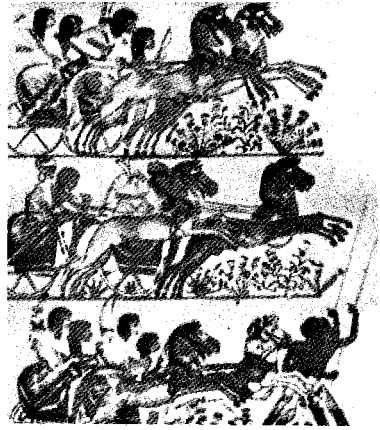
"And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea"
(Exodus 15: 20-21).

The timbrel or tabret, here seen being played by Egyptian dancing-girls, was a kind of tambourine, a wooden framework covered with hide. It was used to provide a rhythmic accompaniment for the choral dance which was led off by the prophetess Miriam as an expression of joy and thanksgiving for the miraculous escape of Israel from destruction at the hands of the Egyptian army. Later on, King Saul is greeted joyfully in this manner after the slaughter of the Philistines: ". . . the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets . . ." (I Samuel 18:6).

FROM: THE BIBLE AS HISTORY IN PICTURES
By Werner Keller - Wm. Morrow Co.

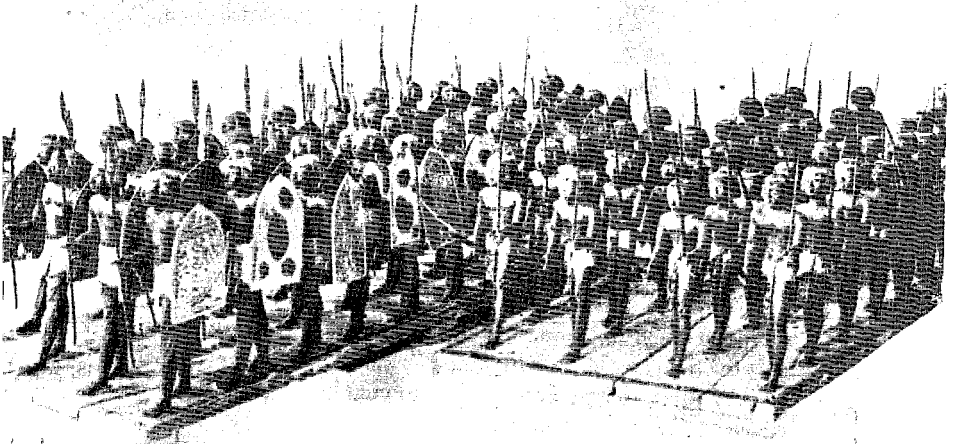
"And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them" (Exodus 14:7).

Egyptian war-chariots careering through meadows thick with flowers. Since ever the Hyksos introduced the horse into Egypt about 1700 B.C., the light two-wheeled chariot played an increasingly important role in Egyptian strategy. The chariot corps became a powerful striking force, operating in sections of twenty-five machines. Each car had a driver and a fighting-man, who was armed with bow, spear and shield. The quiver was fixed to the outside bodywork (as illustrated). Chariot units of the type seen in this Egyptian picture pursued the people of Israel, according to the biblical record.



"But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army" (Exodus 14:9).

Forty soldiers on the march in four columns of ten (left). Each of them holds a six-foot lance in his right hand and a leather-covered shield in his left. Marching beside them, likewise in four columns of ten, is a company of Nubian archers (right). Each archer carries an unstrung bow in his left hand and a bundle of arrows in his right. This wooden model reproduces accurately what the Bible calls "Pharaoh's army".



FROM: THE BIBLE AS HISTORY IN PICTURES
By Werner Keller - Wm. Morrow Co.

QUERIES

- a. What "words" would God not call back?
- b. When would Jehovah come down to fight upon mount Zion?
- c. How would the young men of the Assyrians become subject to taskwork?

PARAPHRASE

Cursed are those who run to Egypt for help, relying on Egypt's great numbers of horses, chariots and cavalrymen. Woe to them because they do not turn to the Holy One of Israel, Jehovah, for their help. Jehovah's word is wise and His word is faithful—He is going to keep His word and bring evil upon the evil-doers and upon those from whom they seek help. Let me remind you, these Egyptians are mere men, not God; and their horses mere flesh, not spirit. When Jehovah stretches forth His omnipotent hand against them, both you and your helpers will fall and be consumed. But God has told me this: Just like a lion growling over his prey is not frightened or cowed even when many shepherds shout at him, so the Lord will come down upon Zion and fight against her enemies, the Assyrians, and He will not be frightened or cowed by them. As birds hover over their young to protect them, so Jehovah of hosts will hover over Jerusalem to protect her. He will shield, deliver, pass over and preserve her. Turn back, therefore, O Chosen Nation, to Him from whom you have so completely strayed. The day is soon coming when some of you will indeed recognize that you have rebelled and you will cast away your idols—images made by your own hands which reveal the sin of your hearts. In that day the Assyrians will be destroyed—not by human swords but the sword of God will pursue them and scatter them. The Assyrians, who have laid tribute on so many others will one day have their young men taken in tribute and made slaves. The real strength of the Assyrian nation will be so terrified and its leaders so cowed by fear they will desert

their battle-flag in panic. This is a pronouncement of Jehovah whose fire is in Jerusalem ready to devour His enemies.

COMMENTS

V. 1-3 **FEEBLENESS OF EGYPT:** The flatness and scarcity of trees in the land of Egypt made it ideal for vast armies of horses and chariots. Classical writers attest to the abundance of horses in Egypt as well as the bas reliefs on ancient Egyptian ruins. Chariots were as awesome against foot soldiers then as tanks and armored vehicles are today. Egypt, with thousands of horses and chariots, would appear to Judah as invincible. Isaiah continues his warning in the strongest and plainest language possible against turning away from Jehovah and seeking help in pagan Egypt.

Judah thinks she is wise in trying to get help from Egypt. But Jehovah is also wise. He is wise enough to know what evil is—going to Egypt; He is wise enough to know who the evil-doers are—Judah; He is wise enough to bring woe upon the evil-doers to try to turn them from their evil; He is wise enough that He never needs to retract His words! God always abides by what He has spoken. He always speaks with full knowledge and perfect foreknowledge (cf. Num. 23:19, etc.).

The prophet may have put some irony or sarcasm into his tone when he spoke these words, "Now the Egyptians are men; and not God. . . ." The great war machine of the Egyptians and all their riches made them appear invincible to tiny Judah. However, Judah is reminded, the Egyptians are merely men—not God. They are not invincible. One is reminded of the people of the Roman empire of the first and second centuries. In that day "the whole earth wondered after the beast" (the Roman emperor), and they made images of the beast and worshipped the beast, saying, "Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to war with him?" But the apostle John, author of the Revelation to the churches of Asia Minor, told the church that the "beast" was not invincible—in fact

John said he had the beast's number; it was 666, the number of a man. The beast is not invincible, he is human! (cf. Revelation 13:1-18). Isaiah said, Egypt is not God, but man!

The Hebrew word *ruahk* translated *spirit* is also translated *wind* and symbolizes the mighty penetrating power of the Invisible God. The horses and horsemen of the Egyptians are flesh, subject to all the feebleness of flesh, and not spirit! Spirit is a synonym for power. God is *all* power. When He stretches out His hand they will see power like their forefathers witnessed at the parting of the Red Sea and the drowning of the Egyptian army. There may be a veiled reference here to that great wonder of the past. This time, both Egypt (he that helpeth) and the rebellious Israelites (he that is helped) shall fall, and they shall all be consumed together.

V. 4-9 FEROCITY OF GOD: The power of God is as awesome as that of a lion devouring a sheep. Call all the shepherds of the land and have them shout at the lion—he will show no fright. Let the Assyrians surround Jerusalem (as they did in Isaiah 36-39) and let them shout at the Lion of the Tribe of Judah—He will show no fright nor will he be cowed by them. In fact, He will pounce upon the taunting Assyrians and devour them (185,000 of them in one night).

The power of God to destroy His enemies will, at the same time, protect and deliver those who put their trust in Him (instead of putting it in Egypt). God will hover over them like a bird hovers over its young. Jesus said He would have gathered Jerusalem under His wings as a hen gathers her chicks, but Jerusalem would not! (cf. Mt. 23:37-39). God is going to protect Jerusalem every way possible. He will protect, deliver, pass over and preserve it. There is no way the Assyrians are going to overrun Jerusalem, if Judah will repent of its haughty and rebellious determination to seek Egypt's help. It seems from the historical record (II Kings 18-20; II Chron. 32; Isa. 36-39) that Hezekiah probably decided initially to seek Egypt's help but then he, and others of Judah, repented and Jerusalem was saved.

But Judah, God's Israel (chosen), must turn back to Him

from whom they had so completely departed (Heb. *saroh*). The Hebrew word translated *deeply* is *aemiyq* and sometimes means *to conspire*. The combination of words *aemiyq saroh* emphasizes the deliberate, almost premeditated, nature of Judah's rebellion against God. The prophet continues by informing the people that the evidence of true repentance will be total renunciation of their idols. These idols were not borrowed or forced upon them by someone else—they were made with their own hands! They are images of the rebellion that is really in their heart. This would be costly, since the images were of gold and silver. Repentance and discipleship unto the Lord which does not cost is not true!

When they repent, the Lord will cause the Assyrian to fall. He is going to fall, not from some military action of man, but from some mysterious, non-human power, (cf. Isa. 37:36). Yet in the latter half of verse 8, the Assyrian is said to flee from the sword. This is probably the sword of Babylon, a hundred years later (612 B.C.), when Assyria was destroyed at the battle of Carchemish and Assyria's young men were probably captured and sold as slaves as was customary in those days. Even the defeat of Assyria by Babylon was permitted by God (cf. Jer. 27:1-11). Isaiah predicts that the mighty Assyrian, whose very name struck terror into the hearts of all men of that day, would some day be terror stricken himself. The "rock" of verse 9 probably refers to the cruel, blood-thirsty, destructive army upon which the Assyrian empire was built. It fled in terror from the Babylonian attack upon Nineveh (cf. Nahum). The beginning of its downfall was when it attacked Zion, the penitent people of God. The remnant of God was protected and delivered from what seemed an invincible enemy. God has been delivering His church from its enemy for centuries (cf. Revelation). And some glorious day the struggle will be over, for God is going to banish His arch enemy, the devil, to eternal death in the lake of fire and brimstone.

QUIZ

1. Why would Judah be tempted to rely on Egypt's horses and horsemen?
2. How does Isaiah emphasize God's wisdom?
3. How does Isaiah 31:3 compare to Revelation 13?
4. How is God going to be like an unfrightened lion?
5. What does God's "hovering" over Jerusalem remind one of in Jesus' words?
6. How emphatic is Isaiah about the Israelite's revolt?
7. When did Assyria "pass away by reason of terror"?

EXAMINATION

CHAPTERS THIRTY THROUGH THIRTY-ONE

DEFINITION

(Define the following words or phrases as they were discussed in the comments.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. <i>burden</i> of the beasts of the South | 7. a <i>Topheth</i> |
| 2. <i>Rahab</i> that sitteth still | 8. the <i>lighting down</i> of his arm |
| 3. <i>returning</i> and <i>rest</i> | 9. horses <i>flesh</i> , and not spirit |
| 4. <i>quietness</i> | 10. as birds <i>hovering</i> |
| 5. ye be left as a <i>beacon</i> | 11. subject to <i>taskwork</i> |
| 6. a <i>bridle</i> that causeth to err | 12. his <i>rock</i> shall pass away |

MEMORIZATION

"Now go, write it before them on a _____, and inscribe it in a _____, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever. For it is a _____ people, _____ children, children that will not _____ the law of Jehovah; that say to the seers, See

_____ ; and to the prophets, Prophecy _____ unto us _____ things, speak unto us _____ things, prophecy deceits, get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the _____ of Israel to cease from before us." (30:8-11)

"Woe to them that go down to _____ for help, and rely on _____, and trust in chariots because they are _____, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they _____ not unto the _____ of Israel, neither seek Jehovah!" (31:1)

EXPLANATION

1. Explain why Egypt could be of no help to Judah. (30:1-7)
2. Explain how the people of Judah would one day defile their graven images. (30:22)
3. Explain how the Assyrian would fall by the sword not of man. (31:8-9)

APPLICATION

(In its context every scripture has one meaning—the author's intended meaning. How may the following be applied in the believer's life?)

1. Why was Judah foolish in making political plans without consulting God's advice and how may this warning be applied to nations today? (30:1-7)
2. Why did the people of Judah wish to hear no more of the Holy One of Israel and what application may be made of this same attitude today? (30:8-17)
3. Why was Judah placing so much reliance on Egypt's horses and what application may be made of such an attitude today? (31:1-3)

C. FUTURE THAT IS FRUITFUL, CHAPTERS 32-33

1. SOVEREIGN

TEXT: 32:1-8

- 1 Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in justice.
- 2 And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as streams of water in a dry place, as the shade of a great rock in a weary land.
- 3 And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken.
- 4 And the heart of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.
- 5 The fool shall be no more called noble, nor the churl said to be bountiful.
- 6 For the fool will speak folly, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise profaneness, and to utter error against Jehovah, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and to cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.
- 7 And the instruments of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the meek with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right.
- 8 But the noble deviseth noble things; and in noble things shall he continue.

QUERIES

- a. Who is the "king"?
- b. What is a "churl"?

PARAPHRASE

Behold, a king who will reign righteously. His entire kingdom will be characterized by the administration of righteousness

and justice. The man on the throne will be a refuge from danger, a source of life and a resting place. When He comes things will be as they actually should be—people will see as they should see and hear as they should hear; confused men will understand clearly and men will speak the things of God clearly and boldly. In His reign a man will be acknowledged for what he actually is and not for what he appears to be—a fool will not be called a great leader nor will a deceitful man be called noble. The fool will be shown to be what he really is, dedicated to opposing God's will and doing harm to man. And the crafty man, despite all his cunning, is evil because he is dedicated to the exploitation of his fellow man. The truly noble man is one that advises true and pure ways and lives that way also.

COMMENTS

v. 1-2 RULER: Who is the king predicted? Our view is that it can only refer to the Messiah. He will rule in righteousness. The Messiah is the only one who truly reigns in righteousness. We do not think Isaiah is talking about a relatively righteous rule—rather he is predicting a rule that is completely righteous. Furthermore, this king (or perhaps citizens of his kingdom) will become a refuge, a source of life and a rest. Certainly no human king is intended here. What Isaiah is predicting is that sometime in the future (Isaiah does not say exactly when), as a result of God's judgment upon Judah and her consequent repentance, Jehovah is going to send a king to rule in righteousness and be a spiritual benefactor. This king's kingdom will consist of citizens fully converted. The "princes" might be a reference to the apostles whom Jesus said would sit on twelve thrones and judge Israel (Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:30) which meant the apostles would preach the gospel to the Jews and in so doing give Israel the divine criteria by which God will judge all men. "Princes" might, on the other hand, be merely an adaptation to the mentality of people

used to a monarchy and not intended to refer to any particular person or office in the messianic kingdom.

V. 3-8 RULED: Isaiah wants it understood that when the king reigning in righteousness comes things will be as God wishes them to be. The contrast between this new kingdom and the kingdom of Isaiah's day will be as different as daylight and darkness. Men will see as they should and hear and obey (which is what "hearken" means) as they should. The Hebrew word *mohar* is translated *rash* in verse 4 and could also be translated *hasty* or *impetuous* with the connotation of the confusion resulting from impetuosity and impropriety. In this new kingdom men will not act rashly or out of confusion as the people of Isaiah's day were acting in turning to pagan gods and pagan kings for help. They will not have their minds stupefied by drunkenness so they stammer as they were doing in Isaiah's day (cf. Isa. 28:7-8; 29:9). The Hebrew word *nokal* in verse 5 is translated *churl* in the ASV and *knave* in the RSV. It means someone who is *miserly, deceitful, crafty* or *fraudulent*. In the messianic reign a man will be known for *what* he is, not *who* he is as was the case in Isaiah's day. In the messianic reign God's covenant people, Christians, are the true realists! They not only see men as they are but as they may potentially be should the power of God's gospel be permitted to make them new creations. Christians "regard no one from a human point of view" (II Cor. 5:6-21) but as they are looked at from God's perspective! The value judgments of the worldly-minded man may cause him to call a man "smart," and "good" when God calls such a man a "fool" (cf. Lk. 12:13-21). Or the worldly-minded man may call the godfearing, Bible-believing person a "fool." But with God's revelation to guide him, the Christian has a set of values that tells him who is the fool and who is the noble man.

But Isaiah reveals in verses 6 and 7 what these people really are who were held in such esteem in his day. The man who profanes God by rebelling against God's law and teaches error against God's word in order to exploit others for his own ends, this man is a fool. There will be none of those in

God's new kingdom. The man who knows the plight of the needy and plots and deceives in order to exploit such a situation is a churl, a knave, and there will be no such people in God's new kingdom. Those who are to be ruled by the king who reigns in righteousness will be noble people. The word used for *noble* in verse 8 is *nediyviym* which connotes *willingness* as opposed to stubbornness, or *liberality* as opposed to obstinancy. It means *noble-mindedness*. This characterizes the attitude and the actions of the citizen of God's new kingdom which is to come.

QUIZ

1. Why is the "king" undoubtedly the Messiah?
2. What is to be the nature of those ruled over by the "king"?
3. Why will the citizens of this "king's" kingdom be realistic?
4. What does "noble" mean in verse 8?

2. SECURITY

TEXT: 32:9-20

- 9 Rise up, ye women that are at ease, and hear my voice; ye careless daughters, give ear unto my speech.
- 10 For days beyond a year shall ye be troubled, ye careless women; for the vintage shall fail, the ingathering shall not come.
- 11 Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones; strip you, and make you bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins.
- 12 They shall smite upon the breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine.
- 13 Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city:

- 14 for the palace shall be forsaken; the populous city shall be deserted; the hill and the watch-tower shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks;
- 15 until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be esteemed as a forest.
- 16 Then justice shall dwell in the wilderness; and righteousness shall abide in the fruitful field.
- 17 And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence for ever.
- 18 And my people shall abide in a peaceable habitation, and in safe dwellings, and in quiet resting-places.
- 19 But it shall hail in the downfall of the forest; and the city shall be utterly laid low.
- 20 Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth the feet of the ox and the ass.

QUERIES

- a. Why appeal to the women?
- b. When will the Spirit be poured?
- c. What "city" shall be laid low?

PARAPHRASE

Get up from your lounging around in luxury, you women who have the "I could not care less" attitude, and pay attention to what I have to say to you. In just a little more than a year you are going to change your attitude to that of caring immensely because the vintage which gives you the wine from which you get so much pleasure will fail—there will be no harvest of grapes. You should be trembling now instead of lying around in luxurious ease. You had better strip off all the luxuriant clothes and frivolous dress and put on sackcloth and repent now than wait until you are driven to smite upon

your breasts in mourning for the desolation of judgment that will surely come. When this judgment comes it will turn the land of my people into fields of thorns and briers. Thorns and briers will engulf the whole land, grow up over the houses, and over the palaces, for they will all be deserted. The cities will be empty and wild asses and goats will roam through the ruins of walls and watchtowers, sleeping in them and pasturing in the city gardens. This desolation of His people shall continue until the Spirit is poured down on us from heaven. Then desolation will be turned into abundant blessing. Justice and righteousness shall be sown among His people. Peace and rest and security will be harvested from the sowing of righteousness. My people will have a safe and restful place to dwell. But for my enemies I will rain down a hail-storm of judgment that will sweep them away. But whatever my people do will be prospered with all abundance.

COMMENTS

v. 9-14 WARNING PRONOUNCED: Once again the prophet appeals to the women to repent (cf. Isa. 3:16—4:1). Womanhood is the adhesive fibre of any society. They are the earliest teachers of each succeeding generation; they are the motivators of men; they are keepers of the home which is the essential element of all other social structures. When womanhood becomes decadent or deserts its God-ordained calling the last stronghold of societal cohesion is gone. Isaiah challenges the women of his day, lying around in luxury and self-indulgence, to “rise up” and listen to his warning. The women of Isaiah’s country were probably much like the women of Israel in Amos’ day, revelers, drunkards, greedy and careless (cf. Amos 4:1-2; 6:4-6). The word *careless* in v. 9-10 is from the Hebrew, *betahk*, which means *safe, secure*. Thus, they were “at ease in Zion” with the *false* sense of security brought on by the deceitfulness of sin. The prophet is trying to startle them from their luxurious, indulgent lethargy. Isaiah predicts that in just a little

over a year they will be brought up short because the ingathering of the vintage (the annual grape harvest) will not come as usual and their supply of wine and other luxuries will be unavailable. When the Assyrians swept down through Israel (722 B.C.) and on through Judah (cir. 704-700 B.C.) they practiced the "scorched earth" policy of warfare. Most ancient armies burned and destroyed all fortifications, cities and farmlands as they went so their enemies could not use them. Isaiah is probably writing here about a year before the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib (cf. Isa. 36-39). At that time Assyria had conquered and plundered most of Judah with the exception of Jerusalem, and Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were "caged like a bird" by the Assyrian army. All those so safe and secure would tremble then!

Now is the time to tremble, says Isaiah. Repentance now will save you from the judgment of God that will surely come, and its beginning will be in little more than a year. The prophet predicts that unless they have a change of mind and heart about their rebellion and sin, and tremble, the Lord is going to make their once fruitful land a desolate "ghost town." Thorns and briars will grow up and over houses; the palace of the king will be forsaken and Judah's teeming cities will be deserted. Why? Because the people will all be taken captive. Judah was not taken captive for another 100 years after Isaiah's prophecy here, but the judgment of Judah began with Assyria and continued through Babylon until its restoration in 536 under the Persians. During that period Judah was continually plundered and exploited by pagan empires and her people were being taken into captivity until the final captivity and destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. Judah was restored to her land beginning in 536 B.C. (70 years after Nebuchadnezzar's first assault upon Jerusalem in 606 B.C.). She enjoyed a relatively peaceful existence for 200 years until Alexander the Great came conquering the world (cir. 332 B.C.) and his successors, the Seleucids, occupied Palestine. Then from about 165 B.C. until 64 B.C. Judah was free of foreign occupation for another 100 years

during the times of the Maccabeans. But Pompey occupied Palestine (64 B.C.) for the Romans. Then in 70 A.D. the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and scattered the Jews to the ends of the earth. When Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one (cf. Dan. 9:24-27) came, the Jews were offered their final overture from God to receive the blessings promised through the prophets. The blessings of the prophets all focus on the first coming of the Messiah. He is the only way left for anyone to repent toward God. There will be no other way (cf. Heb. 6:1-8; 10:1-31). A reinstated Judaism with a reinstated Hebrew priesthood and a rebuilt Jewish temple is not promised anywhere in the N.T. or the O.T. for that matter. For people to return to Judaism, in the light of the finality of the sacrifice of Christ, is apostasy, and it is impossible to renew anyone to repentance through law, Jewish law, or any other law. This leads us to our next section.

V. 15-20 WEALTH PROMISED: This desolation of Judah, which at its very core was spiritual, would continue (cf. Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi to see the spiritual destitution of this people even after their restoration to their land) until the Spirit was poured out from on high. This evidently has reference to the accomplishments of the Messiah (cf. Dan. 9:24-27) in redemption and establishment of the church (Acts 2:38). The agricultural setting of this prophecy should not confuse the careful student of the New Testament since there are some specific keys in the N.T. which provide clues to proper interpretation of such passages. Consider the following passages:

Isaiah 61:1-4 compare with Luke 4:16-30

Isaiah 55:1-5 compare with Acts 13:26-41

Amos 9:11-12 compare with Acts 15:12-21

See also our list of "key" New Testament passages in *Minor Prophets*, by Paul T. Butler, College Press, pages 25-27.

The essential nature of the future fruitfulness which Isaiah is predicting is to be "justice" (true relationship between man and man) and "righteousness" (true relationship between man and God). These proper relationships are accomplished only through the agency of the Spirit of God, at first incarnate

in the Son, then dwelling in believers through faith and the agency of the Word. When these relationships are accomplished, peace, rest and safety are the results. This is exactly what the Messiah brought to the world and gave to all who will receive it by faith (cf. Mt. 11:25-30; Jn. 14:27; 15:11; Eph. 1:14; 2:11-22). For the true Jew in the eyes of God is one who is one inwardly (Rom. 2:28-29); indeed the promises made to Abraham's progeny was intended to be found by anyone who would become one of his children by faith in the one "seed," Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:6-9; 3:15-18); and all who are new creatures by faith in Christ are the Israel of God (Gal. 6:14-16). One thing is certain; the promises of Isaiah here in verses 16-18 have not found fulfillment in the Jews or in Palestine to this point in history. And to hold out a special dispensation for the Jews in some future age seems to us to disparage the finality and completeness of the New Testament, to say the least.

Verse 19 seems to indicate a prediction of the defeat of all that opposes this future Messianic purpose of God. Enemies of God are likened unto forests in Isa. 10:18-19; Jer. 46:23; unto images and beasts in Daniel 2-8; unto dragons and beasts in Revelation 12-13. God will overcome all opposition as He completes His work of redemption and establishing a place of peace, rest and safety on earth. What God will do on earth will last forever (v. 17). The kingdom of God established on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) is an eternal kingdom.

Those who by faith become citizens of this kingdom will enjoy God's blessings in abundance (Jn. 10:10; I Cor. 3:21-23; Eph. 1:3; Rom. 8:17-18; Rom. 8:32; II Cor. 4:16-18). Whatever they do, wherever they sow, wherever they work, it will prosper.

QUIZ

1. What kind of women were prevalent in Isaiah's day?
2. How would the vintage fail?

3. How long did the spiritual destitution of the Jews last?
4. What is the pouring out of the Spirit to bring with it?
5. Name some N.T. scriptures where we may find the fulfillment of these promised blessings.
6. Who are the true people of God?
7. When did God defeat the ultimate opposition of the forces of evil?

3. SUBJUGATION

TEXT: 33:1-12

- 1 Woe to thee that destroyest, and thou wast not destroyed; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! When thou hast ceased to destroy, thou shalt be destroyed; and when thou hast made an end of dealing treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.
- 2 O Jehovah, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou our arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.
- 3 At the noise of the tumult the peoples are fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations are scattered.
- 4 And your spoil shall be gathered as the caterpillar gathereth: as locusts leap shall men leap upon it.
- 5 Jehovah is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with justice and righteousness.
- 6 And there shall be stability in thy times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge: the fear of Jehovah is thy treasure.
- 7 Behold, their valiant ones cry without; the ambassadors of peace weep bitterly.
- 8 The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: the enemy hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth not man.
- 9 The land mourneth and languisheth; Lebanon is confounded

and withereth away; Sharon is like a desert; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their leaves.

- 10 Now will I arise, saith Jehovah; now will I lift up myself; now will I be exalted.
 11 Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath is a fire that shall devour you.
 12 And the peoples shall be as the burnings of lime, as thorns cut down, that are burned in the fire.

QUERIES

- a. Who is the "destroyer" of verse 1?
- b. Why the prayer v. 2-9?
- c. What is the answer to the prayer?

PARAPHRASE

Woe is coming to you, you who destroy and never feel destruction. Judgment is coming to you, you who deal deceitfully and never seem to suffer being deceived. Your days are numbered—your time to destroy and deceive will soon be over, and you are going to be destroyed and deceived. O Lord, I pray, have mercy upon us. We have been hoping in You. We want You to be our source of strength for every-day life as well as saving us from the great crises of troublous times. We know that at the sound of Your thunder the enemy nations flee and when You stand up to take action your enemies disappear as if scattered. And, Lord, Your people will gather spoil or booty from Your vanquished enemy like the caterpillars and locusts leap upon vegetation and devour it quickly. Jehovah exalts Himself by His omnipotent power to deliver and by His power to fill His covenant people, Zion, with justice and righteousness. And He shall be the source of our constancy in these changing, chaotic times. In fact, He is a treasure for us filled with salvation, wisdom and

knowledge. The reverent fear of the Lord is the door to that treasure house. Behold our present circumstances, O Lord; sturdy soldiers, in the anguish of heart, cry out with a loud shriek of pain. Our ambassadors are not ashamed to be seen out on the streets shedding bitter tears. They know how desperate our situation is now. Our highways lie untraveled like deserted wastelands; covenants made with Assyria which so many had hoped in are treacherously broken, and Assyria has shown itself to be an enemy instead of an ally. Our enemy has plundered our cities and human life is cheap to him. The whole land of God's people is suffering; Lebanon is in a state of confusion and is about to pass out of existence; the territory of Sharon is like a deserted no-man's land; Bashan and Carmel are as barren as trees with all their leaves shaken off. But, says the Lord, I am going to stand up to take action, and when I do My power and might will be demonstrated against My enemies. Assyria, you are pregnant with grandiose plans, but all that shall come of them will be uselessness, and your plans will be blown away like chaff and stubble. The hot breath of war and aggression with which you pant after My people will be the very means of your own destruction. Your nation will be completely destroyed like a body burned down to lime or thorns burned into ashes.

COMMENTS

V. 1-6 PROSPECTS FOR GOD'S PEOPLE: This context (ch. 33) is closely connected to Assyria's almost total domination of Judah in Hezekiah's day. Almost all the cities and villages of Judah had been overrun and plundered except Jerusalem. But, in spite of appearances, God's people had a glorious future. To this Isaiah speaks. He begins by warning Assyria that her time for world conquest will someday come and then she shall be destroyed. One is reminded of Isaiah's earlier prediction of this (Isa. 10:5-34). Assyria was renowned for its destructive cruelty. F. W. Farrar gives a vivid description of Assyria's

general character:

Judged from the vaunting inscriptions of her kings, no power more useless, more savage, more terrible, ever cast its gigantic shadow on the page of history as it passed on the way to ruin. The kings of Assyria tormented the miserable world. They exult to record how "space failed for corpses"; how unsparing a destroyer is their goddess Ishtar; how they flung away the bodies of soldiers like so much clay; how they made pyramids of human heads; how they burned cities; how they filled populous lands with death and devastation; how they reddened broad deserts with carnage of warriors; how they scattered whole countries with the corpses of their defenders as with chaff; how they impaled "heaps of men" on stakes, and strewed the mountains and choked rivers with dead bones; how they cut off the hands of kings and nailed them on the walls, and left their bodies to rot with bears and dogs on the entrance gates of cities; how they employed nations of captives in making brick in fetters; how they cut down warriors like weeds, or smote them like wild beasts in the forests, and covered pillars with the flayed skins of rival monarchs.

This terrible destroyer, Assyria, was herself destroyed (see *Isaiah, Vol. I*, pgs. 188-190). Isaiah predicts it here again to encourage a faithful remnant of believers in his own day.

In verses 2-6 Isaiah seems to be voicing the prayer of the remnant. The prayer is interesting because it is more a prayer of praise for what they believe God can and will do than it is a request. The prayer does begin with a request for God's mercy. Judah's present circumstance is beyond human solution, so the prophet prays for God to act. Judah has no merit to claim God's action so Isaiah prays for God's mercy. His prayer is also that God might act to "exalt" His own name. This prayer is an abbreviated parallel to Daniel's great prayer for the exiles (Dan. 9:3-19). The remnant, being represented by Isaiah, "waited" upon the Lord. This is a word to describe

patient, enduring trust. The remnant did not try to take matters into its own hands and seek help from Egypt as did the majority of the people. They patiently waited upon the Lord to accomplish His purposes in His own good time. The remnant occupied themselves with being the kind of people God wanted them to be and left the matter of Assyria to God.

How could the remnant be so patient with God? Because they knew from God's past deeds, demonstrated in history, when He "thundered" His enemies were scattered (v. 3). They knew from their own history when they depended on God to give them victory, eventually they conquered their enemies and gathered the spoils of their conquest to His glory (v. 4). They knew that when God's people filled God's land with justice and righteousness—when Jehovah was exalted above all—there was stability. They knew it from past history, and so they prayed that it might come again. They knew the real treasure of Judah, the real and valuable currency of the Chosen was the fear of Jehovah. This brought true salvation, wisdom and knowledge. Perhaps there is a pointed exhortation to Hezekiah here who succumbed to the temptation to boast and show off the worldly treasures of Judah to the Assyrians (cf. Isa. 39:1-8), and even to pay tribute from it to them (II Kings 18:15-16) as if that kind of treasure would deliver them. When will men ever learn that aggressors and those who would destroy society or enslave people can never be appeased with "things," but that trust in God, moral uprightness, justice and self-sacrifice is the only deliverance from evil. In times of political and moral chaos such as those in which Isaiah lived the only stable, constant, secure position is trusting the Lord to exercise His sovereign purposes and actions in His own time, because we have evidence that He has always done so to the glory and victory of His people in the past.

v. 7-12 PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PEOPLE: Is Isaiah still praying? Verses 7-9 seem to be the conclusion to his prayer. He is pouring out his heart and the heart of the remnant for their beloved land just as Daniel did (Dan. 9:12, 16, 18) for the pitiful state of the exiles. And their prayers are not so

much for the people as for the vindication and exaltation of the name of God!

Apparently the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib had already begun. Judah's "valiant ones" (probably soldiers) cried out in fear. Her ambassadors, having experienced the total frustration of being deceived by the Assyrians and unable to negotiate a withdrawal of Assyrian troops, weep openly. Every bit of news seeping into the besieged city of Jerusalem tells of death, destruction and desertion in the cities and villages of Judah. The highways of the land are no longer traveled. The Assyrians, after taking Hezekiah's tribute (II Kings 18:15-16), reneged on their treaty and attacked Judah, plundering its cities and killing its people without regard to human life at all. Thousands are killed, other thousands are taken captive and still other thousands flee. There is nationwide mourning; large sections of the land is in paralyzing fear and confusion; other large sections are so completely deserted they are like vast wastelands; the land is stripped bare of its inhabitants like a tree is completely barren of its leaves in wintertime. Verses 10-12 are God's prediction that He will stand against Assyria to dissolve and annul its plans against Jerusalem. Assyria apparently made great plans to do away with Judah and Jerusalem, but God says its plans will amount to no more than refuse—chaff and stubble. Very rarely did a project so auspicious ever turn out as adversely for the planners as did Sennacherib's plans against Jerusalem.

Isaiah predicted, II Kings 19:32-34, ". . . thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come to this city nor shoot an arrow there, or come before it with a shield or cast a mound against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and he shall not come into this city, says the Lord, for I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David."

The Biblical and the Assyrian accounts of Sennacherib's campaign in Palestine are in general agreement. The fact that the Assyrian texts as well as the Bible make it clear that Sennacherib did not occupy Jerusalem is particularly significant.

This is the Assyrian account of the Judean campaign:

“As to Hezekiah, the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke, I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts and to the countless small villages in their vicinity, and conquered (them) by means of well-stamped (earth) ramps, and battering-rams brought (thus) near (to the walls) (combined with) the attack by foot soldiers, (using) mines, breeches as well as sapper work. I drove out (of them) 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, big and small cattle, beyond counting, and considered (them) booty. Himself I made a a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage. I surrounded him with earthwork in order to molest those who were leaving his city’s gate . . . Hezekiah himself, . . . , did send me later, to Nineveh, my lordly city, together with 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver . . . his (own) daughters, concubines, male and female musicians. In order to deliver the tribute and to do obeisance as a slave he sent his (personal) messenger.”

from *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed., Princeton University Press, 1955, pg. 288

Biblical history records that 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp perished as a result of God’s intervention on behalf of His people (II Kings 19:35). Secular history and biblical history both record that Sennacherib returned to Nineveh and was assassinated by two of his sons in 681 B.C. (II Kings 19:37; Isa. 37:38) and that Esarhaddon, his son, ruled in his place. The last quarter of the seventh century B.C. (625 B.C. - 612 B.C.) saw the decline and fall of the Assyrian empire and its subjugation by the Chaldean conquerors of Babylonia, with the Medes. Nineveh was conquered 612 B.C. and in 605 B.C. at Carchemish the Assyrian government-in-exile was finally wiped out forever. So Assyria disappeared from the face of the earth “as thorns cut down and burned in the fire.” Nineveh, Assyria’s capital city, was forgotten so com-

completely that Alexander the Great on his way to conquer the world, walked upon the very earth that covered it without knowing it. It was not unearthed until about 1845, nearly 2400 years after its demise.

QUIZ

1. Characterize the Assyrians in their methods of conquest.
2. How does Isaiah's prayer compare to that of Daniel's (Dan. 9:19)?
3. Why could believers in Isaiah's day "wait" for the Lord?
4. What is the overriding purpose or end of Isaiah's prayer?
5. How extensive was the Assyrian occupation of Judah?
6. How do the Biblical accounts compare with secular accounts of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem?

4. SERENITY

TEXT: 33:13-24

- 13 Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my might.
- 14 The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling hath seized the godless ones: Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?
- 15 He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from taking a bribe, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from looking upon evil:
- 16 he shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; his bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.
- 17 Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold

a land that reacheth afar.

- 18 Thy heart shall muse on the terror: where is he that counted, where is he that weighed the tribute? where is he that counted the towers?
- 19 Thou shalt not see the fierce people, a people of a deep speech that thou canst not comprehend, of a strange tongue that thou canst not understand.
- 20 Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tent that shall not be removed, the stakes whereof shall never be plucked up, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.
- 21 But there Jehovah will be with us in majesty, a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.
- 22 For Jehovah is our judge, Jehovah is our lawgiver, Jehovah is our king; he will save us.
- 23 Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not strengthen the foot of their mast, they could not spread the sail: then was the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame took the prey.
- 24 And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.

QUERIES

- a. Who are the "sinners" in Zion?
- b. Who are the "people of a strange tongue"?
- c. When will the inhabitants *not* say, I am sick?

PARAPHRASE

Pay attention to what I, Jehovah, have done. Acknowledge My might, all you nations of the earth, both far and near. The sinners among My covenant nation are filled with fear, the godless are paralyzed with terror. Who can live here, they cry; Our God has become a consuming flame in bringing this

judgment upon us. I will tell you who can live here: All who live honestly and speak truthfully, who abhor making profit by fraud, who wave aside the temptation to take a bribe, who refuse to even listen to plots for bloodshed, who refuse even to look at anything which appears to be evil. Such a man shall live above evil and its consequences. He will dwell securely like a fortress built upon a rocky mountain. He will be sustained with all the food and water he needs. Your eyes will see the king in his beauty. You will look out upon a land of far-away horizons where the land meets the sky, and think back to this time of terror, wondering, Where are those Assyrians who counted our people, estimated how much of our treasure they would plunder and analyzed our military fortifications. You will see no more of these violent and insolent people with their jabbering, incoherent language. Soon they will all be gone. Instead you will see Jerusalem, the festival city, at peace. It will be secure, like a tent that never has its stakes pulled up, its ropes broken and is never moved from place to place. Jehovah will dwell with us in all His majesty. The protection He shall give us will be greater than the wide rivers surrounding cities like Thebes. No ships of war shall sail across this river. The Lord Jehovah is our judge; the Lord Jehovah is our lawgiver; the Lord Jehovah is our king; He will save us! Right now the ship of Zion's tackle is not ship-shape. Everything is not taut and strong like it should be. The masthead wobbles on an unsure footing and the battle ensign is not hoisted. However, in a short time Zion will be dividing the treasure of its enemy in great abundance; even the lame will be in on the plundering of the enemy. Then those on board the ship Zion will not say, I am ill, for they will be healed—their iniquity will have been forgiven.

COMMENTS

V. 13-16 PERSONAL: There is a serenity which is a result of righteous living. Isaiah promises that in these verses. First,

the prophet describes the distress of the people. The whole world is called to attention to watch the change that is about to take place in Zion (Jerusalem). Presently she has a seizure of terror and shakes like a person in shock. The godless in Jerusalem who had taken so much comfort in believing Egypt would help against Assyria are horrified at what Assyria has done and is about to do! They have given up all hope of survival! They are finally at the point of asking God what can be done instead of telling Him! God speaks through His prophet—repent! Walking righteously might be defined as doing everything from the attitude of desiring it to be right, good, true, just. Speaking uprightly means to say what is true, honest, pure, upbuilding and helpful. Gain of oppressions is money or profit made through taking advantage of someone by force or fraud or some other injustice. Shaking hands from taking a bribe probably means waving aside any invitation or temptation to render an illegal or unjust judgment or transaction by receiving a bribe. And the last two, stopping the ears and shutting the eyes indicates the attitude mentioned in the New Testament, “abhorring the very appearance of evil” (Rom. 12:9; II Thess. 5:22; see also Psa. 15:1-5; 24:3-10). Such personal righteousness do not of themselves produce serenity, but they do make it possible for the Lord to enter into such a penitent heart and give it serenity. God cannot give the impenitent, rebellious sinner serenity simply because the sinner refuses to have it! He is determined to direct his own life and achieve serenity on his own. But the godly man who walks righteously dwells in the heights. The word *munitions* is from the Hebrew word *metzouroh* which literally means *citadel*. The godly man is like the man who has a safe refuge high in the inaccessible mountains, a fortress well stocked with all that is needed to sustain him against the seige of his enemy. He is secure and serene.

V. 17-22 PROVISIONAL: When man gets his life right with God then God has opportunity to provide what He wishes to provide always. God created man to live in perfect serenity, peace and harmony. God is able to provide that state for man

but man is also created with the power to refuse such a state. When man trusts God enough to obey God, God provides it. The land of Judah had been almost totally occupied by Assyrians. Everywhere the people of Jerusalem looked their land no longer belonged to them. On every horizon there were Assyrians. But soon, because they now want Him, they shall see the King (Jehovah) in all His beauty. We think this refers to the manifestation of God's majesty and beauty in the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib and not the Messiah because of verses 21-22. When Jehovah-King comes and the Assyrians retreat in disgrace, the people of Jerusalem will once again look upon a land belonging to them as far as the eye can see—their horizons will once again extend to where the land meets the sky.

Not only that, but when the Lord drives the enemy from their land they will retrospectively give much time to wonder and amazement at the miraculous deliverance wrought for them. They will remember the great and ferocious army of the Assyrians camped for miles around their city. They will remember the magnificence and pompousness of the Rabshakeh. They will remember all the foreign officials of the Rabshakeh as they counted the Jews in Jerusalem, counted the treasure of the Jews, counted the fortifications of the city as if they were coolly estimating exactly the amount of plunder they would soon be taking. They will remember the utter horror they felt as they reminded one another of the cold-blooded cruelty of the Assyrians. All this remembering will impress more intensely in the minds of the people of Zion the divine nature of their deliverance. They will know it was provided by Jehovah and not by their own schemes. They will look back and remember the ferocity and insolence of the enemy that had surrounded them and come into their city to negotiate with their king. Their appearance was barbaric; their language was completely foreign and non-understandable. This writer remembers serving with the occupation forces in Japan immediately after World War II and the fear and suspicion felt when listening to the Japanese speak or whisper

in their tongue while looking at him. One usually suspects, in those circumstances, a plot against him or a slur upon his character. This occupation by hundreds of thousands of foreigners jabbering in incomprehensible tongues will have completely vanished and Isaiah says the people of Zion will remember and marvel at it.

The prophet continues his prediction of the serenity God is going to provide. He predicts the people of Jerusalem will soon see their city peaceful and stable. When God sends the Assyrian away peace will return to Jerusalem and her political stability will be restored. This is predicated upon the continued repentance of the people. No long treatise is needed here to establish the fact that God's promises of blessing or judgment are always conditional. That is a doctrine made abundantly clear in the Bible. Isaiah uses "times coloring" figures of speech (terminology contemporary with his own culture) to describe the stability that will come to Zion with the people's repentance. He describes it as a tent which is not moved. In the culture of the Hebrew nomad—the herder of sheep and goats—they pulled up the stakes and untied the ropes and moved their tents from day to day. Jerusalem's position was secure so long as its inhabitants trusted God. We know, from subsequent history (Micah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel), her inhabitants did not continue to trust God. Jerusalem had her "stakes" pulled up and her "ropes" cut by Nebuchadnezzar and her inhabitants taken away to Babylon.

The prophet then turns to another figure of speech easily understood by his contemporaries. He likens Jerusalem's security to a city surrounded by "broad rivers" which some ancient cities enjoyed as natural moats making them secure from attack by armies and, when attacked by navies, could be easily defended. The ancient cities of Thebes (Nahum 3:8; Ezek. 30:16) and Tyre (Isa. 23:1ff; Ezek. 26:1ff) were such cities. In Jerusalem's case, the majestic power of Jehovah will be her moat.

v. 22-24 PERVASIVE: The serenity provided by God and appropriated by man's penitence pervades the whole experience

of man. These verses show Jehovah's influence in every area of man's nature. Man needs an arbiter (judge) to tell him what is right and wrong; man needs a lawgiver to give him a divine codification of behavior; man needs a ruler to be sovereign over all his aspirations, choices and motives. Only then can man be saved from destroying himself. Jerusalem needed to recognize her "tacklings were loosed" and her "mast" was so insecure she could not set "sail." The ship of Zion was unseaworthy (as an old "salt" would say). She needed a "shake down cruise" to make her a taut ship again. She was a "sick" and ailing ship. When repentance came, she would be fitted to sail the stormy seas of life again with her captain at the helm steering her to safe harbors. Repentance makes forgiveness possible and forgiveness produces serenity within even though the storms rage without. Jerusalem would enjoy this serenity. She was also promised victory over her enemies (v. 23). She would have complete victory—even the lame would be able to join in the spoils of victory.

This serenity and victory apparently did come in the latter days of Hezekiah's reign when the rulers and the people finally turned to Jehovah instead of Egypt for help against their enemies. But it did not last long for they were soon led back into sin and rebellion by Manasseh (son of Hezekiah) and eventually into captivity in Babylon.

QUIZ

1. What does personal righteousness have to do with bringing serenity?
2. What does the trembling of the sinners in Zion indicate about their relationship to God?
3. What are the "munitions of rocks"?
4. Why would "musing" on the terror bring serenity?
5. Why mention the "strange tongue" that would soon be gone from the land?
6. Why liken Jehovah unto a "broad river"?

EXAMINATION

CHAPTERS THIRTY-TWO AND THIRTY-THREE

DEFINITION

(Define the following words or phrases as they were discussed in the comments.)

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. a <i>man</i> shall be as a hiding-place | 6. be thou our <i>arm</i> |
| 2. <i>churl</i> | 7. as <i>locusts</i> leap |
| 3. <i>careless</i> ones | 8. Ye shall <i>conceive</i> chaff |
| 4. <i>Spirit</i> | 9. <i>munitions</i> of rocks |
| 5. <i>hail</i> in the downfall of the forest | 10. a people of <i>deep speech</i> |
| | 11. <i>broad</i> rivers and streams |
| | 12. Thy <i>tacklings</i> are loosed |

MEMORIZATION

“Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and ye that are near, _____ my might. The _____ in Zion are afraid; trembling hath seized the _____ ones: Who among us can dwell with the devouring _____? who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh _____, and speaketh uprightly; he that _____ the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from taking a _____, that stoppeth his _____ from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from looking upon _____: he shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the _____ of rocks; his _____ shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.” (33:13-16)

EXPLANATION

1. Explain why the “king” reigning in “righteousness” is the Messiah (32:1-2).

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2. Explain how Judah's enemy broke its covenant? (33:7-8)
3. Explain why the inhabitant of Jerusalem shall not say, I am sick. (33:24)

APPLICATION

(In its context every scripture has one meaning—the author's intended meaning. How may the following be applied in the believer's life?)

1. How does the discussion of the fool no longer being called noble and the churl bountiful apply to the Messianic age? (32:1-8)
2. How does the faith of the remnant in Jehovah's arm bring stability to the nation and how does that lesson apply today? (33:1-6)
3. What three attitudes or areas of human relationship to God expressed in 33:13-24 brings serenity? How does this still apply to the believer today?

SPECIAL STUDY

KINGSHIP OF GOD

by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTION

I. SCRIPTURES

A. O.T.

1. The Lord is king for ever and ever, Psa. 10:16.
2. He is the king of glory, Psa. 24:7-10.
3. He is the king of all the earth, Psa. 47:7.
4. The Holy One of Israel is our king, Psa. 89:18.

B. N.T.

1. The Magi came seeking the One born King of the Jews.
2. Mary's son was to receive the throne of David and

reign forever.

3. The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem brought forth the prophecy from Zech. "Behold thy king cometh unto thee . . ."
4. The people shouted, Blessed be the king who comes in the name of the Lord.
5. Pilate's first question to Jesus was: "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus' answer: "You have said so."

II. AMERICANS CANNOT APPRECIATE KINGSHIP

A. It means *absolute* rule.

1. Simeon, holding the baby Jesus in his arms, said, "*Lord*, now lettest thou thy servant depart . . ." Lord is a translation of *despotes*, from which we get the English word *despot*.
2. It is allegiance to a MONARCH!

B. The church is a kingdom, not a democracy.

1. Its citizens have no authority in formulating its laws, covenants, means of administration.
2. Its citizens can only decide whether they shall accept and respond to its rule or whether they will rebel and refuse to have its King rule over them.

III. THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KINGSHIP OF GOD

A. Justice

B. Beneficence

C. Glory

DISCUSSION

- I. JUSTICE (The ONE thing man needs above everything else is a Divine Dispenser of Perfect Justice; man is a moral being and morality demands not only a knowledge of right and wrong but a Divine enforcement of right and

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wrong; this is the very essence of the power necessary to motivate man in all his moral potentialities such as love, holiness, etc.)

A. *The King's Actions* in Justice are twofold.

1. *Punishing the Rebel*

- a. Christianity is a moral religion; it is moral life itself. Whenever we talk about anything moral judgment necessarily enters into it.
- b. If there is any difference between right and wrong, God in His perfect Justice and Righteousness must be hostile to the wrong.
- c. Hebrews 1:9 says of Christ the King, "But of the Son he says, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, the righteous scepter is the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness . . ." **GOD HATES REBELLION AND LAWLESSNESS AND WILL PUNISH IT!**
- d. God is the Judge who in any transaction decides who is in the right and who is in the wrong.

It is God who allots to each man his reward.

God's judgment falls upon the arrogant, the insolent, and the oppressor.

- e. God's methods of punishment and judgment are many:

He has built some of his judgments into the natural laws of our physical existence. If we violate physical right, we will suffer the consequences.

He has built some of his judgments into the conscience of man. If we violate the mental and spiritual right, we will suffer guilt, spiritual disorientation and disintegration.

He has built some of his judgments into the social structures necessary for this existence. If we violate them we shall suffer chaos, anarchy, frustration.

ISAIAH

- f. BUT HE HAS RESERVED HIS PERFECT WRATH FOR THE NEXT LIFE, THE FUTURE EXISTENCE.

2. *Protecting the Righteous*

- a. A corollary of JUSTICE is that God the Judge-King protects the rights of the defenseless.
- b. He delivers the one who believes and trusts and obeys Him.
- c. God's justice will vindicate the righteous and obedient.
- d. God has punished all sin, potentially, in Jesus Christ's death on the cross. He has carried out His justice and has, by grace, offered to justify all guilty sinners who accept Christ's death in their place by faith and obedience (Rom. 3:21-26).

B. *The Citizen's Reaction to the King's Justice*

1. *Fear* (Reverence and Awe); one of the three meanings of *phobos* is reverence and awe.
 - a. This fear is the source of the chaste life, I Pet. 3:2.
 - b. This fear is the source of holiness, II Cor. 7:1.
 - c. This fear is connected with the godly sorrow that brings repentance, II Cor. 7:11.
 - d. This fear is the source of Christian effort . . . "working out one's own salvation with fear and trembling . . ."
 - e. This fear is the basis of mutual respect and service which Christians are bound to render to each other, Eph. 5:21.
 - f. This fear can be the motive power of persuasion. Christianity always comes to men with a promise and an offer, but any promise can be disbelieved and any offer can be refused, and there is a necessary consequence of disbelief and refusal.
 - g. Christian discipline is to be publicly exercised that others may see it and fear (I Tim. 5:20). It is an interesting thought that Christian discipline is to be exercised not only for the sake of the man

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who has sinned, but also as a means of warning the man who has not sinned to abide in the right way.

In the N.T. *phobos* is one of the great words. There can be no religion at all without the awe of the creature in the presence of the Creator. The feeling of reverence, the awareness of God, is at once the prophylactic against sin, the dynamic of the Christian life, and the mainspring of the Christian effort.

2. *Faith* (obedience, trust); reverence (*phobos*) must turn to faith and not fear in the lower, paralyzing sense.
 - a. Faith in God's fairness
 - b. Faith in God's mercy
 - c. FAITH IN GOD'S HOLINESS. Those who rebel against God's Kingship are really those who disbelieve in God's righteous and holy wrath. THEIR FAITH IS FANCIFUL AND NOT BASED ON THE FEAR OF GOD!

II. BENEFICENCE (It is evident from the failing attempts of human governments and other human institutions that man needs a benefactor, a Divine Supplier; man doesn't even know *what* he needs, let alone being incapable of supplying his needs.)

A. The King's Actions

1. *Provider* (physical necessities)
 - a. He provides physical well-being; health, safety, a world full of challenge in which to work.
 - b. He provides friends and loved-ones to help us.
 - c. Seed-time and harvest are controlled by Him.
 - d. It is all His domain; He is king of the earth, of the universe.

It is His by right of creation, but He sees fit to share it with us.

- e. He could take it all away with merely a word; He could banish us from its boundaries by merely wishing it to be so.

2. *Pilot* (spiritual necessities)

- a. Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.
- b. He supplies the water of life that quenches the eternal thirst of the soul which dries, withers and dies without it.
- c. He supplies the bread of life that fortifies, edifies and energizes the soul—which starves, sickens and dies without it.
- d. He is chart and compass, He is the Way, the Truth and the Life giving direction to life—which is directionless, chaotic, stormy and lost without it.
- e. He supplies light to life, dispelling the darkness of ignorance, illuminating the ugliness of sin, beaming the brightness of holiness to man.

B. *The Citizen's Reaction*

1. *Stewardship*

- a. Jesus taught more on stewardship than any thing else!
- b. A steward is one who tends to another's property or affairs.
- c. A steward is one who works!
- d. The king has provided, but we are to work.
- e. We hear a great deal these days about helping the helpless, and I believe it to be the very nature of a Christian to do so, for after all God helps each of us in our helplessness. BUT IT IS JUST AS GOD-LIKE AND CHRIST-LIKE TO CONSIDER THE MATTER OF STEWARDSHIP, WORK, LABOR. GOD WORKED SIX DAYS. JESUS WORKED.
- f. The apostles taught that the Christian community was not to tolerate the shiftless, lazy, parasite

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who could work. The apostles practiced what they preached—they worked.

- g. If such is the norm for the Christian, certainly we ought not to think we are doing the non-Christian a favor by condoning laziness.
- h. Stewardship implies wise judgment and forbids indiscriminate pampering or perpetuation of either social or spiritual laziness.

2. *Discipleship*

- a. Jesus, the King, has beneficently provided our spiritual life also.
- b. Here again, WE ARE TOLD TO WORK.
- c. "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life . . ." Jn. 6:27.
- d. "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." Jn. 6:29.
- e. It is well for us to remember that all our spiritual life comes by grace, but that grace has to be SOUGHT AND BOUGHT WITH THE SACRIFICE OF SELF AND THE DISCIPLINE OF SERVICE!
- f. Jesus said the kingdom is "like a man going on a long journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch." Mk. 13:34
- g. The Pearl of Great Price, when found (note the man was searching to find it), demands a cost, a trade.

The Field with Buried Treasure, when discovered (God's beneficence is sometimes discovered and sometimes searched for), demands cost.

III. GLORY (Man will glorify someone or something. Man, whether he admits it or not, inherently and inevitably

worships some other than his own person. He has demonstrated time and again that he must glorify some other outside his own individuality, even if it is mankind in general he glorifies.)

A. *The King's Acting Glory*

1. His *Greatness* (His Creative Power)

- a. The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork, *Psa. 19.*
- b. Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle! *Psa. 24:8.*
- c. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. *Isa. 6:3.*
- d. “. . . myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing . . .” *Rev. 5:12.*
- e. The word *Glory* literally means, “to be heavy or laden with riches, power and position.”
- f. NO HUMAN BEING WILL BE EXCUSED FOR FAILING TO SEE THE GLORY OF THE IMMORTAL GOD IN NATURE AND MAKING SOME RESPONSE.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men . . . For what can be known about God is plain to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse . . .” *Rom. 1:18ff.*

2. His *Goodness* (His Moral Beauty)

- a. Perfect in Holiness; Perfect in Love; Perfect in Humility; Perfect in Wisdom; Perfect in Consistency (Unchangeableness) Perfect in Justice; Perfect in Power.
- b. It is the goodness of God that leads to repentance.

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- c. Moses had a craving to come to grips with God as he was in himself. In reply, God emphasized his goodness . . . His moral beauty (Ex. 33:19).
- d. Oh, the ineffable worth of God's moral richness.
- e. We glorify the wisest of men—the powerfulest of men—the most charitable of men—the most consistent of men—the purest of men—the richest of men—the most just of men BUT GOD EXCEEDS THEM ALL AS A MILLION MT. EVERESTS EXCEED ONE GRAIN OF SAND!
- f. And all His glory was exhibited to men in a Man, Christ Jesus. "We beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father." "In him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily . . ."
- g. And look how Jesus exhibited the GLORY of God to men. . . . as a servant, as a redeemer, as a sinless, holy, powerful, compassionate, KING WHO CAME TO WOO AND WIN A THRONE IN MAN'S HEART!

B. The *Citizen's Reacting Glorification* of the King

1. *Worshipping His Glory*

- a. Praise, adoration, honor
- b. Preaching His ineffable character — OUR PREACHING IS TO GLORIFY GOD AND HIS SON CHRIST, AND HIS CHURCH.

We have no reason to praise men, except as their lives exemplify and glorify God.

- c. This can be done by writing books to glorify His name, by composing and singing music to His adoration, by giving of our means to honor His name throughout the world.

2. *Walking In His Glory*

- a. He made us in His image and glory, BUT WE HAVE FALLEN SHORT!
- b. He wants us to be changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another. . . . THIS IS DONE BY BEHOLDING HIS GLORY.

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- c. Beholding His glory means to imbibe of it . . . to wrap ourselves in it . . . to assimilate it into our nature.
- d. "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of *him who called us to his own glory* and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature" II Pet. 1:3-4.
- e. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So *glorify God* in your body. I Cor. 6:19-20.
- f. Remember the definition of glory? **TO BE HEAVY. . . . GOD WANTS US TO WALK AROUND LADEN DOWN WITH HIS RICH CHARACTER OF MORAL PURITY AND GOODNESS.**
Instead of Jesus people, we might call ourselves **GOD HEAVIES!**

CONCLUSION

PAROUSIA: THE ARRIVAL OF THE KING

In the papyri and in Hellenistic Greek, parousia is the technical word for the arrival of an emperor, a king, or a ruler, into a town or province.

For such a visit preparations had to be made. All things had to be readied. New coins were always struck to commemorate the visitation of a king. It was as if with the coming of the king a new set of values had emerged.

One of the commonest things is that provinces dated a new

era from the parousia of the king. A new section of time emerged with the coming of the king.

WHEN OUR KING COMES HE BRINGS WITH HIM HIS JUSTICE, HIS BENEFICENCE, HIS GLORY.

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. II Cor. 4:16-18

D. FOES WILL FALL, CHAPTER 34

1. SLAUGHTER

TEXT: 34:1-7

- 1 Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye peoples: let the earth hear, and the fulness thereof; the world, and all things that come forth from it.
- 2 For Jehovah hath indignation against all the nations, and wrath against all their host: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter.
- 3 Their slain also shall be cast out, and the stench of their dead bodies shall come up; and the mountains shall be melted with their blood.
- 4 And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fade away, as the leaf fadeth from off the vine, and as a fading leaf from the fig-tree.
- 5 For my sword hath drunk its fill in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Edom, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment.

- 6 The sword of Jehovah is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams; for Jehovah hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom.
- 7 And the wild-oxen shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be drunken with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness.

QUERIES

- a. Who are the "nations" Jehovah will slaughter?
- b. How are the "heavens to be rolled up"?
- c. When did Jehovah's sword "drink its fill in heaven"?

PARAPHRASE

Come close and listen to me, all you nations of the world. All of creation had better pay attention to what I have to say! For the Lord of Creation is filled with wrath against the whole world because it has schemed to usurp His sovereignty by human governments. Because human empires are in rebellion against God's rule of man, God has marked them for utter destruction. Their destruction will not only be total, it will be humiliating and horrifying. It will be as when a city is conquered and its slain are cast out into the streets and left unburied and the stench of rotting flesh permeates everything. The destruction of the world empires will be so complete it could furnish enough blood to wash away the mountains. When God finishes His destruction of all that oppose Him, even the material world will be dissolved. The planets of the heavens will be dissolved, the skies will be taken away just like the scroll is rolled up and put away, and the stars will go out of existence like leaves dying and dropping from a fig-tree. My sword of wrath in heaven is filled to staggering. It is going to stagger forth upon Edom, one of those kingdoms opposing My

sovereignty, as an example of the inevitable judgment that is to come upon all kingdoms opposing Me. This sword of the Lord is about to be saturated with blood and gorged with flesh like the sword used to slay lambs and goats. It is Edom that will come under Jehovah's bloody, sacrificial sword. The small and the great, weak and powerful, rich and poor alike are going to be slaughtered in Edom. The land will stagger and reel with blood like a drunken man reels from wine. Their whole land will be saturated with dead bodies.

COMMENTS

v. 1-4 JUDGMENT ENVISIONED: Once again Isaiah is bringing a section of his written prophecy to a climactic conclusion. He has done so before in chapters 6, 12, and 23. These two chapters (34 and 35) are the climactic conclusion to the section warning Judah not to seek help from Egypt (28-35). Chapters 34 and 35 summarize the reasons Judah should not seek help from pagan, worldly, God-opposing governments: (1) because God has decreed their doom; (2) because God has a glorious future planned for Zion.

What God is going to do will involve the whole cosmos (creation) so (v. 1-2) He calls, through the prophet, the whole creation to attention. What God is going to do involves not only the earth but heaven. He is going to defeat all the "principalities, powers, world rulers of this present darkness, the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places . . . and disarm them, and make a public example of them, triumphing over them in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 6:12; Col. 2:15). God is not going to "utterly slaughter" all the power that opposes Him in Isaiah's day. Furthermore, the *total physical* destruction of the world is probably not even intended here. The defeat of the spiritual power that opposes God and enslaves men is much more imperative and cosmically significant than the physical destruction. In other words, the victory Christ accomplished over the world, the flesh and the devil, on the cross and at the

resurrection was the great slaughter probably referred to here. Of course, God destroyed His enemies, the great world empires that were possessed by the devil to attempt to thwart God's redemptive program in the earth. He destroyed them one by one. And, God will ultimately destroy all physical kingdoms with the destruction of the universe, and He will create a new heaven and a new earth (II Pet. 3:8-13). But all that would be of little consequence without the once-and-for-all defeat of Satan and his hosts at the cross. It was at the cross (and the empty tomb) that God "brought to nothing things that are," destroyed the wisdom of the wise, (I Cor. 1:18-31), cast out the ruler of this world and destroyed his power (Jn. 12:31; 16:11; Heb. 2:14-15; I Jn. 3:8). Now this work, culminated in the cross and resurrection, began as God took the people of Isaiah's day and destroyed their pagan enemies, one by one, and delivered a faithful remnant through which God brought the Messiah into the world in order to "deliver them from their enemies" (cf. Luke 1:67-79). Isaiah is predicting the same great overthrow of the world-opposition as Joel predicts (Joel 2:28—3:21; see our comments, *Minor Prophets*, College Press). It is the same overthrow of world-opposition Isaiah predicted earlier (Isa. 13—23; see our comments, *Isaiah, Vol I*, College Press). It is the same overthrow of world-opposition Ezekiel predicts (Ezek. 38—39) and Daniel predicts (Dan. 2—11) and Zechariah predicts (Zech. 9—14). It was accomplished in the cross and resurrection when Christ "took captivity captive" and will be consummated at His second coming.

The Jewish prophets portrayed the end of the Jewish dispensation and the beginning of the new era (the Messianic age) as a Day of Jehovah, a great judgment and redemption. The Messianic age was portrayed in eschatological, cataclysmic, cosmic figures of speech. It is even referred to in the New Testament in somewhat the same way: (Just to list a few)

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Joel 2:28—3:21 | 5. Luke 4:16-29 |
| 2. Malachi 3:1-5 | 6. Matthew 23:37—24:35 |
| 3. Ezekiel 38:1—39:29 | 7. Colossians 2:14-15 |
| 4. Daniel 9:24-27 | 8. Hebrews 12:18-29 |

Much modern-day interpretation of O.T. prophecy alleges the main function of the prophets was to predict the so-called "rapture, tribulation, millennium," and the Second Coming of Christ. It seems totally incongruous to us that the prophets would devote as much detail as is alleged to the end of the so-called "church age." Their main *predictive* function, as the New Testament *plainly* points out, was to proclaim the *First advent* of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom of God upon the earth, the church (cf. I Pet. 1:10-12; II Pet. 1:12-21; Luke 24:25-27; 24:44-49, etc.).

If modern readers of the Bible could project themselves back into the days of the prophets or the apostles, or if they could assimilate the Jewishness of those Jews, they might easily understand how eschatological, cataclysmic and cosmic it would seem to talk of the abrogation and abolition of a religious system (Judaism) with 1400 years of heritage. It was their whole existence, politically, socially, religiously. To predict a New Era which would completely replace the Old would seem like a prediction of the end of the world-order. And the prophets were called upon to portray the New Era in just those figures.

Of course, there is always the typical element in every Day of the Lord, which points to God's ultimate Day, the literal, actual consummation of judgment and redemption. And that is probably the case with our text here in Isaiah. Even God's awful judgment of sin in the crucifixion of Christ and God's glorious act of redemption in Christ's resurrection is, in addition to being His literal, historical work of salvation, a prophecy, promise and type of the final, consummating work at Christ's Second Coming.

V. 5-7 JUDGMENT EXEMPLIFIED: Edom is now cited as a representative of the God-opposing human governments. Edom was one of the first human governments to oppose God's redemptive work in placing His covenant people in the land of Canaan. The covenant people were later opposed by Ammon, Moab, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. All these, and others, were, in their own times, condemned

by the prophets and judged by God. Even the sinful covenant peoples (Israel and Judah) were condemned and judged because they chose carnal, human systems of government rather than government by the rule of God's word. Probably the most graphic symbolism of God's defeat of the attempt by human government to overthrow the rule of God in men's hearts (the establishment of God's kingdom among men) is the symbolism in the book of Daniel—in the great image (ch. 2) and the four beasts (ch. 7).

The sword of the Lord in heaven is filled with blood. In other words, the wrath of God has been accumulating (cf. Rev. 15:7), and it is symbolized by a sword poised to vent its full fury on God's enemy. God is longsuffering but He will not be opposed forever. The judgment of God is portrayed as a great sacrifice. This is a figure used elsewhere in the Old Testament (Zeph. 1:7-18; Jer. 46:10; 50:27). Sacrifice was worship of the Lord. Slaughtering of animals was never very pretty to behold. In fact, it is always rather revolting. But in spite of the revolting and almost sickening splashing of blood and burning of flesh, God was glorified. The punishing of sin in the innocent and perfect Jesus is an idea both revolting and repulsive to the human ego—nevertheless God is exalted in it. So, God will be glorified in the slaughter that is necessitated at the judgment of human, God-opposing governments. Edward J. Young considers the "lambs and goats" of v. 6 to be figurative of the general citizenry of Edom and the "wild-oxen and bulls" of v. 7 to symbolize the leaders of the nation. Whatever the case the point being made is the awfulness and completeness of judgment upon those who have so persistently opposed God's redemptive work in the world by opposing His people. This should be a graphic warning to all governments in any age opposing God's people in any way.

QUIZ

1. Why do chapters 34 and 35 seem to form a climax in Isaiah's book?

2. Cite N.T. passages to show that God defeated His opposition at the cross.
3. Why do we think Isaiah is predicting the cross and empty tomb accomplishment?
4. What other O.T. prophets predicted God's defeat of His opposition at the cross and establishment of the church?
5. Why would the Jewish prophets speak of God's victory as if it were the end of the present world-order?
6. What N.T. passages confirm this?
7. Why is it most probable that the O.T. prophets spoke mainly of Christ's first coming?
8. What part does Edom play in this drama?

2. SHAMBLES

TEXT: 34:8-17

- 8 For Jehovah hath a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion.
- 9 And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch.
- 10 It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever; from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.
- 11 But the pelican and the porcupine shall possess it; and the owl and the raven shall dwell therein: and he will stretch over it the line of confusion, and the plummet of emptiness.
- 12 They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there; and all its princes shall be nothing.
- 13 And thorns shall come up in its palaces, nettles and thistles in the fortresses thereof; and it shall be a habitation of jackals, a court for ostriches.
- 14 And the wild beasts of the desert shall meet with the wolves, and the wild goat shall cry to his fellow; yea, the night-monster

shall settle there, and shall find her a place of rest.

- 15 There shall the dart-snake make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shade; yea, there shall the kites be gathered, every one with her mate.
- 16 Seek ye out of the book of Jehovah, and read: no one of these shall be missing, none shall want her mate; for my mouth, it hath commanded, and his Spirit, it hath gathered them.
- 17 And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line: they shall possess it for ever; from generation to generation shall they dwell therein.

QUERIES

- a. How could the smoke of Edom go up forever?
- b. What is a "night-monster"?
- c. What is the "book of Jehovah"?

PARAPHRASE

Yes, the Lord will bring Zion its day of recompense. Edom has had its day opposing Zion, but the Lord will bring vengeance upon Edom at the proper time. Edom's streams will be fouled with tar and pitch and her soil turned into sulphurous dust and her land into burning, smoldering pools of tar, not fit for habitation. This desolation of Edom will never end. It will be an uninhabited kingdom forever, from one generation to another. It will never again be made a habitable place. The only creatures inhabiting this territory henceforth will be wild, unclean creatures of loneliness and desolation—pelicans, porcupines, owls and ravens. God has measured that kingdom by His standards of righteousness and justice, and it is found to be fit only for destruction and desolation. They shall call it, No Kingdom There, and its princes shall soon all be gone. Thorn bushes and weeds will grow up inside its palaces and

mansions; its fortresses will fall into complete disuse and be the haunts of wild jackals and ostriches. The animals of the desert will forage there along with wolves and wild goats. The screeching night-thing will settle there and build her nest. The dangerous darting snake and the scavenging vulture will settle there and reproduce their young. Search what the Lord has caused to be written in His book; not one of these predictions shall go unfulfilled because the Lord who revealed the predictions through my mouth is the same Lord whose Spirit will cause the wild animals to inhabit the desolation of Edom. The Lord of Creation has set this territory aside and marked it off to be given to those doleful and despised wild creatures from one generation to another.

COMMENTS

v. 8-10 WASTE-LAND: The vengeance of the Lord serves also as a recompense for Zion. Edom has vented its age-old hatred (which began with the family feud between Esau and Jacob) upon Zion with an unrelenting passion (cf. Obadiah). Edom "stood aloof," "rejoiced," and "joined in" when other pagans plundered Jerusalem. God's sovereignty and His sovereign program cannot go on being thwarted forever. If His sovereignty is to be verified, rebellion must be punished. Edom's time has come, or is very near. When it happens, Zion's cause will be vindicated.

Malachi 1:3, 300 years after Isaiah, says the mountains and the heritage of Esau (Edom) were laid waste and left to the jackals of the desert. Then Malachi 1:4-5 represents the Edomites vowing they will rebuild and the Lord vowing He will tear down again. The territory of Edom was made desolate by the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and Greeks (Seleucids) in succession. However, there was a brief period of recovery in the time of the Maccabees, and Edom once again appears as an adversary of Israel of some importance. Gradually, however, Edom had to yield to the superior power of the

Romans and was later overrun and conquered by the Moham-
 medan Arabs who completed the ruin of the land. It is now,
 and has been for more than a thousand years, one of the most
 desolate territories of land upon the face of the earth. Isaiah
 would hardly seem to demand a literal turning streams into
 pitch. The present land of once ancient Edom has no perennial
 rivers. It has numerous "wadis" (dry stream beds) which some-
 times run with torrents when the winter rains flood them.
 Isaiah's intent, no doubt, is that Edom should be visited with
 a destruction and desolation so complete it could be likened
 unto that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24; Jer. 49:18).
 Men have passed through this area again and again since those
 days and still do, though they all testify to its utter desolate-
 ness. The word "forever" must be understood as hyperbole here.

V. 11-15 WILD-LIFE: There is some disagreement among
 translators as to the exact identification of the animals in these
 verses. The only one generally agreed upon is the raven. The
kooth is translated, cormorant, pelican or hawk. The *kipod*
 is translated, bittern, hedgehog or porcupine. Whatever their
 specific genre, the intent of the prophet seems to be to describe
 only animals that inhabit desolate, deserted places not in-
 habited by human beings. These forlorn beasts of the desert
 nights will move in and make this territory their possession.
 No other creatures will want it. God has measured off this
 territory for this specific group of unclean animals. The
 measuring-tape and the plumb-line are *tohu* and *vohu* and
 are the same two words used in Genesis 1:2 and translated
 waste and void, or confusion and emptiness. In other words
 God has marked Edom for systematic or planned reduction
 to chaos. All the nobles (rulers by birth) of Edom will disappear,
 and none will remain to constitute a kingdom. So the territory
 will be called, No Kingdom There. Its palaces and cities will
 be deserted and overgrown with brush and thorns. In verse 14
 the word in Hebrew *lyilyith* is translated *night-monster* in the
 ASV and *satyr* in the RSV. Some say it is a word with Akkadian
 root meaning some kind of "storm-spirit." Most Hebrew lexi-
 cons define it as "screech-owl." *Lilit* was the name of a female

demon or wicked fairy, in whom the Assyrians (Akkadians) believed—a being thought to vex and persecute her victims in their sleep. The Hebrew word for *night* is *layeloh*. Whatever the case, the night-monster or screech-owl is added to the arrow-snake and vulture to indicate a place where dwells every odious, despised, scary creature known. The prophets were poets and used imagery. When so doing they were free to use even the beliefs and superstitions of their contemporaries to intensify the force of their messages.

V. 16-17 WORD OF THE LORD: Some have said the “book of Jehovah” was a volume collected of the works of Moses, some of the prophets before Isaiah, and the psalms of David. But there is no evidence of such a collection then. It is better to understand the book to be that of Isaiah’s own writings up to that point. Nothing contained in his writings shall fail of fulfillment is the prophet’s warning, for his writings are the work of Jehovah. Every utterance of his, even in the minute detail of the animals marked to possess Edom’s territory, will come to pass, for although the predictions come through the mouth of Isaiah, it shall be the Spirit of the living God which shall bring them to pass. The Lord allots to all the nations of the earth their boundaries (cf. Jer. 27:5ff). He has now allotted Edom to the unclean beasts and birds which are mentioned. He has marked it desolate (cf. Mt. 23:38). All kingdoms which oppose God are marked for destruction (cf. I Cor. 15:24-28, 50). Edom is here typical and representative.

QUIZ

1. How will Edom’s judgment be recompense for Zion?
2. Were Edom’s streams literally turned into pitch?
3. What does the list of these particular animals portray about Edom?
4. What is the territory of ancient Edom like today?
5. How could Isaiah be certain his predictions would be fulfilled?

ISAIAH

SPECIAL STUDY

THE GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT
IS THE GOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

by

Seth Wilson

GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT
AS LOVING GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE GOD OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13) Anger forbidden: Psa. 37:8; Prov. 14:17; 16:32; 27:4. "The thought of foolishness is sin; the scorner . . . an abomination" Prov. 24:9.
2. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Ex. 20:14. "Lust not" Prov. 6:25; "he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul" Prov. 6:32, 33. Thoughts of the wicked, abomination; words of the pure, pleasant. Prov. 15:26. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" Prov. 23:7.
3. "Thou shalt not swear by my name falsely, neither profane the name of God" Lev. 19:12.

THE GOD OF
THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. The teaching of Jesus on killing. Mt. 5:21-26. Hatred forbidden: I Jn. 3:15.
2. The teaching of Jesus on adultery. Mt. 5:27-32. Works of the flesh: Gal. 5:19; I Cor. 6:15:20.
3. The teaching of Jesus on oaths. Mt. 5:33-37. Jas. 5:12.

GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IS GOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

4. "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear grudge against children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" Lev. 19:18. "Say not that I will recompense evil, but wait on the Lord and he will save thee" Prov. 20:22; also 24:29.
5. Do good unto enemies: "If thou seest the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, thou shalt surely help him" Ex. 23:45. "If thy enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; if he be thirsty, give him water to drink" Prov. 25:21. "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thy heart be glad when he stumbleth" Prov. 24:17.
6. "But because the Lord loved you and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt" Deut. 7:8.
4. The teaching of Jesus on revenge. Mt. 5:38-42. I Pet. 2:19, 20; Rom. 12:19-21.
5. The teaching of Jesus on the treatment of enemies. Mt. 5:43-48.
6. The love of God. Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8.
7. The prodigal son. Lk. 15:11-32.
8. The woman of Samaria. Jn. 4:1-42.
9. The sinful woman. Jn. 8:3-11.
10. The robber on the cross. Lk. 23:39-43.
11. The gracious invitation. Mt. 11:28-30.
12. Love the supreme ideal of life. I Jn. 4:17-21; I Cor. 13.

"The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind; the Lord raiseth

them that are bowed down; the Lord loveth the righteous; the Lord preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow" *Psa.* 146:8, 9.

"In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them, in his love and in his pity he redeemed them." *Isa.* 63:9.

"Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth: keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." *Ex.* 34:6, 7.

The entire book of Hosea especially *ch.* 11:1-4: "When Israel was a child . . . I loved him . . . Yea, I taught Ephraim to walk . . . I drew them with the cords of a man, with hands of love."

7. "Jehovah will smite Egypt . . . they shall return unto him . . . and he will heal them" *Isa.* 19:22. "In returning and rest shall ye be saved" *Isa.* 30:15. "Let the wicked forsake his way and return unto Jehovah . . . for he will abundantly pardon" *Isa.* 55:7.

"O Israel, return unto thy God . . . I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely *Hosea* 14:1, 4a; the entire chapter deals with return of the prodigal nation. "Return unto me, and I will return unto you saith the Lord of hosts" *Mal.* 3:7.

8. "Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and the stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of the Law" *Deut.* 31:12.
Miraculous blessings given to Gentiles: the widow of Zarephath (*I Kings* 17:16) and Naaman the leper (*II Kings* 5:1-15).

9. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth

GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IS GOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

in mercy" Mic. 7:18.

"But he, being merciful, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea many a time turned he his anger away" Psa. 78:38.

"It is of Jehovah's lovingkindness that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not" Lam. 3:22.

10. "He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" Mic. 7:19.

"But if the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes . . . he shall not die. None of his transgressions that he hath committed shall be remembered against him" Ez. 18:21-22.

11. "Ho every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters and he that hath no money, come ye . . . buy wine and milk without money and without price . . . incline your ear and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live. Let the wicked forsake his way . . . and return unto our God for he will abundantly pardon . . . though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" Isa. 55:1, 3, 7; 1:18.

12. "Hatred stirreth up strifes; but love covereth all sins" Prov. 10:12. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with thy mind, and with all thy strength" Deut. 6:5. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" Lev. 19:18.

GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT IN JUDGMENT AS GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE GOD OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE GOD OF
THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. God cursed Adam, Eve,

1. John the Baptist an-

I S A I A H

- | | |
|---|---|
| and the serpent. Gen. 3: 9-21. | nounced the coming of the kingdom but also of judgment and punishment by fire. Mt. 3:8-12. |
| 2. God cursed Cain. Gen. 4:9-15. | 2. Unbelievers condemned: 3:18; Rev. 21:8. |
| 3. God destroyed man with the flood. Gen. 6 & 7. | 3. Jesus pronounced judgment on Chorazin and Capernaum, predicting a worse fate for them than that of Sodom. Mt. 11:20-24. |
| 4. God ordered capital punishment. Gen. 9:46. | 4. "Woe to the Pharisees and lawyers" Lk. 11:42-54. |
| 5. God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Gen. 19. | 5. Jesus taught the coming of torment in fire after death—the rich man and Lazarus. Lk. 16:19-31. |
| 6. God plagued Pharaoh and slew the first born. Ex. 12. | 6. This punishment Jesus promised is without end. Mt. 25-46. |
| 7. God destroyed the Canaanites. Josh. 23:5-9. | 7. As they were destroyed by flood in Noah's day, so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man. "But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man |

GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IS GOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

8. The bears destroyed children. II Kings 2:23-25. is revealed" Lk. 17:28, 29.
 9. Saul was commanded to slay the Amalekites. I Sam. 15.
 10. God punished Israel and carried his people into captivity. II Chron. 36:16-20.
 11. God is a God of vengeance. Psa. 94:1.
-
9. Peter quoted and approved Moses' saying, "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." Acts 3:22, 23.
 10. "Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord." Quoted from Deut. 32:35 in Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30.
 11. Ananias and Sapphira slain for lying. Acts 5:1-11.
 12. "For if the Word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation" Heb. 2:2, 3.
 13. "For if we sin wilfully after having received a knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fierceness

of fire that shall devour the adversaries" Heb. 10:26. Those disregarding Moses' Law "died without compassion"; how much more shall one suffer who spurns the new covenant. Heb. 10:28, 29.

14. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" Heb. 10:31.
15. "For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." Heb. 12:25, 26. "For our God is a consuming fire" Heb. 12:29.
16. Paul, by the Holy Spirit, blinded Elymas. Acts 13:8-12.
17. Herod was smitten by "an angel of the Lord" eaten of worms and died. Acts 12:22-24.
18. "Behold then, the goodness and severity of God" Rom. 11:22.
19. The devil, the beast, and the false prophet shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. Rev. 20:10.
20. Anyone not written in the Book of Life is to be cast into the lake of fire. Rev. 20:15.

E. FREEDOM WILL FLOURISH, CHAPTER 35

1. STRENGTHENED

TEXT: 35:1-7

- 1 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.



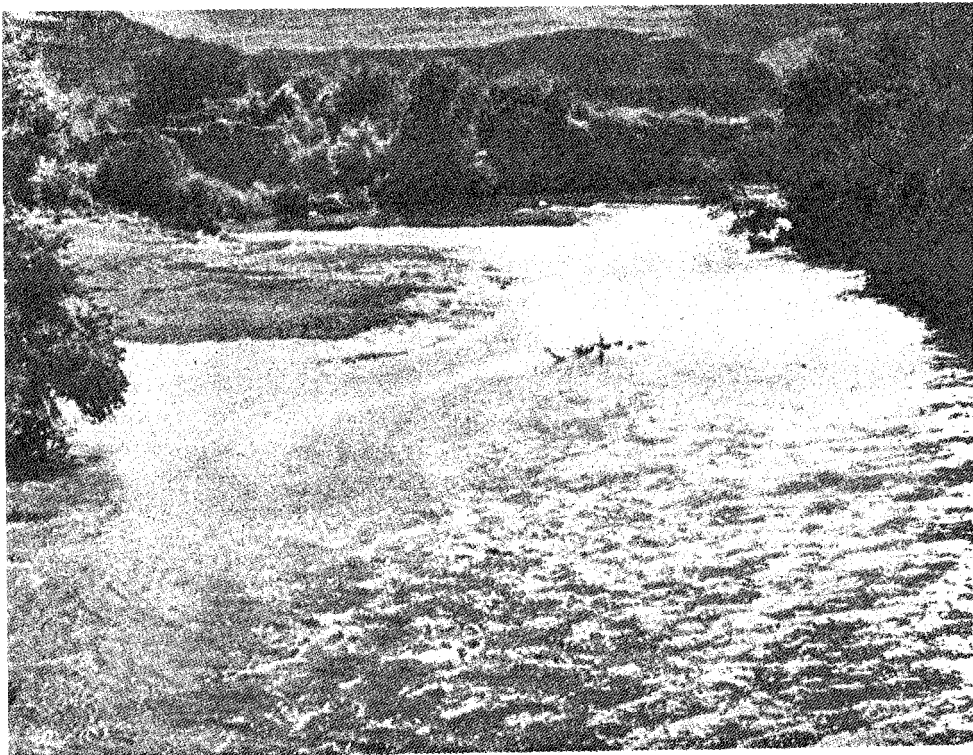
"And Joshua rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over" (Joshua 3: 1).

From their last camping ground on the "plains of Moab" the route taken by the Israelites lay across the Arabah (Deuteronomy 1: 7; 4: 49—*R.S.V.*) the name given in the Bible to this area north of the Dead Sea on either side of Jordan. It is a desolate expanse of limestone through which the Jordan has cut a gorge half a mile wide.

In the background, to the west of the depression, the hills of Judah rise above Jericho.

It was here "in the plains of Jericho" that the Babylonians later captured King Zedekiah of Judah when he fled from Jerusalem (Jeremiah 39: 5).

FROM: THE BIBLE AS HISTORY IN PICTURES
By Werner Keller - Wm. Morrow Co.



"And the people passed over right against Jericho . . . and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan" (Joshua 3:16-17).

Near Jericho the river is almost twenty feet deep and is fringed by a narrow, sub-tropical thicket, the "jungle of the Jordan", which at one time harboured lions (Zechariah 11:3-R.S.V.). It is on record that several times when the river has been in spate masses of marl have crashed down the banks and temporarily stopped up the channel. According to the Arab historian, al-Nuwairí, the river was completely dammed for ten hours on 8th December 1266 near the confluence of the Jabbok, a striking reminder of the biblical story. Similar occurrences have been reported in more recent times, as in October 1914, when the Jordan was blocked for twenty-four hours at the Jericho bridge.

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- 2 It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of Jehovah, the excellency of our God.
- 3 Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.
- 4 Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; he will come and save you.
- 5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.
- 6 Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.
- 7 And the glowing sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water: in the habitation of jackals, where they lay shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

QUERIES

- a. Why will the desert blossom and sing for joy?
- b. How shall the weak be strengthened?
- c. When will all the infirm be healed?

PARAPHRASE

While the glory of the God-opposing world empires will be changed to wastelands and desolations, the desolation of God's people is only temporary. Yes, their wastelands will someday be filled with gladness and their unproductiveness will be turned into beauty and fertility. There will be great joy and singing in that day. The majestic glory and beauty of Lebanon's mountains, the verdant lushness of Mount Carmel and the fertile productiveness of Sharon's plain will be faint comparison with the glory and excellency of the Lord which they shall enjoy in that day. On account of this promise let those of God

who are afraid be valiant and walk on in God's way with confidence. Tell those who are apprehensive to be courageous and strong. Your God is coming to destroy your enemies and save you. When He comes the blind will be made to see and the deaf made to hear. When he comes the crippled will be made as agile as the deer and those who cannot speak will be enabled to shout and sing. Refreshing and life-giving water will gush forth in the arid places and turn into running streams. That which is parched and dried up will be made into an oasis for the thirsty. Even that which normally would never be fertile and refreshing shall be so.

COMMENTS

v. 1-4 SAVED: Chapter 35 stands in direct contrast to chapter 34. These two chapters conclude or summarize the two propositions of this section (28-35): (a) World governments cannot help God's people (especially Egypt) for they oppose God's sovereignty; (b) God will keep His promise to deliver from eternal destruction all who believe and trust Him.

This chapter finds its ultimate fulfillment in the messianic kingdom (the church). Just as the God-opposing world governments were defeated and judged at the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ (see comments ch. 34), so the great deliverance and productiveness portrayed in vivid landscape scenes refer to the same climactic event in history. It would seem evident to us that all the predictions of the prophets concerning the rejuvenated *land* of Israel or the restoration of the *people* of Israel to the land must either be fulfilled in a literal (though hyperbolic) way after the captivity, or in a spiritual sense in the establishment of the church—or both. We cannot abide the idea that the prophetic predictions concerning the land and the people will find their fulfillment in a literal restoration of the Jewish economy (dispensation) at some time future to the church.

a. So far as we are able to discover, the New Testament says

- nothing of literal, genetic Israel's reoccupation of Palestine and restoration of a Jewish system.
- b. Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple but He said nothing of its rebuilding for the restoration of a Jewish system.
 - c. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world."
 - d. Paul told the Gentile Ephesians they were blessed with every spiritual blessing in the church.
 - e. Paul told the Gentile Galatians that all who were in Christ were heirs of Abraham and the *promise* made to Abraham.
 - f. To restore a Jewish system would invalidate the credibility, authenticity, finality and superiority of Christianity as revealed in the book of Hebrews.
 - g. To establish again the kingdom of Israel of the Old Testament would be to establish a kingdom conceived in disobedience, born in rebellion and perpetuated in apostasy. That is exactly what the O.T. kingdom of Israel was.

Matthew Henry says, "Under the Gospel the desert land of heathenism becomes blooming. The flourishing desert shall have the glory of Lebanon given to it, which consisted in the strength and stateliness of its cedars; and the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, which consisted in corn and cattle. All the beauty of the Jewish economy passed into the Christian and appeared in its perfection, as the apostle shows in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Whatever is valuable in any institution is brought into the gospel."

In the Messianic age the best of every pagan kingdom will be blended with the best of God's chosen people to form the beautiful, productive, joy-filled new kingdom of God. Isaiah amplifies this thought with vividness when he speaks of the "wealth of the nations" being brought into God's Messianic kingdom (cf. Isa. 60:8-22; 61:1-11, etc.). The wealth of any nation is, of course, its godly people—not its silver and gold. God's great universal kingdom (the church) is to possess the glory of every nation on the earth. And so it has; and so it shall continue to do. These prophecies began to be fulfilled

when the gospel began to conquer and possess people from the regions of Tyre, Sidon, Antioch (all in Lebanon) (Acts 11:22, 26; 13:1, etc.); by the gospel capture of people from Caesarea (at the foot of Mt. Carmel) (Acts 8:40; 10:24, etc.).

The prophecy has a far greater range than that, of course. Wherever the gospel is preached and men surrender to the rule of God in Christ, there the glory of "Lebanon" is blended with the excellency of "Carmel and Sharon." There rejoicing and singing take place. There beauty and productiveness become the new order.

Verses 3-4 are apparently paraphrased in Hebrews 12:12-13. Perhaps the idea of Isaiah in this whole section (vs. 1-7) is appropriated by the Hebrews 12:12-13 passage. Hebrews 12 is the chapter in which the Mosaic dispensation is contrasted with the Christian dispensation (Zion) and the Hebrew Christians are exhorted to cling to the kingdom which cannot be shaken (Christian) because this was God's goal in the Old Testament. This seems to indicate the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews is saying the Christian dispensation is the fulfillment of the promises made in Isaiah 35, and "therefore" the messianic age is the point upon which God's people are to focus for "strengthening the weak hands and confirming the feeble knees." One thing is certain, the coming of God with vengeance, recompense and salvation should provide strength. What God is going to save from is the unbelief and perversity of carnal, satanic opposition to His redemptive work. That salvation has nothing to do with a particular land, race, people, circumstance or social class. It was accomplished by Christ *once* for *all*. Of course, we look forward to a new heavens and earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. But glorified circumstances or environment are irrelevant without glorified people. Heaven without sanctified people would be Hell. So it is not a land God is primarily interested in—it is a people!

v. 5-7 **SLAKED:** The first step in the process of sanctifying a people is a renewal of spiritual discernment. The "eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be

unstopped." This reminds us of Jesus' application of Isaiah 61:1-4 to His redemptive work in the synagogue in Luke 4:16-30. (cf. also Jn. 9:35-41) Spiritual sensibility will replace carnal dullness, and spiritual ability will replace debilitating sin. There was more *seen* by those whom Jesus cured of physical blindness than was seen by many of those who had perfect eyesight. Verse 5 was fulfilled in Christ in much more than a physical way and is still being fulfilled today. Men are constantly recovering their spiritual sight and hearing. Lame and dumb regained more than physical well-being when Jesus healed them. It was by being brought to faith in Him they were saved from sin.

It is sin that opposes God. All men are sinners and enemies. Men are deceived by sin. Sin is the great mirage. The great Liar, Satan, deceived man with the great lie and deceived man into opposing God's sovereignty. False philosophies, false religions and carnal political schemes form the great mirage out in the desert of sin. Men think they see life, refreshment and sustenance in the mirages. Isaiah says, when the Messianic age comes, instead of a mirage there will be real water for thirsty souls. There will be a beautiful, green, cool, satisfying oasis in the midst of the arid, false, killing wilderness of sin. The Living Water would come (Jn. 4:1-42; 7:37-39) and all who believe in Him become "rivers of living water," oases in the desert of sin. Before the gospel the nations wandered like travelers in the desert, allured and disillusioned by shadows and mirages and dreamlike phantoms of truth in the false religions and human political systems. But in the gospel of Christ they have pure fountains and calm lakes of living water which refresh them in their weary pilgrimage home.

That which was once desolate and barren will become lush with an abundance unheard of. This is the meaning of the reference to jackals, normally animals of the desert who have no vegetation in which to lie, finding tall grass, reeds and rushes in which to lie. It is an added figure of speech describing the verdure of the messianic age.

QUIZ

1. Give at least six reasons the prophetic predictions concerning the land of Palestine cannot find their fulfillment in a restored Jewish dispensation.
2. How is the glory of Lebanon given with the excellency of Carmel and Sharon to the "land"?
3. Where is the passage concerning strengthening weak hands and feeble knees paraphrased in the N.T.?
4. What was the Lord's main purpose in opening the eyes of the blind and restoring hearing in the N.T.?
5. Who is the Living Water in the desert of sin, and who become "rivers of living water"?

2. SANCTIFIED

TEXT: 35:8-10

- 8 And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for the redeemed; the wayfaring men, yea fools, shall not err therein.
- 9 No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up thereon; they shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there:
- 10 and the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

QUERIES

- a. What is the highway and The way?
- b. When is the everlasting joy to come?

PARAPHRASE

And a main thoroughfare shall be there in that rejuvenated wilderness. It shall be a road leading the redeemed directly to their destination. This will be called The Way of holiness, and sinners will not walk in this Way. It is reserved for those who desire to be sanctified unto the Lord. It will be a Way so clearly built and recognizable that even the inexperienced and those who have not known this Way before may not fail to comprehend it if they wish to learn of it. All dangers involved in traveling through the wastelands will be eliminated on this Way. Those whom the Lord purchases with a ransom-price will return to Him and to Zion rejoicing with songs about their redemption. Everlasting joy will crown their whole lives. They shall finally find the refreshment of their souls for which they have longed. All that would frustrate or hinder their travel will be made to disappear.

COMMENTS

v. 8-9 THE WAY: Isaiah continues to wax eloquent concerning the great work of redemption Jehovah is going to bring to a climax in the Messianic age. Redemption-opposing, enslaving ideologies are going to be defeated by one great judgmental act of God from heaven (Isa. 34). This occurred at the cross of Christ as we have already demonstrated from the N.T. God is going to take the desolation and waste caused by carnal, unbelieving programs of man and turn them into a blooming flowergarden. God will provide an oasis of living water in the midst of this world-wide desert (Isa. 35:1-7). Furthermore, as the text now being considered continues, God is going to provide a Way through this desolate wasteland of carnal confusion and chaos. The Hebrew word for *way* used here is *maselul*, which means "a raised way." The "roads" in ancient times were mere trails for the most part. But a "raised way" would be a main thoroughfare—distinctly a

road as compared to a path or trail. Instead of the wild confusion and chaos of human philosophies and schemes, God will provide His Way. It is the only Way characterized by holiness. Its uniqueness is that of the separateness of those who walk upon it. They are separated from uncleanness (spiritual and moral uncleanness). The spiritually stained and morally soiled will not travel this Way. Their exclusion will be of their own choice (Mt. 7:13-14) because Jesus is The Way (Jn. 14:6). Jeremiah speaks of this Way (Jer. 6:16-17). This Way will be so unmistakably demonstrated or marked out by God that even the man who has never seen God's Way before will recognize this as His Way. The one with no experience in the Way of God will be able to comprehend and walk in it. It will not be complex or confusing. The "Way" became a favorite synonym for the Christian life in the early church (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9; 19:23; 24:22). This Way would be one of safety, security and peacefulness. No dangerous "beast" (which, by the way, is a figure in Daniel and Revelation to symbolize human governments opposing God's redemptive work), nothing predatory would prey upon those who choose to walk in This Way.

V. 10 THE WAYFARER: Those who travel this "raised way" will be the redeemed (Heb. *goal*) and the ransomed (Heb. *padah*). This certainly indicates the traveler on this way has been purchased with a price. The purchase or ransom occasions *everlasting* joy and results in sorrow and sighing *fleeing away*. The emphasis is on everlasting. It cannot, therefore, have its ultimate fulfillment in anything transitory or temporal such as a land or physical nation/kingdom. It is associated with coming to Zion. Zion, in its spiritual focus, is the church, not a mountain (Heb. 12:22). Those who walk upon this Way are those purchased by the blood of Christ. The joy that shall be the crowning factor of their lives (upon their heads) is the joy Jesus brought (cf. Jn. 15:11; 16:22-24; 17:13; Rom. 14:17; I Jn. 1:4, etc.). Walking on this Way of holiness, which is both clear and safe, will eliminate the need for sorrowing and sighing. Frustration is eliminated and hurt

or damage is impossible (in the eternal sense) inasmuch as the traveler has been assured of reaching his destination because his price has been paid by Jehovah.

It is interesting that this glorious chapter, describing all the beauty, glory and gladness that is to come to the redeemed, is followed (after the historical interlude of chapters 36-39) by the introduction of Isaiah's great "Servant" section (chapters 40-53). All that is to come to the redeemed is a result of the work of the "Suffering Servant" of God (Isa. 53), the Messiah.

This chapter brings to an impressive climax the whole section warning that emancipation for God's people is not from union with Egypt. Egypt, in reality, is in opposition to God's redemptive work, as are all human ideologies. Emancipation for God's people will be accomplished by God Himself in ransom and redemption. It is appropriated by those who wish it in traveling on God's Way.

QUIZ

1. What is the literal meaning of "highway" in v. 8?
2. What connection does this section have to 35:1-7?
3. Where in the N.T. is the "Way" referred to?
4. Why does the fact that the traveler upon this Way will be redeemed and ransomed point to a fulfillment in the N.T.?
5. What "joy" is referred to in v. 10?

EXAMINATION

CHAPTERS THIRTY-FOUR AND THIRTY-FIVE

DEFINITION

(Define the following words or phrases as they were discussed in the comments.)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. <i>host of heaven</i> | 7. <i>wilderness</i> |
| 2. <i>sword of Jehovah</i> | 8. <i>glory of Lebanon</i> |
| 3. <i>Edom</i> | 9. <i>streams in the desert</i> |
| 4. <i>line of confusion</i> | 10. <i>highway</i> |
| 5. <i>night-monster</i> | 11. <i>fool</i> |
| 6. <i>book of Jehovah</i> | 12. <i>Zion</i> |

MEMORIZATION

And a _____ shall be there, and a _____, and it shall be called _____; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for the _____: the _____ man, yea fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor shall any _____ go up thereon; they shall not be found there; but the _____ shall walk there: and the _____ of Jehovah shall return, and come with _____ unto Zion; and everlasting _____ shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and _____, and sorrow and _____ shall flee away. (35:8-10)

EXPLANATION

1. Explain why the prophets spoke of the coming Messianic age in terms of cosmic cataclysms?
2. Explain the practice of using Edom to represent all God-opposing human governments.
3. Explain why the prophets used figures of speech depicting a rejuvenated land to portray the Messianic age?

APPLICATION

(In its context every scripture has one meaning—the author's intended meaning. How may the following be applied in the believer's life?)

1. What application may be made in proper Bible study today of the evident prophetic manner of depicting the Messianic age by cosmic upheaval?

2. What application may be made of God's attitude toward Edom in today's world of God-opposing human ideologies?
3. What application may be made in teaching today what God's Way is like from Isaiah's description of the Way in chapter 35?

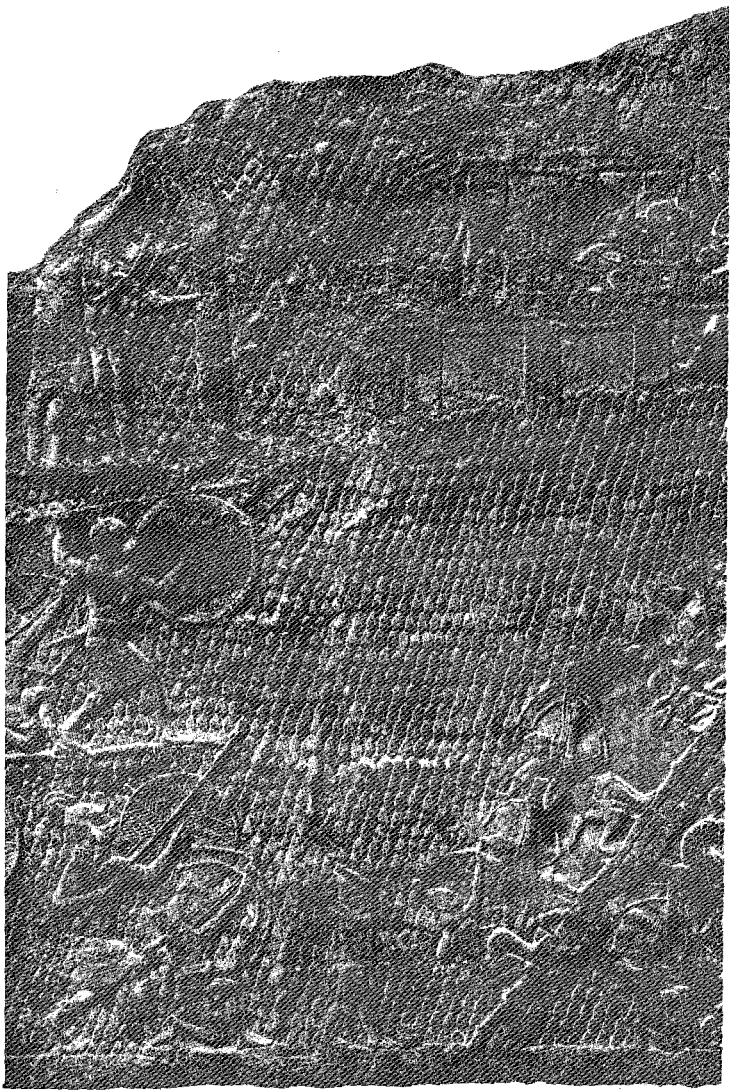
VI. CHASTENING THROUGH CAPTIVITY CHAPTERS 36 - 39

A. PRESSURE, CHAPTER 36

1. PREDICAMENT

TEXT: 36:1-12

- 1 Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib, king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah, and took them.
- 2 And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field.
- 3 Then came forth unto him Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder.
- 4 And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trusteth?
- 5 I say, thy counsel and strength for the war are but vain words: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou hast rebelled against me?
- 6 Behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust on him.



"Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them" (II Kings 18:13).

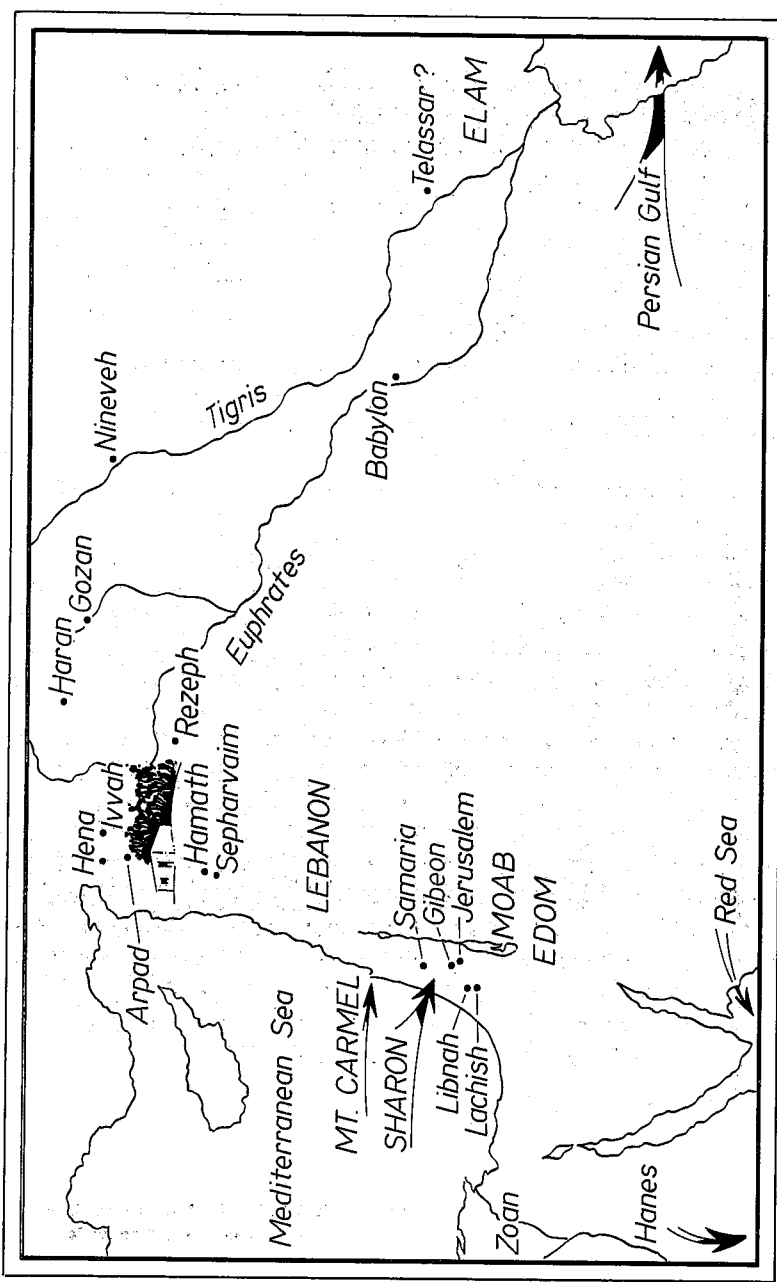
After more than two thousand five hundred years this relief from Nineveh reproduces for us the attack of Sennacherib's army upon the biblical city of Lachish, with overwhelming force and with all the techniques of war. The defenders fight desperately from the towers, protected by shields between the battlements—"like the tower of David, builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men" (Song of Solomon 4:4). They are shooting arrows, slinging stones or throwing them with their bare hands and hurling firebrands down upon the enemy.

FROM: THE BIBLE AS HISTORY IN PICTURES
By Werner Keller - Wm. Morrow Co.



They wear pointed helmets like the Assyrians or close-fitting caps with chin- straps. Assyrian sappers have built a series of sloping brick ramps on which the siege- engines are pushed up the hillside against the fortress walls. The battering-rams are fitted with a long shaft in front, the purpose of which was to gouge stones out of the masonry. A soldier was posted in the front of the machine to keep throwing ladlefuls of water on the flying firebrands, thus preventing the flames from spreading. The archers advance under cover of the battering-rams. Behind them come the spearmen with large round shields. Captives, both men and women, are already leaving the city, passing three impaled victims.

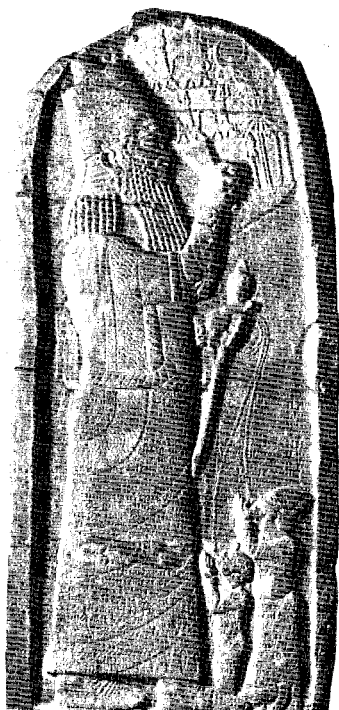
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"And it came to pass, as he (Sennacherib) was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword" (II Kings 19:37).

Sennacherib was assassinated in 681 B. C. These men formed part of the palace guard and private bodyguard of the great Assyrian monarch. They were obviously not very efficient.



"And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead" (II Kings 19:37).

This short matter of fact statement in the Bible is amplified by Esarhaddon himself, the son of Sennacherib, who succeeded the murdered king. He describes these turbulent days in Nineveh: "Disloyal aspirations overpowered my brothers . . . they rebelled. To seize the kingdom they killed Sennacherib. I became a raging lion, I was consumed with fury . . ." On this victory monument King Esarhaddon stands over two of his vanquished foes, Usanahuru, son of Taharka of Egypt (kneeling) and King Abdimilkutti of Sidon. He has these dwarf-like princes roped through the lips like wild beasts. "Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips . . ." (Isaiah 37:29).

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- 7 But if thou say unto me, We trust in Jehovah our God: is not that he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar?
- 8 Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.
- 9 How then canst thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?
- 10 And am I now come up without Jehovah against this land to destroy it? Jehovah said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.
- 11 Then said Eliakim and Shebna and Joah unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall.
- 12 But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall, to eat their own dung, and to drink their own water with you?

QUERIES

- a. Who is "Rabshakeh"?
- b. At which altar did Hezekiah tell Judah to worship?
- c. Did Rabshakeh threaten Jerusalem by Jehovah's command?

PARAPHRASE

It was in the fourteenth year of the reign of King Hezekiah that Sennacherib, king of Assyria, made military expeditions against many of the fortified cities of Judah and conquered most of them. While he was occupied with the siege of Lachish, the king of Assyria sent his commander-in-chief with a great

number of troops to deliver an ultimatum to Hezekiah. When the king of Assyria's commander arrived at Jerusalem, he set up camp with his troops by the conduit of the upper pool along the road going down to the bleaching field. A trio of high officials from Hezekiah's court went out to where the Assyrian troops were to confer with their leader: Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, chief administrator; Shebna who was formerly chief administrator but now serving as a scribe; Joah, son of Asaph, an official chronicler, all went out to talk to the Rab-shakeh. The Assyrian official said to them, Go tell this Hezekiah that the great king of Assyria wants to know what kind of a fool he is for thinking the king of Egypt will help him? The great king of Assyria wishes to inform Hezekiah of the uselessness of his strategies and conferences on war. Who in the world will be able to help him now that he has rebelled against the great king of Assyria? Egypt is not just a useless ally, she is a dangerous one. She is like a broken but sharp stem of the reed—she will pierce your hand if you lean upon her. Now before you say to me, We are trusting in Jehovah our God, let me ask you, is not this the God Hezekiah defied by tearing down all the altars you people built to your God in the high places and groves and made everyone worship only at the altar in Jerusalem? My master, the king of Assyria, wants to make a wager with you—that you don't have 2000 cavalymen in your whole army. If you do, the king of Assyria will give you 2000 horses for them to ride on! Now with a tiny army like that, how do you propose to make war on even the smallest and worst section of my master's army? With so little to offer, how do you expect to get help from Egypt? Furthermore, do you think I have come here without the help of your own God, Jehovah. Let me tell you, your own God, Jehovah, spoke to me and told me to make war on this land and destroy it. Then the three Hebrew men representing king Hezekiah said, with much consternation in their voices, Speak, O Rab-shakeh, I beg you, in the Aramaic language; we understand it. Please do not continue to speak these threats in Hebrew because our countrymen there on the city's walls will hear and chaos will fill the

city. But the Rab-shakeh said, Do you think my master has sent me just to threaten Hezekiah? I was sent to threaten the whole Jewish nation and warn them they will suffer atrocious and inhuman degradations if they do not surrender. They will eat their own dung and drink their own urine if they force my master to war against them.

COMMENTS

v. 1-5 **RABSHAKEH'S INQUIRY:** This section of Isaiah is one of three different historical records of these events. The other two records are II Kings 18 and 19, and II Chronicles 32. These three records do not contradict, but supplement one another. Chronicles seems to be, in these events, as it is in so many other parallel events, a condensation of what actually took place because Chronicles is the "theological" view of the theocracy while Kings is the "historical" view.

One might wonder why Isaiah would insert an historical narrative squarely in the middle of a series of grandly soaring and majestic prophecies. Without doubt his purpose is to give *proof* of his prophetic call and mission. The rapid fulfillment of Isaiah's prediction concerning the deliverance of Jerusalem, the restoration of Hezekiah and the death of the Assyrian king would prove conclusively that he was sent from Jehovah and spoke Jehovah's word!

There is a minor problem with the year of Hezekiah's reign. The campaign of Sennacherib against the cities of Judah took place from 703 to 701 B.C. This would at first glance indicate Hezekiah's reign to begin about 717-715 B.C. According to II Kings 18:1-2 it began in the 3rd year of Hoshea of Israel and lasted for 29 years. Hoshea was king of Israel when Shalmanezzer began his siege of that kingdom. That was in Hoshea's seventh year and Hezekiah's fourth. Three years later Hoshea was carried captive (cf. II Kings 18:9-10). Israel fell to Shalmanezzer in 722-721 B.C. (II Kings 18:9ff). This means that Hezekiah began to reign six years before the downfall

of Samaria, i.e., 728-727 B.C. Edward J. Young submits the possibility of an early emendation to the Hebrew text—a slight change in one of the characters in a specific Hebrew word. Only a slight alteration could change the Hebrew word *'eseryis* (twenty-four) to *'esereh* (fourteen) and thus create the apparent discrepancy here. If this were the 24th year of Hezekiah's reign (703 B.C.) it would place the beginning of it 728-727 B.C. Young, however, offers no manuscript evidence for this possibility. Another possible explanation is that 703 B.C. may be noted as the fourteenth year in which Hezekiah was the sole ruler of Judah! It has been proven by ancient records uncovered by archaeologists that kings of antiquity often ruled a number of years in a *co-regency* with their aged father-kings. In other words, Hezekiah may have ruled the first 10-12 years *with* his father, and *without* his father from 717-715 B.C. for the next fourteen years. This would explain calling 703-701 B.C. Hezekiah's fourteenth year of rule. (see also, *Old Testament History*, Smith/Fields, College Press, p. 556-561).

The king of Assyria took 46 cities of Judah, as we have mentioned elsewhere. Now he, himself, is occupied with an assault upon Lachish, some 30 miles southwest of Jerusalem. The king sends his Rab-shakeh to inquire of Jerusalem's intentions toward his campaign of conquest in Judah. *Rab* means chief, and *shakeh* probably is a military officer. The Rab-shakeh was probably the emperor's *personal*, most trusted military commander much like the American Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who may be depended upon for absolute allegiance to carry out very important military/political functions the President himself cannot attend to. When he spoke it was with direct and absolute authority from the king himself. To make his mission more ominously impressive, he came to Jerusalem with a "great" army.

Now Hezekiah had been busily restoring true and holy religion to Judah. He had been breaking down idolatrous altars, reinstating the Passover, rebelling against paying tribute to a pagan Assyrian empire, and defeating Philistine enemies, (II Kings 18:1-8; II Chron. 29-31). When the king

of Assyria came marching into Judah with his campaign of conquest, it appears Hezekiah had second thoughts about his refusal to pay tribute to Assyria and sent an apology to the king at Lachish (II Kings 18:13-16) and stripped the gold from the doors of the temple and took silver and gold from the treasury of the temple and the palace and gave it to the Assyrian emperor. What was Hezekiah's motive for such an apparent reversal of courage, faith and godliness being demonstrated by his unique and amazing religious reform? Perhaps he rationalized, The throne of David is in imminent danger of being overthrown and the House of David extinguished; I am old, my days are numbered, I have no child to succeed me and the king of Assyria must be placated awhile longer until a royal successor to David's throne is produced. Or, perhaps, Hezekiah, like many rulers, compromised his convictions simply from fear.

Lachish is approximately 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem (see Map #1) and would take the Rab-shakeh two days of marching, setting up camp at night, to reach Jerusalem. Upon arriving at Jerusalem the Assyrians probably set up their bivouac in the Kidron Valley or on the slope of the Mt. of Olives, eastward from the main gates of the city. Located there also is the Gihon Spring and the Upper Pool with its new secret conduit hewn out of solid rock by Hezekiah's workmen to hide Jerusalem's chief water supply from the Assyrians (cf. II Chron. 32:1-8). It was probably Hezekiah who first extended the wall to the western hill (known as Modern Zion). In 1970, Professor Nachman Avigad of Hebrew University unearthed a massive portion of ancient wall in the Jewish quarter of the Old City. This wall was 25 feet thick in some places and located opposite the Temple area (see Map #3). The reader may research this information in *The Biblical Archaeology Review*, September, 1975. Archaeologists date this wall in the late 8th century B.C. This is probably Hezekiah's "outer wall" of II Chronicles 32:5. Hezekiah's underground conduit (through which tourists can walk today) enabled the city successfully to withstand the Assyrian siege. A second unprotected earlier

conduit has been traced from Gihon Spring, directly southward, outside the walls of David's city, discharging its waters through a short tunnel behind a dam built across the mouth (lower end) of the Tyropoeon Valley. This was the Old Pool of Isaiah 22:11 and was the pool probably enlarged later by Hezekiah and called the "reservoir between the two walls" and was probably intended to take the overflow of his new conduit (see Map #3). Here by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field Ahaz had rejected the word of God and the promises of the true King and had turned to the Assyrians (cf. Isa. 7:3). Now, the Assyrians are here on this same spot, a terrifying, threatening consequence of the disobedience of the rulers of God's people.

Accompanying the Rab-shakeh were officers called "the Tartan and the Rab-saris" (II Kings 18:17) and upon their arrival at the "upper pool" they "called for the king" (II Kings 18:18). It was a calculated show of insolence and contempt for Hezekiah. But Hezekiah did not come in person. He was represented by Eliakim, Shebna and Joah. Eliakim has assumed the duties formerly assigned to Shebna, chief of the king's house (see our comments on ch. 22:20ff). Shebna has been demoted to scribe. What the Rab-shakeh has to say will be recorded.

It is interesting to note the Rab-shakeh always speaks of his own king with proper respect, calling him "the great king," but not once does he refer to Hezekiah as king. There is probably some psychological-warfare intended here as well as outright contempt. The Rab-shakeh's entire speech is masterfully, though rudely done.

The Assyrian begins by challenging the confidence of Judah. The Jews apparently had demonstrated a measure of military-political confidence in something. Perhaps Hezekiah's rebellion (II Kings 18:7) is referred to; perhaps Rab-shakeh knows of an alliance with Egypt—perhaps the Assyrian intelligence department has discovered such an alliance between Judah and Egypt. Whatever the case the Rab-shakeh is trying to destroy this "confidence" for he uses the word "trust" and

“rely” over and over in his speech. The Rab-shakeh also evidently knows something of the details of Hezekiah’s basis for confidence. He intimates that he knows even of the words (“counsel”) and the preparations (“strength”) the Jews have made to war against the Assyrians! He arrogantly classifies them as useless.

v. 6-12 **RABSHAKEH’S INTIMIDATION:** After a rhetorical question, the Rab-shakeh gives his own answer. Judah has trusted in Egypt which he characterizes as a “bruised reed.” Egypt was a land of reeds. For a man to try to lean on a reed was foolish, but to lean on a bruised reed was stupid. Isaiah has already characterized Egypt as “big mouth who does nothing” (30:7). King Hoshea of Israel had relied on Egypt for help against Assyria, but Egypt did not come to his aid (II Kings 17:4). Actually, to trust in Egypt caused nations to suffer worse disaster than if they had not relied upon her. So the figure of a man trying to lean on a bruised reed and having his hand pierced! Perhaps the battle of Eltekeh, between the allied armies of Egypt-Philistines and the Assyrians, had been fought already. Egypt was soundly defeated at this battle near Ekron, according to the annals of Sennacherib. So the Rab-shakeh makes his boast of the inferiority of Egypt.

Having cut the ground from under the Jews in respect to their cherished military alliance with Egypt, the Rab-shakeh turns his sarcasm upon their religious confidence. Implied is a certain knowledge among the Assyrians of the importance attached by the Jews to their worship and reliance on Jehovah. The Assyrian’s reference to Hezekiah’s reform manifests his misunderstanding of the One True God. Hezekiah caused to be “hewed down the Asherim” (II Kings 18:4-5; II Chron. 31:1) and the Nehushtan (the bronze serpent the people had begun to burn incense to). The altars he tore down were evidently Canaanitish places of worship along with some altars the Jews had made for themselves contrary to God’s command that He was to be worshipped in only one place. Yet, in spite of the truth of Hezekiah’s reform, the rank and file of the people of Judah had become so accustomed to worshipping in the high

places at the half-idolatrous altars, they were probably impressed with Rab-shakeh's argument that Jehovah was displeased with them.

The Assyrian commander's next form of intimidation is a dare. He dares the Jews to barter, negotiate (Heb. *'arav*), or, one might translate "make a wager" with the king of Assyria that they have 2000 men to ride war horses. If they can prove they have only that many, the king of Assyria will give them 2000 horses! The Rab-shakeh has no doubt already determined that Hezekiah does not have that many cavalymen. He then continues his tirade of contempt by boasting the Jews are unable to offer reasonable opposition to the *smallest* and least significant of *one* of Assyria's divisions of fighting-men. This would be as frightening as were the boasts and sabre-rattling of Adolph Hitler when he intimidated Neville Chamberlain in the 1930's.

Adding to the trepidation of the Jews would be the announcement of the Rab-shakeh that he had come up to Jerusalem with Jehovah's commission to destroy it. He represents Jehovah as speaking directly to him a command to go against Judah and destroy it! The Rab-shakeh's claim is interesting, to say the least. There are indications that Jehovah would "call" the Assyrians to chasten the Jews (Isa. 5:26ff; 7:18ff; 10:5ff; 28:11ff). God spoke to a number of pagan emperors through dreams, visions and prophets. We are more inclined to believe in this case, however, the Rab-shakeh is self-deceived and thinks he has been sent by the Hebrew God, or is deliberately lying to the Hebrews and received no call whatsoever. There is an inscription of Cyrus, king of Persia, claiming that the Babylonian god, Marduk (Bel), was with him in his conquests of Babylon. It was apparently a widely practiced bit of psychological-warfare among the ancients.

This so unnerved the Hebrew officials for fear his arguments would spread from the mouths of those upon the walls who were listening to the ears of all in the city, exaggerated with each telling, of course, they insist that the Rab-shakeh speak to them in *aramiyth*, Aramaic, and not in *yehudiyth*, Jewish.

Though Aramaic was the common language of diplomacy at this time, it is probable that most of the Jews could not understand it. After their captivity in Babylon they could only understand Aramaic and not Hebrew. The Hebrew language is called here "Jewish" after Judah since the northern kingdom has already gone into captivity and Judah is the only Hebrew nation left. The people of Judah may have been calling themselves *Yehudiyth* for a long time to distinguish themselves from the northern kingdom. It is interesting to note the Rab-shakeh knew the Hebrew language. He was not only the "chief" military man, a master psychologist and well versed in world affairs; he was also a linguist.

In verse 12 the Rab-shakeh makes it plain in the crudest and most humiliating language his purpose for coming to Jerusalem was not diplomacy but intimidation. He did not come to banter pleasantries and subterfuge with Hezekiah or his noblemen. He says bluntly his purpose was to intimidate the common people of the city, threatening them with the most degrading threats. He warns them in their own language they will eat their own dung and drink their own urine if they dare to go to war and resist the Assyrian conquest of their city. People besieged in ancient cities for three and four years in succession often resorted to atrocities such as this and worse for survival (see Josephus' account of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.).

The Rab-shakeh has thoroughly intimidated the populace. They have heard him ridicule their counsels for war as if he knew every move they were making; they have heard him ridicule their "dinky" army as if he knew how few soldiers they really had; they have heard him claim a divine commission from Jehovah for destroying their city; they have heard terrifying threats of human privation—all in their own language. And to impress them with his power to carry out his threats, he brought along a great number of troops. The Rab-shakeh is a skillful propagandist. He will make a psychological turn from intimidation to indulgence. He knows how to "psych" people.

QUIZ

1. What is the "fourteenth" year of Hezekiah's reign?
2. What had Hezekiah done, according to II Kings, to attempt to appease the king of Assyria?
3. Where, most likely, did the Rabshakeh set up camp upon his arrival at Jerusalem?
4. Name four different areas in which the Rabshakeh attempted to intimidate the people of Jerusalem.
5. Why did the Hebrew officials wish Rabshakeh to speak in Aramaic?
6. Evaluate the Rabshakeh's ability as a psychologist?

2. PROPOSITION

TEXT: 36:13-20

- 13 Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria.
- 14 Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he will not be able to deliver you:
- 15 neither let Hezekiah make you trust in Jehovah, saying, Jehovah will surely deliver us; this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.
- 16 Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make your peace with me, and come out to me; and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern;
- 17 until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards.
- 18 Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, Jehovah will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?
- 19 Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out

of my hand?

20 Who are they among all the gods of these countries, that have delivered their country out of my hand, that Jehovah should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?

QUERIES

- a. Was Hezekiah trying to deceive the people?
- b. Why would the Assyrian king take them from their land?
- c. Why refer to the gods of other nations?

PARAPHRASE

Then the Assyrian commander-in-chief stepped forth and shouted loudly in the Hebrew language toward the people gathered on the city walls, Listen to the words of the greatest of all kings, the king of Assyria: Do not let Hezekiah's promises deceive you—nothing he can do will save you. Do not let Hezekiah deceive you by telling you to trust in your Jehovah—that He will save you—that He will not let this city be taken over by the king of Assyria. I repeat, do not listen to Hezekiah! You had better listen to this proposition from the king of Assyria: He says, Surrender on my terms, open the gates of the city and come out in peace and I will let each of you go ahead living on your own land, conducting your own business, prospering, until I have time to come and take you away to a land very similar to this one where you will find as much prosperity as you do here. My taking your city is inevitable. You will be much better off to surrender. Beware that you do not be fooled by Hezekiah's promise that your Jehovah will save you from me. The gods of no other nation have been able to deliver from the king of Assyria. Remember Hamath and Arpad? Their gods did not deliver them. Neither did Sepharvaim's gods and Samaria's gods. Of all the gods of these nations, which one has ever delivered them from my power?

Not a one! And do you think this god of yours can deliver Jerusalem from me? Do not be foolish!

COMMENTS

v. 13-15 **TAUNT:** The Assyrians were noted for their arrogant disregard of the most basic diplomatic etiquette. Their reputation was that of baseness, cruelty and insolence. Rabshakeh, asked to address his words in Aramaic to the representatives of King Hezekiah, insolently rises from his seat, steps forward (probably past the three Hebrew officials) and yells his taunt in the Hebrew language at the people gathered along the walls of the city of Jerusalem. His taunt is that Hezekiah does not know what he is talking about—that Hezekiah is leading the people down the path of deception. It is really an accusation that the people are being exploited by Hezekiah. It is interesting to note the emphatic repetition (4 times) of the Rabshakeh that the people not let Hezekiah deceive them. Evidently Hezekiah had impressed the people that Jehovah would deliver the city from the Assyrians. When Sennacherib first marched into Judah, Hezekiah sent a letter of apology for rebelling against him (see comments 36:1-12). Hezekiah even sent tribute to Lachish to Sennacherib. Isaiah must have convinced Hezekiah in the interval between Sennacherib's initial invasion and Rabshakeh's journey to Jerusalem that the Lord would indeed deliver Jerusalem. Hezekiah made an impassioned plea to the people (II Chron. 32:6-8), after redirecting the city's water supply and building new walls, that "there is one greater with us than with him." It appears the Assyrians had heard of this new courage of Hezekiah and his persuasion of the people. Rabshakeh's words must have indicated to the people that the Assyrians knew even about the passionate pleas Hezekiah made within the confines of their city walls! It would be disconcerting and frightening.

v. 16-17 **TEMPTATION:** The Rabshakeh applies the pressure of fleshly concern for physical well-being, innocent enough in

itself but idolatrous when it supercedes godliness as a first concern. He urges the people to think first of their stomachs. He promises that all will be well with them if they will surrender to the terms of the king of Assyria. The only sacrifice they will have to make, according to the Rabshakeh, is to be taken from their homeland. Even then, he promises, they will be taken to a land as fertile, productive and prosperous as their own. Rabshakeh does not specifically promise them they will participate as citizens or land-owners in the "new land." The fertility of Mesopotamia was, in some ways, greater than that of Palestine. And that was the catch! The appeal was fleshly. The temptation was casting physical survival against a spiritual birthright. It was the age-old temptation begun with Jacob and Esau and epitomized at Christ's temptation in the wilderness to turn stones into bread. The land of Palestine was more than mere physical sustenance to the Hebrews. It was the *covenant* land of their fathers. They were given this land by the mighty hand of Jehovah for a spiritual purpose. It was the land where the only altar to the One True God could be erected. If they, of their own deliberate choice, should surrender to be taken from the land, it would demonstrate their total disregard of their spiritual birthright. Later, when God removed them from their land, it was a graphic object lesson to the Jews that they had forfeited their spiritual legacy by sin and idolatry and no longer deserved to occupy the covenant land. The temptation was to weigh the invisible, ideal matters of faith against the visible, practical matters of the flesh. They were being tempted to think they were, after all, clinging to a religious illusion while they might deprive themselves of a present happiness.

The Hebrew people should have known the practice of pagan empires in transplanting people away from their homelands was not for the pleasure of the conquered people but for the security of the empire. It was a well known practice (cf. II Kings 18:11, etc.) and functioned well in keeping subjugated people from rebelling. Such a practice not only humiliated people and dispersed them widely but it also de-culturized them. They

tended to lose their national identity and thus any strong motivation for rebellion.

v. 18-20 TABULATION: Now Rabshakeh appeals to *seeming* facts of history. He tabulates all the victories the king of Assyria has had over the gods of the nations he has conquered. He begins by warning the Hebrew people not to let Hezekiah "sweet talk" them into depending upon their God. The Hebrew word translated *persuade* is *yasiyth* (from *suth*) meaning "to soothe." It is almost as if Rabshakeh warns the people that Hezekiah may be trying to soothingly seduce them by saying, Jehovah will deliver us. The gods of the nations appear to have been powerless against the great king of Assyria. When the power showdown came, none of the gods of the nations could deliver from the Assyrians. The gods of the nations now sat as trophies in the Assyrian pantheon of gods. In ancient thought, religion and political power were closely connected. If a city or a nation survived and maintained its sovereignty, it was because of the power of its national god; a nation's wanderings were accompanied by the wanderings of its gods, its victories accomplished by its gods, its defeats signs of the inferiority of its gods. If all the powerful gods of the many nations conquered by Assyria were proven powerless, what hope could the Hebrews hold that their God was any more powerful. This appeal to the power of paganism over Jehovah may seem strange to us but to the mind of the heathen, and from the heathen view of politics, religion and history, it was not strange. In fact, in some godless lands today, the same reasoning prevails. See Map #1 for the location of Hamath, Arpad and Sepharvaim.

QUIZ

1. How did Rabshakeh react to the request of the Hebrew officials to refrain from speaking so the people on the wall could hear?
2. What does the repeated warning of Rabshakeh that Hezekiah should not deceive the people about deliverance infer

- about Hezekiah's appeals to them?
3. Where is the record of Hezekiah's appeal to the people to trust God?
 4. What basic temptation did Rabshakeh hold out to the people to get them to surrender to Assyria's terms?
 5. Why did ancient empires transplant conquered peoples away from their homelands?
 6. What significance did Palestine have for the Jew besides a land to live on?
 7. Why did Rabshakeh refer to the pagan gods defeated by Assyria?

3. PATIENCE

TEXT: 36:21-22

- 21 But they held their peace, and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.
- 22 Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, that was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

QUERIES

- a. Why did the king command no answer be made?
- b. Why did the officials tear their clothing?

PARAPHRASE

But in the face of all these taunts and temptations, the people were silent, because King Hezekiah had ordered the people, Do not answer the Assyrian Rabshakeh. Then Eliakim, chief administrator, and Shebna, the royal scribe, and Joah,

the royal chronicler, returned to the presence of Hezekiah with their clothes ripped and torn as a sign of their grief and misery and told him all that had been said by the Rabshakeh.

COMMENTS

v. 21 SILENCE: The usual Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, is not in this sentence. The word is *yaheriyshu* and is translated "held their peace" but literally means "were dumb, silent," and is from the same root word which speaks of engraved sculpture. The idea probably is that the Hebrew officials stood before the Rabshakeh as silent as stone statues! Wise King Solomon said, "there is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak . . ." (Eccl. 3:7). This was a time for silence. Hezekiah commanded it. The Hebrew word for command is *mitzvah*. The *bar-mitzvah* literally means "son of command" and is the ceremony observed for all Jewish boys at the age of 13 when they become "sons of responsibility." In this sentence it is the *mitzvah* of the *melek*; the command of the king. Hezekiah knew that any answer his representatives or his people might give about Jehovah delivering them would not convince the Assyrians to refrain from their threats and actions. It would only agitate them. There are times when "pearls and bread should not be cast before swine and dogs, lest they turn and rend you." There are times, in heated, emotional confrontations when answering taunt with taunt would inflame the situation out of control. Matthew Henry said, "It is sometimes prudent not to answer a fool according to his folly." Hezekiah and Isaiah had reason enough to make an answer to Rabshakeh that God would deliver them, but such an answer would hardly appease such an unreasonable braggart as Rabshakeh. Jesus, facing just such a brazen, foolish and ungodly man in Herod, "answered him not a word."

v. 22 SUFFERING: It was not easy for the Hebrew officials to keep silent. Their dismay and despair is demonstrated in the tearing of their clothing. The Jews tore their clothing when

they were sorrowful, penitent, distraught, confused and angry. All of these emotions may have been welling up within these men. One thing they knew, the Assyrians were powerful and had done all (and more) that the Rabshakeh recounted. What the future held for their city was unknown, as yet. The only alternative they had to the Rabshakeh's tabulation of Assyrian victories was faith in Jehovah. Often, the known is distinct and threatening; the unknown veiled and sometimes even more threatening. So we are often defeated by our own reasoning. Our problems seem insoluble to our thinking. But there is enough evidence of the power of God to deliver the faithful, the believer may have victory over every threat of the enemy.

QUIZ

1. How silent were the people?
2. Why did Hezekiah command them to keep silent?
3. How do we know it was a struggle for them to do so?

B. PERSEVERANCE, CHAPTER 37

1. THE PLEA

TEXT: 37:1-7

- 1 And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of Jehovah.
- 2 And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah, the prophet the son of Amoz.
- 3 And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of contumely; for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.

- 4 It may be Jehovah thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to defy the living God, and will rebuke the words which Jehovah thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left.
- 5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.
- 6 And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith Jehovah, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.
- 7 Behold, I will put a spirit in him, and he shall hear tidings, and shall return unto his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

QUERIES

- a. What is a "day of contumely"?
- b. Why say, "children are come to the birth . . ." etc.?
- c. When did the king of Assyria return to his own land?

PARAPHRASE

When King Hezekiah listened to the report of the men sent to meet with Rabshakeh, he tore his robes indicating his anguish of soul, put on camel's-hair clothing indicating his penitence and went into the Temple to humble himself before the Lord. Just before doing this he had sent Eliakim, his chief administrator, and Shebna, his royal scribe, and the chief priests—all in camel's-hair clothing of humility—to Isaiah, the prophet of God, son of Amoz. They were sent to Isaiah with this message from King Hezekiah: This is a day of distress and anguish, punishment and rebuke, reproach and rejection from the Lord—it is a day from which only a miracle can deliver us like a day when children are ready to be born but the mothers' wombs will not open! So I am hoping, Isaiah,

your God will take note of the defiant, insulting words of the Rabshakeh, who was sent by the king of Assyria for that very purpose and will punish him for the words He has heard the Rabshakeh speak. So pray, Isaiah, for those of us remaining, as many as we can find. So, they came to Isaiah with this message. And this was Isaiah's reply to them: Say this to Hezekiah, your master; Jehovah's word is, Do not be afraid of the threats and insults of the men sent by the king of Assyria, because I will dispose the king of Assyria to leave Judah through a report that will come to him from his homeland that he is needed back there at once, and he will return to his own land, and he will eventually die a violent death by the hand of his own people.

COMMENTS

v. 1-5 WORSHIP: It is significant that Hezekiah, upon hearing the report of Rabshakeh's scoffing intimidation and insulting blasphemy of Jehovah, turned immediately to worship God in penitence and sent to get God's word from God's prophet. Happy is any nation whose ruler turns in penitence to worship Jehovah and seek His word in national crises. It was a Hebrew custom in times of great stress and turmoil, sorrow and remorse to both rend the clothing and put on sackcloth (cf. Gen. 27:34; II Sam. 3:31; I Kings 21:27; Esther 4:1, etc.). In addition to all this Hezekiah went into the Temple (the house of the Lord) undoubtedly to pray. He did not pray to have the Lord's will revealed directly to himself—for that he sent to the messenger of God, Isaiah. His prayer was probably one of penitence.

Not only did Hezekiah devote himself to penitence and seeking the Lord's will, but he instructed his officials to do so also. Most political potentates are accustomed to depend too much on their own power and expertise and consult God's spokesmen only on matters of morality and religion. Many potentates have made that mistake (Saul, Ahaz, Zedekiah,

Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, the Caesars, ad infinitum). Then he sent them to Isaiah. He did not order Isaiah to come to him, as many rulers would have done. Respecting God's prophet shows Hezekiah's deep reverence for God! There was no question in Hezekiah's mind who was the King of the Universe—Jehovah. This is true worship, acknowledging God's sovereignty and seeking His will.

King Hezekiah sends Isaiah his analysis of the current political-military crisis. It is dark and foreboding. The following Hebrew words are used by Hezekiah to describe the situation: *tzar* (trouble, anguish, distress, oppression); *thokekhah* (rebuke, correction, punishment); *natzah* (contumely, contempt, blasphemy). It was a day so dire and catastrophic that it was like a woman in labor struggling to give birth and her womb will not open to deliver. Unless some extraordinary help is forthcoming death will be the result. Hezekiah realizes Judah is at this critical juncture.

Hezekiah's "It may be Jehovah . . . will hear" is like the "Who knows whether he will not turn and repent . . ." of Joel 2:14 and Jonah 3:9, etc. It is not a guess! It is an expression of hope that God will intervene based upon known deeds of God in the past (see our comments, *Minor Prophets*, College Press, pg. 176, 249, 250, 251). Hezekiah's description of the day, trouble, rebuke, contempt, indicates his persuasion that their circumstances were by the permissive will of God to correct them for their trouble, rebuke and contempt of God. Their circumstances were designed to bring them back to God and Hezekiah was one of the first to recognize and admit it. It is no wonder God compared Hezekiah to David—after God's own heart.

So, the good king commits the defiance of the Rab-shakeh to the Living God who is being defied. The Hebrew word translated defy is *lekharek* and means literally to reproach and blaspheme—to insult and scoff at. Hezekiah requests Isaiah to pray for the *shariyth* (remnant) that is *nimetzaah* (findable, or remaining). Apparently the king is referring to besieged Jerusalem as all that is left of Judah. So Hezekiah's servants

brought his request to Isaiah.

v. 6-7 **WORD:** Isaiah's answer is authoritative, direct and simple. It is as simple as Thus saith the Lord. The answer is simple but the application of it (be not afraid) may be difficult in view of the present circumstances. This is where man's faith is put to the test. If faith fails then he is by his own choice not of the nature fit to companion with God. Isaiah told Ahaz (7:4) not to fear the enemies of the covenant people earlier, but Ahaz failed in faith.

The Lord promises, through Isaiah, to "put a spirit" in the king of Assyria. The Hebrew word is *ruakh* which is usually translated spirit but literally means breath or wind. It is sometimes translated mind (Ezek. 11:5; 20:32) and sometimes means an emotion (Prov. 29:11; Gen. 26:35). Just how God "puts a spirit, mind, emotion, disposition" in a pagan ruler to return to his homeland when he seems of a mind to do something other must remain one of the mysteries of the Infinite and Omnipotent God. We are told in other places of such action by God (Isa. 10:5-19; 44:28—45:6; Jer. 51:20-23; II Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). God is capable of speaking to pagan rulers in dreams and visions (as He did to Nebuchadnezzar) or stirring up their spirits (as He did to Cyrus). It does not appear that God gave Sennacherib a vision. He heard something from his own land that caused him to return, and 20 years later he was violently slain by his own sons. We will document this event in later comments. It should be noted here Isaiah does not predict Sennacherib's death immediately upon his arrival back in Assyria. It is not the prophet's purpose to predict all the details—only those which are essential to Hezekiah's trust in the Lord.

QUIZ

1. Why did Hezekiah rend his clothes and put on sackcloth?
2. How drastic had the political-military situation of Judah become?

3. What is the "remnant" that is left?
4. What is the character of Isaiah's reply?
5. How did God put a "spirit" in the king of Assyria?
6. Why did the king of Assyria return to his own land?

2. THE POTENTATE

TEXT: 37:8-13

- 8 So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah; for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.
- 9 And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopa, He is come out to fight against thee. And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying,
- 10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.
- 11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered?
- 12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them, which my fathers have destroyed, Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden that were in Talassar?
- 13 Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivvah?

QUERIES

- a. Why is Tirhakah attacking the Assyrian forces?
- b. Who were the children of Eden?

PARAPHRASE

So the Assyrian army general left Jerusalem and returned to his king. But he found his king waging war on Libnah, having already departed from Lachish. Then the king of Assyria received an intelligence report that Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, was marching toward southern Palestine to fight against him. Immediately, the king of Assyria sent messengers with a warning to Hezekiah, saying to him, Do not be fooled with any oracle from your God that Jerusalem will be delivered from my hand—if you trust in your God you will be deceived. Let me remind you that the reports of Assyrian destruction and victory over all the world are not exaggerated. Now, what makes you think you will be delivered? None of the gods of the different peoples of the world, such as those of Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, or the gods of territories like Beth-eden or Telassar, have been able to deliver them from Assyrian conquest—do you think yours shall deliver you? Where are the kings of nations like Hamath, Arpad, Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? They are gone—dethroned by the mighty Assyrian king.

COMMENTS

V. 8-9 **WARY WARRIOR:** The Assyrian army commander (the Rabshakeh) left Jerusalem and went directly to Libnah, 10 and 12 miles north of Lachish and 25 miles west (and a little south) of Jerusalem. Libnah and Lachish were cities along the "Gaza strip" and were strategic military positions on the Egyptian frontier. The king of Assyria probably felt he had secured Lachish and now he must secure Libnah since he apparently had received word that an Egyptian force was marching toward his deployed troops in Palestine.

Now Tirhakah was not yet king of Egypt. He was nephew of the man (Shabaka 715-701 B.C.) who was then king of Egypt. It appears from ancient records that Tirhakah was

approximately 20 years of age at the time of Sennacherib's (701 B.C.) expedition into Judah. He would be old enough, since he was royalty, to be put in charge of a military force. Tirhakah's brother (Shabataka 701-689 B.C.) was the Pharaoh after Shabaka and then Tirhakah became Pharaoh (689-664 B.C.). Edward J. Young thinks Tirhakah is proleptically called king. That is, Isaiah, writing some years after these events occurred, when Tirhakah was in fact king, calls him king in an event that took place before he was king. This is not unusual. Daniel calls Nebuchadnezzar "king of Babylon" proleptically in Daniel 1:1. Tirhakah was the third and last Pharaoh of the 25th Ethiopian dynasty. His Ethiopian kingdom was quite Egyptian in character. Sennacherib was successful against Tirhakah, but the mysterious loss of Assyrian troops forced Sennacherib back to Assyria. Tirhakah enjoyed a respite from the Assyrian threat for some years, but was defeated by Esarhaddon and later by Assurbanipal. He was driven south where he retained rule of that portion of Egypt.

Sennacherib apparently associated Tirhakah's show of force with Hezekiah's refusal to surrender to Rabshakeh. He evidently assumed the Egyptians were in collusion with the Hebrews and they were coming to rescue Jerusalem from Assyrian conquest. So the Assyrian king sent a written (37:14) message to Hezekiah.

V. 10-13 WRITTEN WARNING: Verse 10 makes it appear as if the Assyrians have spies within the very chambers of King Hezekiah. It almost seems as if the Assyrians knew the very words Isaiah spoke in reply to Hezekiah's request (37:5-6). Here the Assyrian messengers are told to "speak" the message to Hezekiah. In 37:14 Hezekiah takes a "letter" from the messengers and reads it. Perhaps the messengers read the letter to Hezekiah upon their arrival and then he took it from their hand and read it for himself. The message from Sennacherib was a warning. It intended to remind Hezekiah of current political history. It was common knowledge in the world at that time of the ruthless, overwhelming, destructive power of the Assyrians and the extensiveness of their conquests.

They had conquered or at least dominated the whole Asia Minor-Mesopotamian-Palestinian area. Sufficient power to resist the Assyrians could not be found anywhere in the world! Cities and territories which had existed for centuries were swiftly conquered. Famous kings and potentates had been deposed and taken captive and either killed or deported into slavery. Whole cities and areas had been repopulated with Mesopotamian immigrants. The political, cultural, racial face of the inhabited world was being drastically changed. And does little, weak, religiously-oriented Judah think it can stand against a military machine like Assyria?

Some of the cities and territories listed have been located by the archaeologists and historians. Some are still lost in the sands and dust of antiquity. The reader may refer to Map #1 for locations of those known and those conjecturally placed. Beth-eden is the Eden referred to in verse 12. Since many leading scholars and archaeologists believe the Garden of Eden was in Mesopotamia (Greek for "between the rivers"), Beth-eden may very well have retained its name from the Garden of Eden. William F. Albright, renowned archaeologist and scholar of antiquity says, "Archaeological research has thus established beyond doubt that there is no focus of civilization in the earth that can begin to compete in antiquity and activity with the basin of the Eastern Mediterranean and the region immediately to the east of it. . . ." (Tigris-Euphrates, Mesopotamian area). Very ancient clay tablets with "creation accounts" written on them have been discovered in that general area. Ur and Haran are cities directly associated with Abraham. Telassar was probably a territory near the region of ancient Elam (Media).

The imposing, overwhelming, seemingly omnipotent power of the Assyrian Empire (and other ancient world empires) was beyond anything, comparatively speaking, modern geopolitics has ever experienced. No empire has completely ruled the known world since Rome. None was ever as cruel and terrifying as the Assyrian. Hezekiah could not take Assyrian threats lightly! These threats were extremely critical tests

of the faith of the Judeans. So Hezekiah did the only thing he could do—he took it to the Lord!

QUIZ

1. Why would the king of Assyria want to conquer Libnah?
2. Why may we conjecture that the king of Assyria suspected a collusion between Tirhakah and Hezekiah?
3. Why would it seem the Assyrians had spies in the Hebrew palace?
4. Why would the king of Assyria remind the Hebrews of current world events?
5. Could the Eden of verse 12 have any association with the Garden of Eden in Genesis? Why?
6. Why could Hezekiah not take lightly these threats of Assyria?

3. THE PRAYER

TEXT: 37:14-20

- 14 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up unto the house of Jehovah, and spread it before Jehovah.
- 15 And Hezekiah prayed unto Jehovah, saying,
- 16 O Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, that sittest above the cherubim, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.
- 17 Incline thine ear, O Jehovah, and hear; open thine eyes, O Jehovah, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, who hath sent to defy the living God.
- 18 Of a truth, Jehovah, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the countries, and their land,
- 19 and have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them.

20 Now therefore, O Jehovah our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art Jehovah, even thou only.

QUERIES

- a. Why spread the letter before Jehovah?
- b. Why say God sits above the cherubim?
- c. Why cast the nation's gods into the fire?

PARAPHRASE

Hezekiah took the letter from the Assyrian messengers and read it for himself. Then, taking it to the Temple, he presented it before the Lord and prayed, saying, O Lord of hosts, Great God of Israel enthroned upon Thy Mercy Seat here in this Thy Temple, Thou art the Only God, King of all kingdoms, and Omnipotent Creator of the universe. Please turn Thine ears to hear my pleas and direct Thine eyes, O Lord, to see what I have to present to Thee. See, Lord, this letter of Sennacherib; it is a mocking defiance of Thy sovereignty. Admittedly, Lord, the kings of Assyria have conquered and destroyed all those peoples listed in the letter. Yes, they have thrown their gods into the fire and proved they were not gods at all but just pieces of wood and stone carved into images by men's hands. Of course, men can destroy gods like those. In view of this, my prayer to Thee, O Living God, is that Thou wilt save us so that all the world may know that Thou art the Only God:

COMMENTS

v. 14-16 PRAISE: Unlike Ahaz, when threatened by the Syrian-Israeli coalition, who went to the king of Assyria for help (see comments on Isa. 7:10-16), Hezekiah turned

immediately to the Lord for help from his enemies. Hezekiah did not spread the letter before the Lord because he believed God would not know what it said had he not taken it to the Temple. His concept of God was not that of mysticism or paganism, as his prayer demonstrates. Hezekiah believed in a God who was omnipotent and omniscient.

Hezekiah's prayer ranks alongside the great prayers of the Bible as a model men today would do well to follow. It is brief, compared to the grand prayer of Daniel (ch. 9), but equally as reverent and believing. All praying should begin and end with *praise* to God. Jesus taught, "Pray this way, Our Father, who art in heaven, *hallowed* be thy name. . . ." The holiness, majesty, righteousness, faithfulness, and sovereignty of God should be our *first* concern in prayer or evangelism or worship. Our salvation, our blessedness, our development into His nature all depends upon who He is—not upon what we are or what we want. Of course, we cannot be saved or blessed unless we want it, but we could want it forever and never have it if God is not Who He Is. Too much prayer is focused on petition and not enough on praise. Too much asking has a tendency to make our wants sovereign. Let us *first* pray, "Thy kingdom come, *thy* will be done, on earth just like it is in heaven. . . ."

The cherubim were the angel-like figures with wings, one on each end of the ark of the covenant, within the Holy of Holies in the Temple. They hovered over the "mercy seat" and were symbols to represent the place where God's presence dwelt. Hezekiah, of course, did not think his God was a provincial God like those of the pagans, restricted to houses made with hands. He was merely reiterating his belief that Jehovah God was present where God said He would be—in His Temple. He was affirming his faith that God was with the nation in their extremity.

v. 17-19 PETITION: Hezekiah refers to God anthropomorphically. That is, he refers to God as having human attributes (ears, eyes, etc.). This is true of both Old and New Testaments. Human attributes are the highest forms or symbols within

man's experience by which he may express nonexperienced attributes! Anthropomorphism is an attempt to express the non-rational aspects of God's being in terms of the rational. Biblical anthropomorphism is quite different from pagan concepts of their gods. The anthropomorphism of pagan religions describes their gods in forms of man and animals, trees, stars, or even a mixture of elements. To regard Jehovah God solely as Absolute Being or The Great Unknown is to refer to *him* or *it*, but if man is ever to think of God as personal, one with whom he can fellowship, man must think of God as *Thou*, and man can only conceive of *Thou* in anthropomorphic symbols. Hezekiah is praying, not to an Idea, but to a Person.

Note also Hezekiah's preciseness in prayer. He does not pray a generalized prayer for delivery from a general enemy. He prays the Lord to take action on the very words of Sennacherib. Specific prayer for a specific need. But what is the need? Hezekiah focuses on the fact that Sennacherib has defied the living God. The primary need, as Hezekiah sees it, is not physical deliverance but vindication of the sovereignty of Jehovah God (see v. 20). Hezekiah is well aware of the power of Assyria. He is a realist and no foolish optimist. The kings of Assyria have done all they brag about. They have laid waste the major portion of the inhabited world. They have even wreaked havoc and desolation in their own land (Mesopotamia) (cf. Isa. 14:20). This characterizes the Assyrians as a people thriving on war and desolation. They cared not that their warlike nature brought destitution even to their own land! One concept thoroughly established by the Assyrian conquests was the demonstration that the gods of all the nations conquered by them were *not* gods at all. When the Assyrians conquered a nation they took that nation's gods (idols and images) and threw them into the fire and burned (wood and metal and stone) and melted them. The Assyrians proved that the gods of other nations were powerless. But what about the gods of the Assyrians?

v. 20 PURPOSE: Hezekiah's primary purpose was not for himself, not even for his country, but for the glory of God.

Hezekiah is concerned for the honor of God. He prays that the power, sovereignty and uniqueness of Jehovah be vindicated before the eyes of the world. He is not willing that Jehovah be considered just another one of the provincial gods of the nations. God repeats over and over in the Old Testament that He acts for "his own sake," and the men of faith in the Old Testament always prayed that God would act for "his own name's sake" (cf. II Sam. 7:21; I Kings 8:41; II Chron. 6:32; Psa. 6:4; 31:16; 23:3; 31:3; 25:7, 11; 44:26; 79:9; 106:8; 115:1; 143:11; Isa. 37:35; 42:21; 45:4; 48:9, 11; Jer. 14:7, 21; Ezek. 20:9, 14, 22, 44; 36:22; Dan. 9:17, 19). This is the most important concept of the Bible. All of man's hopes in this world or the next rest upon the vindication of the Absoluteness of God's Person. Our every motive, desire, aim, prayer, action and concern must be that God will first act for His own sake. If His Word is not verified and confirmed and established, we are lost! *The faith*, once for all delivered to the saints, is the veracity, sovereignty, mercy, faithfulness, holiness of God as demonstrated and manifested in the Incarnate Son of God, who was Immanuel, "God with us." (see special study, "The Faith Once Delivered For All Time," p. 248.)

QUIZ

1. How does Hezekiah's reaction when threatened by enemies compare with the reaction of Ahaz (Isa. 7)?
2. Why is Hezekiah's prayer great?
3. What is anthropomorphism and why is it necessary when speaking of God?
4. How does Hezekiah express his realism about Assyria?
5. What is the primary purpose of Hezekiah's prayer?
6. Why is this purpose so important in our relationship to God?

4. THE PRONOUNCEMENT

TEXT: 37:21-35

- 21 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying,
Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Whereas thou hast
prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria,
- 22 this is the word which Jehovah hath spoken concerning him:
The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed
thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her
head at thee.
- 23 Whom hast thou defied and blasphemed? and against whom
hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high?
even against the Holy One of Israel.
- 24 By thy servants hast thou defied the Lord, and hast said,
With the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the
height of the mountains, to the innermost parts of Lebanon;
and I will cut down the fall cedars thereof, and the choice
fir-trees thereof; and I will enter into its farthest height,
the forest of its fruitful field.
- 25 I have digged and drunk water, and with the sole of my feet
will I dry up all the rivers of Egypt.
- 26 Hast thou not heard how I have done it long ago, and
formed it of ancient times? now have I brought it to pass,
that it should be thine to lay waste fortified cities into
ruinous heaps.
- 27 Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were
dismayed and confounded; they were as the grass of the
field, as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and
as a field of grain before it is grown up.
- 28 But I know thy sitting down, and thy going out, and thy
coming in, and thy raging against me.
- 29 Because of thy raging against me, and because thine ar-
rogancy is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my
hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn
thee back by the way by which thou camest.
- 30 And this shall be the sign unto thee: ye shall eat this year

that which groweth of itself, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof.

- 31 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.
- 32 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and out of mount Zion they shall escape: the zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this.
- 33 Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come unto this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast up a mound against it.
- 34 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and he shall not come unto this city, saith Jehovah.
- 35 For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

QUERIES

- a. When did Jerusalem laugh Assyria to scorn?
- b. What hook will God put in the nose of Assyria?
- c. Did the king of Assyria come to Jerusalem or not?

PARAPHRASE

Immediately Isaiah sent this message to Hezekiah: This is what Jehovah, the God of Israel says: In answer to your prayer to Me concerning Sennacherib, king of Assyria, this is the Word of Jehovah about Sennacherib: The untouchable daughter of Zion laughs and scorns you despicable Assyrians. Jerusalem shows her disdain of you by a shake of her head. Who do you Assyrians think you are defying and mocking? At whom are you railing with your loud boasting and haughtiness? You are defying the Holy One of Israel! You have sent your aides to threaten the Lord, and they have boasted, We have come over

the great mountains of Lebanon with thousands of my chariots and have plundered every nation in my path of its treasures. We have taken whatever we wanted from any nation. We have conquered and occupied many nations and dug wells for our occupation forces. Egypt with its Nile River is no obstacle to me—I simply walk across it as if it were dry land. How is it you do not know that it was I, The Holy One of Israel, who decreed all of this long ago? How is it you do not acknowledge that you do what you do only by My permissive will? I have allowed you to have all this power to devastate nations and cities. This is the only reason other nations have had no power against you. This is why they were as helpless as grass and tender plants before you and as dead and used-up as the dead grass on a thatched roof. I, the Lord God, know everything you do. I know when you sit down, when you go out, when you come in, and I know every word of defiance you have uttered against me. Now because of your arrogance and challenge to My sovereignty, manifested by your intimidations toward My people, I will lead you in humility and docility back to where you came from like a bull is led with a ring in its nose or a horse is led with a bit in its mouth. And I will prove that I, The Holy One of Israel, am delivering this city by giving this sign to My people: Before the year is over the Assyrians will be gone. The time will again come when you will reap abundantly from the fruits of your toil and your enemy will not plunder your fields. It will not be immediately. It is too late now to plant your crops for this year. You will harvest first only that which comes up from volunteer seed. The next year will be about the same, due to the devastation of the land by the enemy. But in the third year you will once again sow and reap good crops from this land. Those of you who are left in Judah will be firmly established in your land again without interference from foreign occupation, and you will flourish as a nation again. For I, the Lord, have purposed to always preserve, small though it may be, a Messianic people for Myself. And because I am very zealous to fulfill My Messianic covenant, I will deliver Jerusalem from the king of Assyria. The king of Assyria

will not be allowed by Jehovah to make war on Jerusalem. In fact, he will not even come to the city, but he will return to his own land by the same route he entered Palestine. I, even I, will defend this city and save it for the vindication of My Name and to fulfill the promise I made to David.

COMMENTS

V. 21-25 DEFIANCE: Perhaps some of the details of what transpired between Hezekiah and Isaiah are omitted. Perhaps Isaiah was informed in writing or by messenger of Hezekiah's prayer. Or, perhaps God began to answer Hezekiah's prayer even as Hezekiah was praying! (cf. Dan. 9:20-23). The Lord knows our hearts and minds better than we—He is able to answer our prayer before we ask. Whatever the case, the Lord answered in a propositional, verbal message, through a messenger, Isaiah. Hezekiah was not left to try to discern the Lord's answer through a mystical feeling or through a providential "fleece."

The expression, virgin (Heb. *bethulath*) daughter of Zion, is probably to symbolize Jerusalem's untouchableness by the Assyrian king who desires to ravish the city. Virgin is sometimes used to symbolize faithfulness. It is also used to symbolize covenant relationship between Israel and God. Amos speaks of Israel's (the northern kingdom) unfaithfulness and covenant-breaking as a "fallen virgin's" behavior (Amos 5:1-2; see also Ezek. 16:1ff). Perhaps all of this, untouchableness, faithfulness and covenant relationship, are involved in the figure virgin here. The point may be that Jerusalem, for its persistent refusal to prostitute itself to the Assyrian intimidations and dogged determination to trust faithfully in God, is being despised by its antagonists. But God promises the reversal of that. Soon, very soon, Assyria the despiser will be despised. God's promise is so certain it may be predicted as having already occurred! The proud, arrogant, powerful Assyrian king will soon return to his own land, his boasting unfulfilled, to die by assassination.

For shaking of the head as a gesture of scorn, see Psa. 22:7; 109:25; Mt. 27:39.

The question of verse 23 is rhetorical. God is not asking for information, He is challenging the arrogance of Assyria. The king of Assyria, through the servants he sent to Hezekiah, has defied the Sovereign God of the universe. Sennacherib is being warned that he is not dealing with a god of wood or stone, a provincial god of man's making. This is Almighty God, the Only True God. This is The God who holds *all* kings and potentates mentally and morally responsible to Himself, whether they acknowledge him or not (cf. Amos, ch. 2-3; Isaiah, ch. 13-23; Jeremiah ch. 46-51; Ezekiel, ch. 26-32; Daniel, ch. 1-6, etc.). Even in the New Testament, rulers and men of *all* nations are declared morally responsible to the Sovereign God, whether they believe in Him or not (cf. Rom. 1:18-32; 2:1-29; etc.).

The Assyrian monarch boasted that nothing could stand in his way if he decided to march with his army. Not even the mountains of Lebanon (a range of mountains 20 miles long, with two of its peaks rising to over 9000 feet, and remaining snow-capped the year round) could stop him. The mountains of Lebanon formed a formidable natural barrier against invasion of Palestine. To go over the mountains was the only alternative to going across the Arabian desert for those Mesopotamian nations who wished to conquer Palestine. Chariots are made for flat open country. To move an army of chariots over forest-laden, snow-capped mountains 10,000 feet in altitude, would be no small task. But Sennacherib did it and considered such a feat proof that he could conquer any land or people he wished. Egypt's Nile River would not stop him—he would go across that as if he were walking on dry land. Hezekiah's God would not stop him—he boasted—he considered himself god of the world! Nothing could stand in his way. If it were mountains, he would cross over them; if it were the absence of water, he would dig wells and sustain his army; if it were the presence of waters, he would bridge them and take his armies across. He considered himself sovereign

over all circumstances and persons. That is blasphemy!

v. 26-29 **DOWNFALL:** How could the king of Assyria have heard of the predetermined plan of God to use him to "waste fortified cities"? Perhaps God is saying, has it never occurred to you through conscience or common sense that there is Someone greater than you controlling circumstances and lives. There is abundant evidence that God spoke or revealed His will to the ancients, including pagan rulers, in direct ways. He spoke to the Assyrians once through Jonah, the prophet. He spoke to others through dreams, visions, and prophets (cf. Dan. 1-6). He also spoke of His eternal power and deity through nature (cf. Rom. 1:18-32; Acts 14:14-18; 17:22-29, etc.). Whatever the case, the Assyrian nation had plenty of proof (through Jonah's demonstration of the sovereignty of Jehovah and through nature) that man does not control circumstances or destiny. God uses governments and nations as tools to carry out His sovereign purposes (cf. Jer. 27:5-7; Daniel, ch. 7-12; Rom. 13:1-7; Rev. ch. 1-22; Isa. 10:5-34, etc.). That the Assyrian monarch did not recognize the certainty of a Higher Power directing history, in light of all the evidence, indicates his pride overcame conscience and common sense. In other words, his unbelief was deliberate and moral. (See Special Study, *Unbelief Is Deliberate*, pg. 99). It was God who gave other nations into the hand of the Assyrian. They fell because God permitted it. It was the height of moral perversity for Assyria to think they controlled the world. There are men today who think by their scientific expertise (atomic or nuclear physics; genetic restructuring; space exploration) they are approaching the ability to control circumstances and destiny. That is just as intellectually dishonest and morally perverse as Sennacherib's boasting.

Whatever the king of Assyria does is not outside the knowledge of God. God knows Sennacherib's "sitting down, and going out, and coming in," (cf. Psa. 11:4; 44:20-21; 139:1-12; Jer. 12:3; 17:9-10). God knows man's thoughts and deeds (Jn. 2:23-25; Mk. 9:33-35; Lk. 9:46-48; Mt. 25:31-46). God knows when arrogant men rage against Him and He deals with

them in His own good time (cf. Dan. 4-6). The Lord declares He will put a *khakhiy* (a hook for animal's noses) in the Assyrian's nose and a *mitheggiy* (a bridle for animals) in the Assyrian's mouth and turn him back to his own land.

The arrogancy that blasphemes must be dealt with by the Sovereign God. When a human ruler attempts usurpation of Divine sovereignty he must be brought low. God must show that He is still sovereign, so He will interverie through supernatural and providential actions to humiliate the Assyrian braggart and lead him around where God would have him to be. There are *bas reliefs* in ancient Assyrian monuments depicting prisoners being led by ropes attached to rings in their noses. God will put His own "ring" in Sennacherib's nose and lead him (slaying 185,000 soldiers, and a rumor from Nineveh that he should come home).

v. 30-35 DELIVERANCE: One must not forget that God's central purpose in the Assyrian downfall was the deliverance of His faithful remnant and the fulfillment of His redemptive plan in them. God uses the wicked schemes of wicked men as tools to work out His redemptive purpose. When God's people became so wicked they needed chastening, He allowed the cruel Assyrians to bring them back to dependence upon Him. Now that Hezekiah has led the nation in a turning back to God, He will punish the arrogant boasting of the Assyrian (cf. Isa. 10:5-34) as further evidence of His power to fulfill His redemptive program.

Isaiah is predicting a complete removal of the Assyrians from the land of Palestine—not just a temporary let-up of the siege of Jerusalem. The massiveness of the Assyrian army, its need to live off the land it occupied and its complete disregard for life or property would have brought unparalleled devastation to the agricultural and economic situation of Palestine! The Assyrians had conquered 46 cities of Judah and had ravaged the whole land except Jerusalem. He had been there for more than a year. But Isaiah predicts the Assyrian will be gone and as soon as can be expected, the people left in Judah will be reaping and harvesting their own crops again. There will be

no miraculous, immediate restoration of the agricultural-economic prosperity. For the immediate year and the one following the people will suffer the effects of the Assyrian devastation of their land; that is, they will eat from crops produced by volunteer seed for the first two years. There would not be enough harvest for two years to provide seed for a full sowing. But the third year would see agriculture returned to its normal processes. That would signify to them God had delivered them from the Assyrian.

The *remnant* will be saved. God has always carried out His work with a "left-over" segment of mankind. The cosmic work of redemption has always been trusted to a minority. It will not be any different when God closes the historical, human part of this work. The New Testament indicates the way that leads to life is "strait and narrow" and few will find it. The majority will be found, at any time, on the broad way that leads to destruction. Great men like Isaiah and Hezekiah were able to persuade a few to trust God and make themselves available to Him that He might bring the Messiah into the world. The *remnant* of this faithful few can be traced throughout the Old Testament right up to Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The zeal (*kineath*, in Hebrew) of the Lord will accomplish this (see comments on Isa. 9:7). The Lord is jealous for His own work and His own people. He is jealous for His own sovereignty, so He will not let the king of Assyria carry out his boast to ravage Jerusalem. In fact, God will not even permit the king of Assyria to come to the city. No siege mound will be built up surrounding Jerusalem by the Assyrians. God is going to save it to vindicate His own power and fulfill His promise to David (II Sam. 7:12, etc.). This is quite a prediction by Isaiah in view of the fact that the Assyrians at that moment controlled all of Palestine except the immediate city of Jerusalem! But if God is for us, who can be against us?! (cf. Rom. 8:28-39).

QUIZ

1. What does the use of the term "virgin" mean in reference to Jerusalem?
2. Why does God ask Sennacherib who he thinks he is raging against?
3. How would God expect the king of Assyria to hear of His sovereignty?
4. Why did God have to put a "hook" in the nose of the Assyrian?
5. What is the sign that God had delivered Palestine from the Assyrians?

5. THE PHENOMENON

TEXT: 37:36-38

- 36 And the angel of Jehovah went forth, and smote in the camps of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.
- 37 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.
- 38 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.

QUERIES

- a. How did the angel of the Lord kill so many?
- b. Why did Sennacherib's sons kill him?

PARAPHRASE

That night the angel of the Lord went out to the camp of the Assyrian army and killed 185,000 warriors. When those who were still alive awakened in the morning they beheld the terrible sight of all the dead bodies strewn throughout their camp. Then Sennacherib, king of Assyria, set out to leave and he went immediately, returning to his own country, Nineveh. A number of years later, while he was worshipping in the temple of Nisroch his god, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer assassinated him with their swords. They escaped into the land of Ararat, and Esar-haddon, another of Sennacherib's sons became king.

COMMENTS

v. 36-37 DEPARTURE: This epilogue is an historical record of the fulfillment of all of Isaiah's prophecies of the failure of the Assyrian empire to destroy the covenant people of God. The only possible way God could carry out His promise to deliver Jerusalem and Palestine from the Assyrian was by supernatural intervention (either directly or indirectly through providence). It is a matter of record (see also II Kings 19:35-37, and II Chronicles 32:20-23), that God intervened supernaturally and directly. An angel (Heb. *maleak*) of Jehovah (Heb. *Yahweh*) went into the Assyrian army camp and killed 185,000 soldiers. The account in II Kings 19 records that the slaying took place the same night Sennacherib's message of arrogant blasphemy was delivered to Hezekiah. How would the angel of the Lord perform such a herculean task? This event reminds the Bible student of the destroying angel of Exodus 12:12-23 and II Samuel 24:1-16. The ministry of angels is spectacular and comprehensive in the Biblical record (see our special study, "The Mystery and Ministry of Angels," commentary on Daniel, College Press, p. 387-404.) One angel had the power to restrain Persia and Greece (cf.

Dan. 10:15-21). One angel has the power to harm a third of the earth (Revelation 8 & 9). God is able to make His angels wind and fire (Heb. 1:7), and sends them forth as "ministering spirits to serve for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation" (Heb. 1:14). Angels do not necessarily have to take human form to do God's service. They may serve in any form, wind, fire, disease, pestilence, war, famine, or whatever suits God's purposes. We simply do not know how the angel of the Lord smote 185,000 men in one night. The Hebrew verb *yaceh* generally means to smite with a disease. America suffered approximately 50,000 war deaths in the more than two years of war in Korea. There were over 55,000 American soldiers slain in the over ten years of war in Viet Nam. With all man's modern technology and massive destructive powers 185,000 dead in a single night still seems a staggering number.

The annals of King Sennacherib make no mention of a disaster to his troops in Palestine. However, there is an interesting tradition preserved by Herodotus (II, 141) which relates that Sennacherib, "king of the Assyrians and the Arabians," led a great army against Egypt. This military move seems to have been subsequent to the subjugation of Philistia and Judea, and to have been a final stroke to secure one of the ultimate objects of his expedition—the conquest of Egypt. The tradition states that the Egyptian army was made up of "traders, artisans, and merchants, and that in great fear they encamped at Pelusium, within range of the enemy (Assyrians)." The Assyrian's camp was completely overrun by an army of field mice, which gnawed apart all of their leather trappings, such as bowstrings, quivers, and shield-straps. On the next morning with only fragments of weapons, the Assyrian troops were routed, put to flight, and many of them slain. This tradition probably has some basis in fact and is an echo of some calamity to the Assyrian army. Some have suggested the mice may have carried bubonic plague, which is both swift and deadly in its working. When Sennacherib and the remainder of his army awoke in the morning the scene must have stunned them. Death on such a massive, sudden scale would cause first,

dumbfoundedness, then fear, then, perhaps, chaos. The Hebrew language is forceful—"and behold! all of them, corpses, dead ones!" What else could Sennacherib conclude but that a Power greater than he and his army had visited during the night. This great catastrophe had happened so unexpectedly, so silently, so suddenly. No one had awakened during the night when it was happening. This was no place for Sennacherib. He would not dare go boasting to Hezekiah now. He had never before suffered such an inglorious defeat. So he left Judea. His departure is stated in the Hebrew language in short, rapid terms, "And he set out, and he went, and he returned to Nineveh."

Although Sennacherib subjugated the entire eastern coastline of the Mediterranean Sea, carried off a vast amount of booty, and levied tribute on the conquered cities and provinces, there is no hint in his records during the remaining 20 years of his reign that he ever again visited this territory. Nor does the Babylonian chronicler of this period mention any such campaign. It seems that some specter haunted his memory and chilled his ambition regarding the final conquest of Egypt.

V. 38 DEATH: Sennacherib lived another 20 years after he left Judea. Then one day as he was worshipping in the temple of his god, Nisroch (which Edward J. Young thinks is an intentional corruption of Marduk), he is slain by two of his sons who apparently are attempting an insurrection. Sennacherib's son, Esar-haddon, in an inscription found by archaeologists at the Dog River near Beirut, Lebanon, tells of this event (see our comments, *Isaiah*, Vol. I, pg. 189-190). Hezekiah worshipped his God and Jehovah delivered him from his enemies. Sennacherib worshipped his god and found not deliverance but assassination. The two assassins did not gain the throne. They had to flee for their own lives to the land of Ararat (modern Armenia). Esar-haddon, another son of Sennacherib, succeeded to the throne of Assyria, eventually restored the city of Babylon, conquered Egypt, imported foreigners into Samaria, forced Manasseh (Hezekiah's son) to pay heavy tribute to help build Esar-haddon's palace in

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Nineveh, and extended the Assyrian empire to its greatest power. In a second Egyptian campaign, Esar-haddon died and his son, the famous Assurbanipal, the one who built the great library from which archaeologists get most of their Assyrian artifacts, succeeded him.

QUIZ

1. Where else in the Bible does God use angels to kill people?
2. What form may angels take to do their work of killing?
3. What tradition from antiquity may be a parallel to the Biblical account of the slaughter of the Assyrian army?
4. How did Sennacherib come to his end?

SPECIAL STUDY

THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED FOR ALL TIME

by

Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTION

I. JUDE IS A MOST NEGLECTED EPISTLE OF THE N.T.

- A. Because it is brief.
- B. Because its language is different than most of the N.T.
- C. Because the circumstances calling for its writing are obscure.
- D. Many preachers have preached from vs. 3 but few have left it in its own context when they used it.

II. JUDE IS A MOST RELEVANT EPISTLE OF THE N.T. FOR TODAY.

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- A. "There have been times in the history of the church when Jude was the most relevant book in the N.T." Barclay
- B. Jude's intention
1. First to discuss in a treatise the common salvation of Christians
 2. But, there arose men whose beliefs and conduct were a threat and a menace to the church.
 3. The need was not so much to expound the faith as to rally Christians in defense of the faith.
- C. The menace of *Antinomianism*
1. Lawless grace; grace without any conditions; what matters is not keeping a code but what's in the heart.
 2. Antinomians considered themselves so spiritual that sin did not exist for them. Their idea was that since salvation was by grace there need be no law.
 3. They believed that if we love God with our heart, we can do what we want with our bodies.
 4. They perverted the grace of God which is in essence
A PERVERSION OF THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF GOD!
- D. The menace of *Gnosticism*
1. They denied the deity of Jesus Christ.
 2. They taught that the creator was sort of an "off-shoot" or emanation from God because matter is evil and God could not create matter or be touched by matter (flesh) for that would make God evil.
 3. They taught a definite dichotomy of spirit and matter.
 4. If there was a divine Messiah He would have to be totally spirit and not flesh—and since Jesus of Nazareth was flesh, He could not be the divine Messiah.
 5. They divided mankind into two classes:
 - a. the *pneumatikoi* - the spiritual elite, that select few who were able to embark on the long intellectual search for God
 - b. the *psuchikoi* - those who had physical life, but whose spiritual life was quite inadequate ever to

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attain to the knowledge which was necessary to reach God.

6. They denied our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.
- E. There are two major reasons for the church today to contend for the faith.
 1. Antinomianism - under grace we are so spiritual we cannot sin.
 2. Gnosticism - Neo-orthodoxy: God is "Wholly Other"; denial of the Divine/Human nature of Jesus Christ.
 3. BOTH ARE A PERVERSION OF THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF GOD AND JESUS.

III. SOME OBVIOUS CONCLUSIONS FROM JUDE 3

- A. The faith is something *delivered* to us. It is not something manufactured or discovered on our own. IT IS REVEALED FROM GOD!
- B. The faith is something *once for all delivered*. Each generation is obligated to relearn and rethink and reexperience it, BUT IT IS OF PERMANENT AND UN-CHANGING NATURE.
- C. The faith is something which is entrusted to God's consecrated people. IT IS NO MAN'S PRIVATE PROPERTY!
- D. The faith is something which must be defended or tended for. A duty such as this is the obligation of every generation of Christians.

I. WHAT IS "THE FAITH"?

- A. According to this context, and according to the general theme of the whole Bible, THE FAITH IS: THE HOLINESS OF GOD AND THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST!

THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED FOR ALL TIME

1. Jude said "contend for the faith" because some were perverting the "grace of God," and "denying the only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."
2. The first attack upon THE FAITH was an attack upon the *veracity* of God in the Garden of Eden (God lied or would not be faithful to keep His word).
3. The Bible, from beginning to end, is one majestic, historical account of the FAITHFULNESS OF GOD (historical demonstrations of God's mighty and powerful fulfillments of His promises) finally demonstrated in The Son.

The Bible is also God's revelation of guidelines and commandments on the proper human responses to that FAITHFULNESS.

4. The FAITH is not what man must do, however; it is what God has done! The FAITH is not our response systematized. . . . THE FAITH IS NOT baptism, Lord's Supper, prayer, stewardship. THESE ARE OUR RESPONSES TO THE FAITH! THEY ARE OBEDIENCES TO THE FAITH. (Incidentally, THE FAITH is not a particular political philosophy, theological system, evangelistic method, nor an emotion).
5. Our faith, our trust, is not in our response, BUT IN THE PERSON OF GOD AND JESUS. IT IS A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP. . . . NOT A SYSTEM.

Systems may offer guidelines and opportunities within which we may express this personal relationship, BUT IF WE GET TO PREACHING THE SYSTEM INSTEAD OF THE PERSON, WE WILL DEPERSONALIZE THE RELATIONSHIP!

6. I like the way Leroy Garrett says it: "The Faith is response to the fact that Jesus Christ is God's Son and the Lord of life . . . It is the acceptance of the Lordship of Christ, the yielded life. All else is peripheral. The faith is that Jesus Christ is God's Son and Lord of all our lives."

Carl Ketcherside says it this way: "When you have skimmed off all the theological wranglings and interpretations, and strained out all the gnats, the opinions and deductions of men, the one faith is Jesus. He is the center of it. He is also the circumference of it . . ."

7. O.T. Prophets, faced with materialistic, immoral, flippant inhumane society focused their preaching on GOD'S HOLINESS, JUSTICE, FAITHFULNESS, LOVE AND JUDGMENT. If they were ever to redirect those people it would be in response—not to budgets, buildings and banquets—but to *God* who is holy, faithful and just.
8. Isa. 30:9-11 "Preach to us smooth things, illusions; speak no more of the Holy One of Israel."
9. The Woman at the Well — needed not a social program but to know and trust Jesus.
The 5000 in Galilee — needed not to be fed but to assimilate the very nature of Jesus into their minds.
10. The churches of Asia Minor, at the close of the first century, faced the onslaught of political oppression, false teaching and carnal materialism. HOW DID JESUS TELL JOHN TO PREPARE THEM FOR THIS? REPENT!! MOTIVATION FOR REPENTANCE? VISION OF THE GLORIFIED, FAITHFUL, OMNIPOTENT LORD JESUS. . . . AND SOVEREIGN, RULING THRONE OF GOD.
11. When Jesus took the 12 aside to crystalize their faith in preparation for the coming crucible of His arrest, trial and crucifixion, HE DID NOT TRY TO ENTERTAIN THEM, ORGANIZE THEM INTO COMMITTEES . . . HE SAID, WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?!
12. On the day of questioning in His final encounter with the Jewish nation during the last week of His

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ministry MANY ASKED HIM RELEVANT SOCIAL, THEOLOGICAL AND MORAL QUESTIONS . . . BUT THEY DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THE RIGHT QUESTION TO ASK!

THE RIGHT QUESTION IS: "WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST; WHOSE SON IS HE?"

That is the burning issue. Always has been—always will be! That is *the faith!*

B. What is the Church doing about THE FAITH?

1. I think she has neglected The Faith and put too much emphasis on response.
 - a. Too much emphasis on sharing, caring, experiencing, feeling . . . and NOT ENOUGH ON WHO GOD IS, WHO CHRIST IS AND WHAT THEY HAVE DONE!
 - b. Too often the church has assumed everyone (including believers) have all the depth and width and breadth and height they need in knowing God!
 - c. There is no way to know God except as we learn of His deeds in history and in the historical personage, Christ.
 - d. Too many Christians want to talk about knowing God through main-street existentialism called "my feeling," "my experience."
 - e. We cannot assimilate the faithfulness of God, His justice, holiness, righteousness EXCEPT THROUGH BELIEVING, TRUSTING THE DIVINE RECORD OF HIS NATURE . . . THE BIBLE.
 - f. We dare not trust our feelings or experiences! FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCES VACILLATE.
 - g. A man does not know he is saved and forgiven because he *feels* good after he is baptized! He may only feel wet, cold, half-drowned. He knows he is saved and forgiven because GOD IS WHO HE IS AND GOD KEEPS HIS WORD AND GOD

ISAIAH

HAS SAID IT! THAT MAY MAKE HIM FEEL GOOD,
BUT IT IS THE VERACITY OF GOD THAT MAKES
HIM FORGIVEN!

2. Let me make some suggestions:
 - a. Preachers, Bible school teachers, take the great book of Isaiah and preach through it—teach through it, chapter by chapter. I guarantee you you'll meet THE HOLY, FAITHFUL, RIGHTEOUS GOD. The problems those O.T. prophets faced are as relevant as your morning newspaper . . . and they met them by preaching WHO GOD IS!
 - b. Preach through the book of Revelation. WHAT THE CHURCH FACED THEN IS WHAT THE CHURCH FACES NOW. THE ANSWER FOR THE CHURCH NOW!
 - c. Preach and teach through the book of Hebrews, chapter by chapter. The humanity of Christ, Christ conquering sin in the flesh, earning our redemption through His absolute faithfulness, is one of the grandest themes of the N.T. But not much is ever heard about it!

IF EVER WE NEED TO TAKE THE PULSE OF LOST HUMANITY IT IS NOW. THAT PULSE BEAT CRIES OUT . . . "IS THERE SOMEONE I CAN TRUST ABSOLUTELY?" "IS ANYONE WISE, FAITHFUL AND JUST IN CHARGE OF THIS CHAOTIC WORLD OF OURS?" WILL JUSTICE EVER BE DONE? WILL GOOD TRIUMPH? IS THERE AN ABSOLUTE BEING? THE PULSE BEAT OF HUMANITY IS IN ITS LITERATURE AND MUSIC—MODERN LITERATURE AND MUSIC SAYS NOTHING SOLID, ABSOLUTE, DEPENDABLE, HONEST.

C. Peter tells us that (II Pet. 1:3-4) through His precious and very great promises, we escape from the corruption that is in the world and become partakers of the divine nature.

1. A most significant passage is in II Cor. 1:20 . . . "All the promises of God find their 'Yes' in him."
2. In other words, men need above all else to hold on to the veracity of God. . . . and the whole work of

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Jesus was to establish beyond any reasonable doubt the veracity of God!

3. The great need of the church of the first century was *not* to find God in their own experience, but to remember the veracity of God confirmed by the resurrected Christ. TOO OFTEN THERE IS NOT MUCH IN OUR OWN EXPERIENCE WHERE GOD MAY BE FOUND!

Governments betray us; friends betray us, even the human heart is deceitful above all things.

The great apostle Paul, dealing with the frustration of men when they experience the unfaithfulness of their fellow men, advised, "What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Let God be true though every man be false . . ." Rom. 3:4

When David Livingstone sailed for Africa the first time a group of his friends accompanied him to the pier to wish him Bon Voyage. Some of them, concerned for the safety of the missionary, reminded him of the dangers which would confront him in the dark land to which he was journeying. In fact, one man urged Livingstone to remain in England.

In response, David Livingstone opened his Bible and read aloud the portion of our Lord's last recorded words in Matthew's gospel, chapter 28: "Lo, I am with you always." Turning to the one who would have prevented his going, the missionary said: "That, my friend, is the word of a Gentleman. So let us be going."

4. The world tries to motivate people and change people into peace-loving, caring, helping individuals by programming, entertaining, indulging, feasting, organizing, working, legislating them—AND IT HASN'T WORKED YET!
5. I fear that in some places the church has tried to copy the world. . . . BUT LIFE'S GREATEST CRISES AND PROBLEMS CANNOT BE DEALT WITH BY ORGANIZATION, ENTERTAINMENT.

ISAIAH

THE ONLY SURE THING UPON WHICH TO CLING IN THE STORMS AND DARKNESSES IS THE FAITHFULNESS, HOLINESS, JUSTICE, MERCY OF GOD. . . . THIS IS SURE WHETHER WE FEEL GOOD OR HAPPY, OR WHETHER WE ARE FED OR HUNGRY, AND WHETHER WE CAN DO ANY WORK OR NOT!

6. When this fleshly light begins to go out—all I want to know is: WHO IS GOD? WHO IS CHRIST? DO THEY KEEP THEIR WORD?

It would be comforting, should I linger at death to have friends and family reassure me of their love and concern. . . . BUT WHAT I WILL REALLY BE CRYING OUT IN THE DEPTHS OF MY SOUL, IS, IS JESUS WHO HE CLAIMED—WILL HE MAKE GOOD ON HIS PROMISES—WILL I GO ON LIVING—WILL I STAND BEFORE HIM JUSTIFIED. It certainly won't be, Was my program right—did I do enough for Him—

EVERYBODY WANTS SOMEBODY TO CARE Isaiah cared, Daniel cared, Ezekiel cared, Paul cared, John cared, BUT WHAT THEY PREACHED WAS THE FAITHFULNESS AND MERCIFULNESS OF GOD, MANIFESTED IN THE FLESH IN JESUS CHRIST.

Lots of people cared about Mary and Martha and Lazarus at the graveyard. Lots of people were trying to comfort them by sharing in their suffering. BUT WHAT THEY REALLY NEEDED . . . THE REALLY CRITICAL QUESTION . . . THE FOCAL POINT OF THEIR VERY BEING WAS . . . IS JESUS REALLY THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE! WHO IS THIS JESUS?!

E. J. B. Phillips, author of the famous Phillips N.T., wrote, *Your God Is Too Small*. In it he says:

"The trouble with many people today is that they have not found a God big enough for modern needs. While their experience of life has grown in a score of directions, and their mental horizons have been

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expanded . . . their ideas of God have remained largely static. It is obviously impossible for an adult to worship the conception of God that exists in the mind of a child of Sunday school age, unless he is prepared to deny his own experience of life. . . . if he tries it he worships or serves a God who is really too small to command his adult loyalty and cooperation."

Then he goes on to list 13 "Unreal Gods" which are too small. **YOU OUGHT TO READ THIS BOOK!**

It seemed as if all seven hundred reporters from newspapers, radio stations, and TV networks wanted to talk to Wernher von Braun following the launching of the mighty Saturn V. The Cape Kennedy noise was at a high decibel range. And von Braun wanted to escape it all for the moment. He grabbed the arm of a newspaper friend, Adon Taft. "Come on, let's get away where we can talk." Taft, religion writer of the Miami Herald, pushed away from the crowd with the space scientist and made his way toward the shoreline. Pacing rapidly back and forth, von Braun seemed to be in deep thought. Taft waited for his companion to speak. "We must learn to consider God as creator of the universe and master of everything," von Braun began. "We need a greater Lord than we have had in the past."

This is life eternal that they know thee—the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. Jn. 17:3

II. WHY MUST WE "CONTEND FOR THE FAITH"?

- A. Because "evil *homilia* corrupts good morals" I Cor. 15:33
 - 1. The false teaching that denied the resurrection was corrupting the morals of the Corinthian Christians.
 - 2. It was the false teaching in the church that prompted Jude to exhort the brethren to "contend for the faith."
 - 3. The symbolically representative churches of Asia Minor in the book of Revelation had one great problem above all others—false teachers.

4. The first line of attack for the church is not in the area of doing—but in the area of thinking. The doing will never be right until the thinking is right.
5. In a very small but dynamic book, John Stott's *Your Mind Matters*, the author says, "The battle is nearly always won in the mind. It is by the renewal of our mind that our character and behavior become transformed." He says further, ". . . there must be *solid content* in our evangelistic proclamation of Christ. It is our responsibility to set Jesus Christ forth in the fullness of his divine-human person and saving work so that through this . . . God may arouse faith in the hearer. Such evangelistic preaching is far removed from its tragic caricature, all too common today, namely an emotional, anti-intellectual appeal for 'decisions' when the hearers have but the haziest notion what they are to decide about or why."
6. Brethren, short-term, high-pressure, emotional-manipulation of men and women is not only contrary to scriptural principles—and not only fails to bring true and lasting discipleship—the sheer superficiality of it makes enemies of the faith, those who have been dishonestly manipulated.
 - a. One minister wrote in to *Christianity Today*, "Motivational talks . . . are not needed . . . Supply techniques . . . Please show us the 'tricks of the trade.'"
 - b. It is imperative that the church get serious about its whole teaching program. Sermons, Bible school classes, mid-week Bible studies, youth programs **ALL MUST BECOME GEARED AND FOCUSED ON PLANTING THE WORD OF GOD CONSTANTLY ON THE CONSCIOUS MINDS OF CHRISTIANS!** The church must become an intense, thorough, honest educational organism! It's program must be Biblical with continuity. Not just a verse here and there, **BUT WHOLE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE IN**

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CONTINUITY.

- c. A startling, shocking book was written two years ago. *Subliminal Seduction: Ad Media's manipulation of a Not So Innocent America*, by Wilson Bryan Key.

A reviewer in *Christianity Today*, 1-31-75, says: "Quite disturbing from the Christian point of view, is Key's assertion that 'no significant belief or attitude held by any individual is apparently made on the basis of consciously perceived data.'"

- d. The word subliminal is derived from the Latin *sub*, (below) plus *limen* (lintel or threshold). Thus *below the threshold* of consciousness.
- e. Satan is wise enough to know that most people will not consciously do evil. HE SEEKS TO BYPASS OUR CONSCIOUS MINDS.

THERE IS A WIDE-SPREAD CONSPIRACY OF SATAN AND HIS ARMY OF HELPERS TO BYPASS THE RATIONAL FACULTIES OF MEN AND WOMEN TODAY. PRACTICALLY UNNOTICED AND UNCHALLENGED, HE IS SLIPPING FALSE INFORMATION, UNHOLY SUGGESTIONS INTO MEN'S SUBCONSCIOUS MINDS AT THE RATE OF LITERALLY 1000'S OF STIMULI DAILY!

AND THE TRAGEDY OF TRAGEDIES IS IN MANY PLACES THE CHURCH IS UNWITTINGLY AIDING AND ABETTING THE ENEMY BY ITS HALF-HEARTED, SUPERFICIAL, EMOTIONAL, ENTERTAINMENT-ORIENTED PROGRAM.

- f. The reviewer mentioned earlier, states: "Satan now seems to be making extensive use of the merely emotional as his special ploy. Satan, the author of imbalance and disharmony, is responsible for the current pendulum-swing away from God-ordained reason toward a mindless emotionalism, from thought to 'touchy-feely' sensation, from the reasonableness of sound doctrine to the

intuition of visionary experience." WHAT'S THE ANSWER? Listen: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart, and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts (lintel) of your house and on your gates. Deut. 6:4-9

- g. CHRISTIANS MUST DAILY, CONSTANTLY, SPRINKLE THE THRESHOLDS OF THEIR MINDS WITH THE POWERFUL WORD OF GOD TO GUARD AGAINST UNHOLY STIMULI THAT WOULD ENTER UNNOTICED BELOW THE THRESHOLD . . . INTO THE SUBLIMINAL!
- B. Satan was trying to destroy the church in Jude's day by scoffers, those who rejected Christ's authority, false teachers attempting to subvert the veracity of God and Christ.
 1. What the church must do is contend mightily for the authority and veracity of God and Christ.
 2. The church has been fighting the diversionary actions of Satan. We get all excited and spend our energies on the more immediate, spectacular symptoms of man's problem. BUT THE REAL BATTLE IS WHERE, PRACTICALLY UNNOTICED AND UNCHALLENGED, SATAN IS PLANTING UNBELIEF IN THE SUBLIMINAL!
 3. Evolutionism in our public schools and on TV—not only in science classes but in literature classes. The constant barrage of destructive teaching made respectable by calling it scientific . . . is subliminally planting attacks upon the veracity of God and the

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authority of Christ.

4. *Passover Plot* — nationwide best-seller at one time. Destroyed the veracity of the word of God.
5. *Life* magazine, December, 1964 — whole issue devoted to destroying the veracity of the Bible and of God.
6. The superficiality of some of our church programs—entertaining people, programming people, contesting people—PLANTS SUBLIMINALLY IN THINKING PEOPLE'S MINDS THAT CHRISTIANITY IS NOT ALL THAT SERIOUS . . . GOD IS NOT ALL THAT HOLY OR ALL THAT HONEST (IF THE CHURCH MANIPULATES PEOPLE, WHAT ABOUT GOD?)
7. The very core of false teaching is denial of the veracity, sovereignty and authority of Christ and the Bible. The very essence of a powerless church is not smallness in number but non-existent curriculum of training in Bible evidence and exposition!!

When we reduce God to a program or contest or entertainment, we get back only what we have put in — we get back programmed people, contested people, entertained people.

HOW MANY PREACHERS, SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS, PARENTS, ARE READY TO DEFEND AGAINST EVOLUTION, PASS-OVER PLOT, DEMYTHOLOGIZING THE SCRIPTURES? DON'T THINK YOUR CHURCH MEMBERS, YOUR CHILDREN AND THE WHOLE WORLD ISN'T BEING SUBLIMINALLY ATTACKED!

SOME CHURCH EDUCATION, PREACHING-TEACHING PROGRAMS ARE SHALLOW AND SUPERFICIAL, AND SO . . . MEN AND WOMEN GET THE SUBLIMINAL IMPRESSION THAT THE CHURCH IS NOT REALLY SERIOUS ABOUT IT . . . THAT IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER WHETHER WE PUT IN OUR MINDS WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS AS LONG AS WE GET TO SERVICES, BE SPECTATORS FOR A COUPLE OF HOURS PER WEEK, AND GO HOME FEELING GOOD!

- C. Serious, constant, thorough, contextual Bible exposition is the answer.
1. We want men and women to take on the nature of Christ "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another . . ." II Cor. 3:18
 2. We want men and women to be able to check the indulgences of the flesh.
 "human regulations and systems have an appearance of wisdom in promoting rigor of devotion and self-abasement and severity to the body, but they are of no value in checking the indulgence of the flesh. . . . Set your minds on things that are above . . . seek the things that are above . . ." Col. 2:23—3:2
 3. We want men and women to serve Christ. "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Rom. 12:2

IGNORANCE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT TOOL IN SATAN'S SUBLIMINAL SEDUCTION. WE DARE NOT ABANDON THE MIND OF MAN . . . ESPECIALLY THE SUBCONSCIOUS . . . TO THE ENEMY. "THY WORD HAVE I HID IN MINE HEART, THAT I MIGHT NOT SIN AGAINST THEE."

- D. One of the most profound statements in all scripture is Hosea 9:10. They came to Baal-Peor and consecrated themselves to Baal, etc.
1. Men inevitably assimilate and take on the nature of that which they worship, adore, enthrone, place supreme value upon.
 2. There is no such thing as detachment in worship.
 3. When men adore or worship the god of deception, they will become deceitful; materialism—they will become materialistic; sensuality—they will become sensual.

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4. If they worship a god of religion, they will become religious; a god of superficialities, they will become superficial.
5. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE CONTEND FOR THE HOLINESS AND FAITHFULNESS, AND HONESTY AND PURITY OF GOD IF WE WANT PEOPLE TO BECOME HOLY, FAITHFUL, HONEST AND PURE!

III. HOW SHALL WE CONTEND FOR THE FAITH, ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED? (Jude's answer)

- A. Study the Scriptures, Jude 17, "remember the predictions of the apostles."
 1. The reason Christian preachers and Christian Bible school teachers and Christian families are not contending for the faith once for all delivered, IS BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT STUDYING!
 2. Why not?
 - a. Too busy organizing
 - b. Too busy committeeing
 - c. Too busy going, going, going
 - d. Too busy watching the TV
 - e. Too difficult to really put to practice the disciplines of hermeneutics and exegesis (contextual relationships, word studies, background studies, original language studies)
 3. Paul told Timothy to "give himself to, or attend to, the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching, . . . to devote himself to them."
 4. Jesus relied totally on His knowledge of and trust in the Scriptures to overcome the temptations of the devil.
 5. A PREACHER OR A CHURCH THAT IS NOT SERIOUS AND INTENSELY DEVOTED TO A PROGRAM OF THOROUGH BIBLE STUDY IS NEVER GOING TO CONTEND FOR THE FAITH! THERE MAY BE STATISTICS TO QUOTE, BUT WHAT DO STATISTICS PROVE....ANYTHING YOU WANT THEM TO!

ISAIAH

FIVE OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA MINOR (REVELATION) HAD GOOD STATISTICS BUT WERE TOLD TO REPENT OF THE FALSE TEACHING AND IMMORALITY RAMPANT IN THEM LEST THEIR CANDLE-STICK BE REMOVED.

TWO OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA MINOR WERE STATISTICALLY "POOR" AND "POWERLESS" BUT CHRIST SAID THEY WERE RICH AND HAD AN OPEN DOOR SET BEFORE THEM!

6. The teachings of the apostles cannot be remembered if they are not constantly and thoroughly studied!

If you dare, give your church members the Bible Knowledge Test we give our freshmen when they come to OBC!

SHOULD WE EXPECT TO DEVOTE OUR MINDS AND ENERGIES TO LEARNING TO REMEMBER HOW TO FRAME A HOUSE, ASSEMBLE AN AUTO, OPERATE ON THE HUMAN BODY. . . . AND NOT DEVOTE OUR MINDS AND ENERGIES TO LEARNING IN ORDER TO REMEMBER THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED! MAY GOD HAVE MERCY UPON US!

B. Preaching, Teaching, Jude 20-22 ". . . build yourselves up (edify) on your most holy faith . . . And convince some, who doubt . . ."

1. Preaching is persuasion. This concept has fallen on hard times. Too many have the idea that preaching is emotionalism or entertainment. I'm not denying there is an element of emotion in persuasion. BUT I DESPISE AND RESIST ANY EFFORT TO BYPASS REASON TO MANIPULATE PEOPLE BY PLAYING UPON EMOTIONS SO THAT THEIR CHOICE OR COMMITMENT IS DEPENDENT UPON THE FEELINGS AND NOT UPON THE FACTS!
2. I'm a strong advocate of Alexander Campbell's formula, FACT, TESTIMONY, FAITH, FEELING . . . in that order.

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3. The work of the Holy Spirit is not to give us an exhilarating, mind-by-passing, feeling. . . . IT IS TO CONVICT, CONVINCe, PERSUADE! John 16
4. Paul went into the synagogues and reasoned daily with them from the scriptures. . . . Paul said, Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. Jesus was a Master logician.
5. In a little book entitled, *Your Emotions and Your Faith*, by Franklin M. Segler, the author says:
"The efficacy of faith depends not upon the faith but upon the object of faith, namely Christ."

EMOTIONS ARE NOT CONSTANT. . . . CIRCUMSTANCES ARE NOT CONSTANT. . . . BUT GOD IS CONSTANT!

OUR PREACHING AND TEACHING, IF IT IS TO BE EDIFYING, IF IT IS TO BUILD CONSTANCY AND SOLIDNESS INTO PEOPLE'S LIVES, MUST BE PERSUASIVE.

- C. Discipline, Jude 23, "save some by snatching them out of the fire."
 1. College cheating is astonishingly high according to a report of an experiment in *Intellectual Digest*. When teachers appealed to students' consciences, cheating increased! Threatening punishment was discovered to be the only way to cut down on the dishonesty!
 2. Discipline is another concept that has fallen on hard times, both in the home, in the school and in the church. Discipline is correction. People do not like to be corrected. None of us. Hebrews 12:11 "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."
 3. What else could Jude mean here? NO ONE HAS EVER BEEN "SNATCHED FROM THE FIRE" GENTLY OR TENDERLY OR PAINLESSLY!
 4. Psychologists all over the country are changing their tune about permissiveness. *Reader's Digest*, February,

1975, article "Back To Basics In The Schoolhouse": "N.Y. psychiatrist Richard Robertiello . . . has rethought his once-permissive policies on child rearing. The children of permissiveness who are now his psychiatric patients, he says, are 'warm, loving and lovable,' but they can't hang on to anything, they can't master anything."

5. Jesus was firm, almost rough, with His mother, His disciples, His hard-headed countrymen.
6. The apostles were firm with one another (Paul with Peter) . . . with their converts and with those who would oppose their preaching.
7. Jesus was firm and rough with the seven churches of Asia Minor in snatching them from the fire of Roman worldliness. He admonished them to wake up and repent. He threatened them!

BRETHREN, THERE CAN BE NO DISCIPLESHIP WITHOUT DISCIPLINE. THERE CAN BE NO CONVERSION WITHOUT CORRECTION. NOT FOR ANY OF US! IF WE ARE GOING TO CONTEND FOR THE FAITH IN A WORLD DEDICATED TO DECEIT, DECADANCE AND DESTRUCTION, WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO BE FIRM, RESOLUTE, AND CONSTANT. SOME ARE GOING TO HAVE TO BE "SNATCHED" FROM THE CONSUMING FIRE OF UNBELIEF AND IMMORALITY!

8. Listen to a characterization of these people Jude had to deal with.
 - a. defiling the flesh in their dreams
 - b. rejecting authority
 - c. reviling glorious things and persons
 - d. acting on instincts like animals
 - e. walking in the way of Cain
 - f. abandoning themselves for the sake of gain
 - g. boldly carousing together
 - h. looking after themselves
 - i. waterless clouds (empty) carried along by winds
 - j. fruitless trees

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- k. wild as the waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame
- l. wandering stars, out of orbit
- m. grumblers, malcontents, loud-mouthed boasters
- n. flattering people to gain advantage
- o. scoffers
- p. those who cause divisions

ENTERTAINMENT, PARTIES, CONTESTS. . . . FRIEND, IT WILL TAKE MORE THAN THAT TO DEAL WITH THAT LIST!

D. Compassion, "on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." v. 23

1. There are some whom we must pity and fear at once and the same time.
2. Sinners are in danger. But, sometimes, so are the rescuers.
3. Before a man can rescue others, he must himself be strong in the faith. His own feet must be firm on the dry land before he can throw a life-jacket to the man who is being swept away.
4. THE OLD SAYING IS TRUE; WE OUGHT TO LOVE THE SINNER AND HATE THE SIN.

C.S. Lewis said that troubled him unceasingly about Christianity until he realized he had been doing it all his life . . . HIMSELF HE LOVED BUT HATED HIS SIN!

5. We are not prepared to have true, saving compassion on a man if, while loving the man, we do not hate his sin. COMPASSION WILL NOT HELP A MAN COMPROMISE WITH SIN . . . JESUS NEVER DID!
6. The essence of mercy is to treat a man or woman as you would want to be treated were you in their difficulty.

THE SINNER IS NOT GOING TO BE MERCIFULLY RESCUED BY A LIBERAL, WATERED-DOWN GOSPEL WHICH DENIES THE DEITY OF JESUS, THE HOLINESS OF GOD OR THE AUTHORITY OF HIS WORD!

BRETHREN, TO CONTEND FOR THE FAITH IS TO BE MERCIFUL!

CONCLUSION

I. BRETHREN, WE MUST CONTEND, EARNESTLY, INTENTLY, AGONIZINGLY.

A. The Greek word *epagonizesthai* means *agonize, struggle, wrestle*.

1. Paul said, "We *wrestle* not against flesh and blood . . ."

2. He said, "The weapons of our *warfare* are not carnal . . ."

3. We are in a struggle. . . . this is not a game that matters not whether we win or lose . . . IT IS A LIFE OR DEATH STRUGGLE.

B. We must put on the whole armor and take up the sword of the Spirit.

1. We must bring every thought into captivity unto Christ.

2. We must not be ignorant of Satan's devices.

C. Vance Havner tells this incident: A minister asked a famous actor once, "Why do you draw out crowds to see you act while very few come to hear me preach?" The answer came back, "I act my fiction as though it were fact; you preach your facts as though they were fiction!"

BRETHREN, NOWHERE IS IT EASIER TO PLAY WITH THE GOSPEL THAN IN THE MINISTRY. WITH A PLEASING PERSONALITY, A GIFT OF ELOQUENCE, ADEPTNESS AT EMOTIONALISM, AND PLENTY OF BUSINESS SENSE, ONE CAN TAKE THE GOSPEL FOR A FOOTBALL AND MAKE A FEW SCORES FOR THE SPECTATORS.

BUT CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH IS NO GAME, AND WOE UNTO HIM WHO PLAYS AT IT!

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II. BRETHERN, THE FAITH WE MUST AGONIZE FOR IS ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS.

- A. It is the sovereign grace of an absolutely faithful God accomplished in and demonstrated by the Incarnate God—Jesus Christ. The Faith is the Divine Person and Authority of Jesus Christ.
- B. Our appropriation of The Faith is by a personal response of faith and obedience to His authoritative commandments.
- C. WE NEED CONTEND FOR NOTHING ELSE . . .
- D. "Is there any word from the Lord?" Zedekiah asked Jeremiah that (Jer. 37:17) after Jeremiah had been preaching for 23 years the word from the Lord! SURE THERE WAS A WORD FROM THE LORD . . . BUT ZEDEKIAH WANTED A WORD THAT WOULD SUIT HIS CARNAL, WORLDLY PURPOSES!

AN EVIL AND ADULTEROUS GENERATION TODAY SEEKS A SIGN . . . ANOTHER WORD FROM THE LORD. . . . THE WORD HAS ONCE FOR ALL BEEN DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS!

One of the most significant statements of this generation, in my opinion, was made by Edward John Carnell, when he said, "IF IT IS TRUE THAT JESUS CHRIST DIED ON THE CROSS TO SAVE SINNERS, HAVE WE ANY RIGHT TO SAY THAT WE LOVE SINNERS IF WE FAIL TO CONFRONT THEM WITH THIS TRUTH? AND WHERE CAN WE FIND A DIVINELY VALIDATED ACCOUNT OF THIS TRUTH APART FROM SCRIPTURE? IN SUM, WE CAN EXPRESS NO HIGHER LOVE TO LOST HUMANITY THAN TO PREACH THE GOSPEL IN THE PRECISE FORM IN WHICH GOD HAS BEEN PLEASED TO REVEAL IT!

MAY GOD HELP HIS CHURCH TO CONTEND EARNESTLY FOR THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS!

IS A I A H

EXAMINATION

CHAPTERS THIRTY-SIX AND THIRTY-SEVEN

IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION

(Identify and locate the following by telling all you know about them.)

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Sennacherib | 10. Assyria |
| 2. Rabshakeh | 11. Hamath |
| 3. Lachish | 12. Nineveh |
| 4. Upper pool | 13. Nisroch |
| 5. Samaria | 14. Adrammelech |
| 6. son of Amoz | 15. Sharezer |
| 7. Libnah | 16. land of Ararat |
| 8. Lebanon | 17. Esar-haddon |
| 9. virgin daughter of Zion | 18. Haran |

MEMORIZATION

And Hezekiah prayed unto Jehovah, saying, O Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, that sittest above the _____, thou art the God, even thou _____, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made _____ and earth. Incline thine _____, O Jehovah, and hear; open thine _____, O Jehovah, and see; and hear all the words of _____, who hath sent to defy the living God. Of a truth, Jehovah, the kings of _____ have laid waste all the countries, and their land, and have cast their _____ into the fire: for they were no _____, but the work of _____ hands, wood and _____; therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Jehovah our God, _____ us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art _____ even thou only. Isaiah 37:15-20

EXPLANATION

1. Explain why the king of Assyria is at this particular time in history delivering an ultimatum to Hezekiah, king of Judah? (Isa. 36:1ff)
2. Explain why the representatives of Hezekiah asked the Rabshakeh to speak in Aramaic? (Isa. 36:11)
3. Explain how 185,000 Assyrian soldiers were slain in one night. (Isa. 37:36-38)

APPLICATION

(In its context every scripture has one meaning—the author's intended meaning. How may the following be applied in the believer's life?)

1. Are there times when it is best to remain silent in the face of threats by those who oppose God as Hezekiah's representatives were before the threats of the Rabshakeh? Why? What examples of this are there in the N.T.? (Isa. 36:21)
2. When Hezekiah prayed for deliverance from the threats of the Rabshakeh he made the glory of God his primary request. Should we pray that way today? What other O.T. and N.T. examples of this do we have? (Isa. 37:20)
3. Can pagan rulers defy the living God and get away with it? Is God aware of their defiance? What about godless nations today who defy God's sovereignty over the world? (Isa. 37:21-29)

C. PROSTRATION, CHAPTER 38

1. PERPLEXITY

TEXT: 38:1-8

- 1 In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith Jehovah. Set thy house in order; for thou

- shalt die, and not live.
- 2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto Jehovah,
- 3 and said, Remember now, O Jehovah, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.
- 4 Then came the word of Jehovah to Isaiah, saying,
- 5 Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.
- 6 And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city.
- 7 And this shall be the sign unto thee from Jehovah, that Jehovah will do this thing that he hath spoken:
- 8 behold, I will cause the shadow on the steps, which is gone down on the dial of Ahaz with the sun, to return backward ten steps. So the sun returned ten steps on the dial whereon it was gone down.

QUERIES

- a. Was Hezekiah claiming he had been perfect?
- b. Why did God add fifteen years to Hezekiah's life?
- c. What was the sign to signify?

PARAPHRASE

About nine years earlier in the reign of Hezekiah, he had become deathly ill. Isaiah the prophet and son of Amoz was sent to the king with this message from the Lord: Thus says The Covenant God, Jehovah, You are going to die from this illness, so you had better give your last word of instruction and get things in order for you are about to be succeeded on the throne. When Hezekiah heard these words from Isaiah

he was very upset because he had no son to succeed him and the menace of the Assyrian empire had become critical. The only recourse left to Hezekiah in the face of these impossible circumstances was the Lord, so Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed. He said, O Lord, please remember that I have always tried to live my life according to Thy truth with my whole heart, and I have always tried to do what Thou hast said is good. Overcome with the emotions of this moment Hezekiah began to weep with great sobs. Immediately the word of the Lord came to Isaiah: Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says The Covenant God, Jehovah, the same God who promised your ancestor David that his throne would abide forever, I have heard your prayer and I have seen your tears. Since you have such true concern for the promise of Thy God through David's throne I will let you live fifteen more years and produce an heir to David's throne. (Isaiah told him to put a poultice of figs on his boil and he would recover). I will also deliver you and Jerusalem from any Assyrian menace. I, Jehovah, will defend this city. (Hezekiah asked what sign he would be given to verify God's promise of the extension of his life and deliverance from the Assyrian menace. Isaiah asked Hezekiah whether he would prefer the shadow of the sun to go immediately forward ten steps on Ahaz' "step-sun-dial" or backward ten steps. Hezekiah replied that the shadow going forward would be easy so he preferred it to go backward. Isaiah prayed to the Lord). So Isaiah said to Hezekiah, This will be the sign to you from Jehovah. He will do what you asked. Jehovah says, I will cause the shadow on the step-sun-dial of Ahaz to go backward ten steps from where it is now. So the sun went backward ten steps on the step-dial from where it was at that time.

COMMENTS

V. REPINING: Hezekiah died in 695 B.C. The phrase "In those days," of verse 1 must refer to a time at least 15 years prior to 695 B.C. or somewhere near 710 B.C. Hezekiah was "sick unto death" at least nine or ten years prior to the

confrontation at Jerusalem recorded in chapters 36-37 (Sennacherib's invasion of Judah in 701 B.C.) Therefore, Isaiah, chapter 38, is chronologically out of order. That is no problem. The historical data of chapter 38 is accurate, and that is what is important. The Hebrews were not as concerned with chronology as they were with the events and their meanings. Matthew's gospel is a prime example of a Hebrew man writing as an eyewitness what he saw accurately, but recording it out of chronological order. The proper order of these chapters in Isaiah might be as follows: 38, 39, 36, 37.

Isaiah came to the king with this message from the Lord: "Order your house, for die you shall, and not live" (literally from the Hebrew). With the Hebrew language, the verb is usually first in the sentence because the action being done or to be done is more important than the actor. The Hebrews were not as egotistical as Westerners. Leupold translates it, "Give your last orders, for you shall die and not recover." Isaiah's message is very blunt. We do not know what the king's sickness was. There were evidently boils associated with it. Lange has suggested the Hebrew word *shehiyn* translated in 38:21 *boil* "stands not only for the plague boil, but also for other burning ulcers, as it occurs in reference to leprosy (Lev. 13:18ff) and other inflammable cutaneous diseases (Ex. 9:9; Deut. 28:27, 35; Job. 2:7)."

Hezekiah turned his face to the wall to pray not that there was any special efficacy in facing the wall but probably as an instinctive reaction to hide his countenance from others standing near. It may be he did it to gain what little privacy he could obtain. Hezekiah appeals to God on the basis of Old Testament standards (see Psa. 15). Hezekiah surely does not claim for himself sinlessness. His claim is that of a life based upon the truth as he knew it from God and a complete (perfect) heart's motivation to do what was good in God's sight. It was a prayer of faith, trusting God to fulfill His will in Hezekiah's life. "Wept sore" would better be translated "wept greatly." The Hebrew *bechiy gadol* might well be translated, as the RSV does, "wept bitterly."

But why did not Hezekiah resign himself to what apparently was God's will—his immediate death? Hezekiah was only 39 or 40 years old when this terminal illness struck him. Manasseh was not to be born for three more years (Mannaseh was 12 years old when Hezekiah died at the age of 54; see II Kings 21:1; II Chron. 33:1). It was contrary to all Hezekiah believed concerning the perpetuation of the dynasty of David (which God had certainly promised) that he should die without a successor to the throne of David! It was also considered by any Jewish male to be a sign of Divine disfavor to be cut off in the midst of one's life without a male child to carry on the family name (Job 15:32; 22:15-16; Psa. 55:23; Prov. 10:27; Eccl. 7:17). As much as anything else, Hezekiah was questioning whether, in view of his godly life, he deserved such an untimely death or not. Death with such suddenness and in the prime of life has a sobering effect—a humbling effect.

V. 4-8 REPRIEVE: While Isaiah was walking "in the middle court" (II Kings 20:4) the word of Jehovah came to him. He was to go back and tell Hezekiah that his prayer was heard. Note, it does not say answered. God answered Hezekiah with His own answer. God hears our prayers and He cares about our difficulties. He is sad that we have to suffer. He is hurt by our disobedience. He is gladdened by our praise and supplications. But, He is not convinced, argued into, worn down by persistence, God's mind is not changed by the perfect logic, massive amount or unending persistence of our prayers. He knows what is best for us and always answers according to His will. He insists that we pray in order that we may put ourselves in the proper attitude of faith, humility and dependence to receive what He wills—whether it be weal or woe. The apostle Paul did not want a thorn in the flesh, and, in fact, prayed three times that it be removed. God's answer was, every time, No! So here, Hezekiah did not change the mind of God, but by his prayer of faith, humility and dependence upon God put himself in the proper condition to be the agent through whom God could continue His work of perpetuating the throne of David. God added to Hezekiah's life 15 years—time to produce

an heir and prepare him for the throne of David. The very fact that Jehovah said, "the God of David thy father," indicates God was answering according to His own purposes and not simply to satisfy Hezekiah's desire for more years of life. And it is not just Hezekiah's life that is to be spared—the city of David and its inhabitants are also to be protected from annihilation. God will continue His program of redemption through Hezekiah and his countrymen in spite of all the threats of the Assyrians.

In II Kings 20:8-11 and Isa. 38:22 we are informed that Hezekiah asked for a sign. To Ahaz God had offered a sign (Isa. 7) but Ahaz did not want a sign for he was depending upon help from Assyria. Hezekiah, realizing the severity of his situation, asks for a sign to strengthen him for the great task of leading his nation to trust Jehovah for deliverance.

The Hebrew word *ma'eloth* may be translated *dials, degrees or steps*, (cf. Ex. 20:26; I Kings 10:19; II Kings 20:9-11). We quote in part a footnote from *Old Testament History*, Smith & Fields, College Press, p. 643: "In the absence of any materials for determining the shape and structure of the . . . instrument . . . the best course is to follow the most strictly natural meaning of the word, and to consider that the dial was really stairs, and that the shadow (perhaps of some column or obelisk on the top) fell on a greater or smaller number of them according as the sun was low or high. The terrace of a palace might easily be thus ornamented. Ahaz's tastes seem to have led him in pursuit of foreign curiosities (II Kings 6:10), and his intimacy with Tiglath-pileser gave him probably an opportunity of procuring from Assyria the pattern of some such structure."

When Hezekiah asked for a sign, Isaiah said, ". . . shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or go back ten steps?" Hezekiah replied that it was easier for the shadow to lengthen than go back, so he asked that the shadow go back ten steps. (II Kings 20:8-11) Isaiah says the *sun* returned ten steps while II Kings 20:11 says the Lord brought the *shadow* back ten steps. The Lord used the sun to produce the moving of the

shadow backward. Whatever the method, whether by refraction of light or by suspending or reversing the laws governing the orbit of the earth around the sun, it was an act performed by the supernatural power of God at work upon the natural world and provided a sign of supernatural verification to Hezekiah.

Alas, Hezekiah was still a man with weaknesses. He was like many men (even the apostle Paul, Rom. 7:13-25) whose intentions are higher than their deeds. After his recovery, Hezekiah "did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud," (II Chron. 32:24-25), when the envoys of Merodachbaladan came (39:1ff). On the other hand, when Hezekiah's ideals and deeds are compared with some of his ungodly predecessors and successors he was, like his ancestor David, "a man after God's own heart." His faith, humility and trust in God saved the nation and preserved a remnant through which redemption came to all men.

Let every reader be here reminded of the uncertainty of this life and the imperative need to "set your house in order." As a poet once wailed, too commonly "at the mercy of a moment are left the vast concerns of an eternal scene." Too often men and women procrastinate setting themselves in order with God until there is no more time or they are incapable. *Now* is the time; *Today* is the day of salvation!

QUIZ

1. When was Hezekiah sick?
2. What is probably the proper chronological order of Isaiah 36-39?
3. What is the meaning, "Set your house in order"?
4. What may have been the nature of the king's illness?
5. Why was Hezekiah upset that he was about to die?
6. For whose sake did God prolong Hezekiah's life?
7. Was Hezekiah always true to God after this?

2. PRAISE

TEXT: 38:9-20

- 9 The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness.
- 10 I said, In the noontide of my days I shall go into the gates of Sheol: I am deprived of the residue of my years.
- 11 I said, I shall not see Jehovah, even Jehovah in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.
- 12 My dwelling is removed, and is carried away from me as a shepherd's tent: I have rolled up, like a weaver, my life; he will cut me off from the loom: From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.
- 13 I quieted myself until morning; as a lion, so he breaketh all my bones: From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.
- 14 Like a swallow or a crane, so did I chatter; I did moan as a dove; mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed, be thou my surety.
- 15 What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul.
- 16 O Lord, by these things men live; And wholly therein is the life of my spirit: Wherefore recover thou me, and make me to live.
- 17 Behold, it was for my peace that I had great bitterness: But thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.
- 18 For Sheol cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.
- 19 The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: The father to the children shall make known thy truth.
- 20 Jehovah is ready to save me: Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments All the days of our life in the house of Jehovah.

QUERIES

- a. Why did Hezekiah feel the need to write?
- b. Was Hezekiah bitter toward the Lord?
- c. Why could there be no hope for God's truth in Sheol?

PARAPHRASE

When Hezekiah had recovered from his deathly illness, he wrote this psalm expressing his thanksgiving to God for his recovery. This is what my thoughts were: Just as my life has reached its zenith, suddenly I must depart this life and enter into the place of disembodied souls—the unknown and unknowing realm of the dead: I have been consigned to this nether-world for the rest of my existence. I was saying, I will never be able to be in the Lord's presence again in this living existence and I will never again enjoy the fellowship of living people. My life is to suddenly disappear from this place like a Bedouin's tent when it is moved from its place; my life is terminated like a rug being woven is suddenly rolled up and cut loose from the loom; as swiftly as the day passes into night, so swiftly is my life to end. After the first shock of my illness I composed myself. But my composure was shattered, like bones are shattered when broken by a lion, by the message of Isaiah that I would die from my illness. How swiftly the Lord brings my life to an end! Delirious with grief, I chattered like a swallow and mourned like a dove; I looked with weary eyes, despairing of help, and cried, O Lord, I am crushed down under this heavy grief, help me!

I am so astounded at my miraculous recovery I do not know what to say! Surely the Lord Himself has done this. I shall live submissively the rest of my days as a result of the distressing experiences I have just come through. O Lord, it is through these disciplinary experiences men live—they are the well-springs of spiritual life. O Lord, give me full recovery and restore me to life again. At first, only grief for my shortened

life possessed me. But I learned a great deal about Thy love, O Lord, and that Thou art in control of my dying and my living. From this great experience I know also, Lord, that thou has pardoned my sins. I am so glad I am alive to praise Thee, O Lord, for when men die and their spirits leave their bodies and go to the place of disembodied spirits, they cannot praise Thee; disembodied spirits cannot join in the joy and celebration of the feasts consecrated to Thee—they cannot know hope in Thy truth. The man still living, yes, only the living, like I am, shall praise Thee. Life is for the experience of the father teaching his son the word of God—there is no joy like that for the dead. I have learned from this experience that I need Thy help always and Thou art ready to give it always. On account of Thy helpfulness, O Lord, my compatriots will join me and we will sing my songs of praise all the rest of our lives, to the accompaniment of stringed instruments in Thy Temple.

COMMENTS

v. 9-14 **TURMOIL:** The first five verses of Hezekiah's psalm record his grief and distress ("bitterness") when first he was told by Isaiah he would die from his illness. The last six verses of the psalm express the king's gratitude for his miraculous healing. The psalm is interesting for its frankness and its pathos. Hezekiah has suffered the most extreme experience a man can suffer—he has faced death in the very prime of his life. It is totally unexpected in the life of a man 39 years of age. Then, almost as completely unexpected, he receives a reprieve from death. This experience reaches into the deepest recesses of a man's soul. Out of this experience Hezekiah wishes to permanently record his testimony of praise.

What distressed Hezekiah most was it appeared he would die at the zenith of his life. His great religious reform was just getting under way. There were political problems and foreign policies that needed his attention. There were great public works around the city of Jerusalem to be accomplished. But

most important, he had no son, no heir to the throne of David. If, in the "noontide" of his days, he should go to Sheol he would suffer the frustration of leaving all this unfulfilled. Sheol, though a few times used to designate the place of punishment after this life, is most often used in the Old Testament to designate simply the place of disembodied spirits of the dead. The KJV rendering "Hell" is not a good translation. Sheol corresponds better to the New Testament word Hades.

The Hebrew word *phukadeti* ("deprived") might better be translated *appointed, ordered, consigned*, and is so translated in the Paraphrase of this section. The idea is that Jehovah has ordered an end to Hezekiah's life on earth.

Hezekiah's concept of Sheol raises the problem as to the Old Testament believer's view of life after death. It is clear that O.T. saints had a very dim and shadowy concept of life after death. Part of the confusion of thought concerning Sheol arises from the invisibility of the soul. The O.T. teaches immortality, but not with the clarity of the N.T., chiefly because God's revelation in Scripture is progressive and gradually increases in clearness. It was not until "the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death" that "life and immortality was brought to *light* through the gospel" (II Tim. 1:10). But there is definitely a doctrine of a future life taught in the Old Testament (see Special Study, *The Future Life*, by R. C. Foster, p. 287).

It is a mark of the godliness of Hezekiah that one of his main concerns in having to depart this life was his concern that he would apparently not be able to do two of the things most dear to him—worship the Lord and join in companionship with his friends. These, of all our human experiences, enrich this life the most.

In verse 12, the grieving king uses figures of speech to describe his feelings which would be graphically arresting to the Palestinian herdsmen and weavers. The desolation and unfulfillment he feels is likened to the desolation of a spot where the tent of a shepherd had once been staked and made home, but has been pulled up and moved away. Abruptly, there

is nothing left! The second figure is his life likened to a piece of cloth or carpet finished on the loom and clipped off without anything to follow. "From day even to night . . ." emphasizes the abruptness of Hezekiah's death. It probably is a proverbial form meaning that in the morning a man wakes up not expecting any great crisis and by evening catastrophe has fallen upon him. It could have reference to how swiftly day passes into night; just as swiftly was the king's life to be over! The phrase is used again in verse 13 showing the intense feeling of the king about the shortness of his life. Evidently, after the first shock of Isaiah's announcement of his imminent death, Hezekiah composed himself temporarily; then the depression came upon him again tearing him to pieces psychologically, like a lion tears a carcass apart. The Hebrew word *shuiythy* is a form of the word meaning *equal* or *even* and is translated in v. 13 *quieted*. Hezekiah apparently struggled long and hard in his soul until he got himself back on even keel. Then he was in some way reminded of his impending death and he began to "come apart" all over again. He began talking and chattering, like a bird, to himself or anyone else who would listen. Occasionally a long, low moan would interrupt the chattering. He has worn himself out crying unto the Lord and is so weak he can hardly lift his eyes in prayer once more. Yet, the Lord is his only hope. He is *oppressed*. The Hebrew word *'ashak* literally means *extort*, indicating the intense oppression Hezekiah feels. He asks the Lord to be his *'arebeniy* (pledge, surety). In effect he is asking the Lord "to bail him out."

v. 15-20 **THANKSGIVING:** Verse 15 seems to form a new division in the king's hymn of praise. It is as if he says, "What else can I say about this whole experience of mine? After the vexation of my soul and the wonderful deed of the Lord in restoring my life, what else am I to conclude but that the Lord has done it for my good?" It is to Hezekiah's great credit that he learned the way of the Lord from his traumatic confrontation of death. He learned that the way of the Lord was discipline. The Hebrew word *edadeh*, translated *softly*, really means *submissively*. The king is acknowledging that the

stressful experiences he has just gone through have taught him humility. He vows to live the remainder of his life in submission to God's discipline. He has learned through his "valley of the shadow of death" that troubles are oftentimes the doors to hope (see Hosea 1:14-15, *Minor Prophets*, Butler, College Press). Crises and severities are the stuff of which character is formed. Ease and luxury debilitate character. King Hezekiah learned that it was by the tests and trials of men's lives that they "lived." All the great men of God who have contributed anything at all to the salvation of the human race have been purified and refined by their trials. The very wellsprings of purposeful living are trials (II Cor. 1:3-11; James 1:2-4; etc.).

At first, says the king in verse 17, he was distressed for selfish reasons. His major concern in sickness was that his personal comfort had been taken away. But after prayer and the word of Isaiah concerning his recovery, he realized that the real blessing in restoration to physical health was not personal comfort but the confirmation it gave him that he was in right relationship to God and that God had pardoned him from his sin. This is another concept of the Old Testament that, though true in a sense, was qualified in the New Testament. It is true, as the Mosaic law teaches, health and long life will be granted by God to those who keep His commandments and do not sin against them. It is also true that death, disease and ill-health are often the direct result of disobeying the commandments of God. But it is also true that not all disease, ill-health and tribulation are a consequence of the particular sins of a particular person. So that good health does not always mean a person is not a sinner any more than ill-health always means a person is a sinner. Hezekiah was correct in assuming that God's extension of his life showed that God was pleased with Hezekiah's humility and submission to His discipline. God's forgiveness is by grace to all men. Men are obligated to surrender to God's covenant program in order to receive that grace.

The king rejoiced not only in the evidence of forgiveness he

experienced by his extended life, but also in the opportunity to worship God. His concept of Sheol (state of disembodied spirits of men) did not include worshipping God as the N.T. book of Revelation does. Worshipping at the feast days—partaking of God's truth—none of this was for the dead. The Hebrew word *hay hay, the living one, the living one*, emphasizes Hezekiah's joy that he has been granted an extension of life. The phrase, "even as I do this day," makes it intensely personal. His joy at being allowed to live and praise God was nearly overwhelming. The father making known God's truth to his children was another joyful experience Hezekiah hoped would result from his extension of life. He had no son yet, so he is wistfully hoping God will provide that joy for him also.

The Hebrew word *lehoshiy'enyi* is composed of prepositional and infinitive prefixes attached to the verb and probably expresses an aim, tendency, or direction. Thus Leupold translates, "The Lord is *minded* to deliver me." Because the Lord has made it His purpose to deliver Hezekiah from an untimely death, he is moved to express the deep, heartfelt gratitude of his soul in songs accompanied by stringed instruments. It will not be a "spur-of-the-moment" praise—but deliberate, planned, arranged, scored musical production. Hezekiah's praise will be set to musical composition and lyric in order that others may share with him in praising the Lord. The great Christian hymn writers have left us a heritage of their personal praise in lyric and tune so that we may share in their experiences. Their experiences and expressions of praise are so nearly our own that we can sing their songs as expressions of our hearts to God also. Such personal expressions become monuments and sacrifices offered to the honor of God. Hezekiah was such a man. How sad, how utterly sad, that Judah did not have a man like Hezekiah to succeed him on the throne.

QUIZ

1. Why was Hezekiah so upset about the news of his imminent death?

2. What was Hezekiah's concept of existence after death?
3. What is the difference in Hezekiah's concept of life after death and that of the New Testament?
4. How intense was Hezekiah's reaction to the prediction of his death?
5. What was Hezekiah's eventual attitude toward his traumatic experiences?
6. How did Hezekiah relate his extension of life to his relationship to God?
7. How did Hezekiah say he would express his thanks to God?

3. PRESCRIPTION

TEXT: 38:21-22

- 21 Now Isaiah had said, Let them take a cake of figs, and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover.
- 22 Hezekiah also had said, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of Jehovah?

QUERIES

- a. What value did the cake of figs have for Hezekiah?

PARAPHRASE

For Isaiah had told Hezekiah's servants, Make an ointment of crushed figs and spread it over the boil, and he will get well again. And then Hezekiah had asked Isaiah, What sign will the Lord give me to prove that He will heal me?

COMMENTS

v. 21 OINTMENT: The Hebrew word *marahk*, translated *plaster*, means literally, *rub, bruise, crush*. Isaiah's instructions evidently were to crush some figs into a soft, fluid ointment that could be rubbed on the boil. If the reader will compare the parallel account of Hezekiah's illness in II Kings 20:1-11 he will find the psalm of thanksgiving omitted. The account in II Kings ends with the medicinal ointment and the omen. Verses 21 and 22 are not out of order here. The psalm of thanksgiving is simply inserted in Isaiah's account and omitted in the Kings account. The Ras Shamra (Ugaritic) literature indicates that figs and their juices were used by the ancients for healing purposes. However, it would seem here the fig ointment was used more as a symbolic agent rather than an actual medicinal cure. Hezekiah's illness was terminal! Hezekiah's healing was miraculous. The fig ointment was commanded of God as a test of Hezekiah's faith. It is the same principle with our "eating the flesh of the Son of man and drinking His blood." The emblems are symbolic, not the actual flesh and blood of the physical body of Jesus. Partaking of the emblems serves as a means of proving our faith. They serve as a test of our obedience. What the *shehkiyn* (boil) was is difficult to know. The word may mean *hot* or *inflamed* or *ulcerated*. It would bring death in Hezekiah's case.

v. 22 OMEN: The Hebrew word *aoth* is translated *sign* and also may be translated *token*, or *type*. One of the great differences between Ahaz, the king who displeased God in his leadership of the nation of Judah, and Hezekiah who pleased God in his leadership, was that Ahaz refused to seek God's sign of divine guidance while Hezekiah sought a sign from God of His divine help. When an abundance of divine signs have been demonstrated it is displeasing to God to seek after more signs (cf. Mt. 12:38-42). It would not honor God for men and women today to seek signs from God. He has given His greatest miraculous sign, once and for all, Jesus Christ, God Incarnate! (cf. Heb. 1:1). Many eyewitnesses have left us a record of God's

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complete and final supernatural revelation—the New Testament. But Hezekiah did not have such an abundance of confirmation. He was not wrong in asking for a sign.

QUIZ

1. What was the nature of the medicinal application made to Hezekiah's boil?
2. Are these two verses out of order?
3. How could fig juice heal a terminal disease?
4. Was Hezekiah correct in asking for a sign?
5. Why would it displease God for men to ask for more signs today?

SPECIAL STUDY

THE FUTURE LIFE

A Study of the Teaching of the Bible concerning the Future Life, with special attention given to the Revelation in the Old Testament.

by

R. C. Foster

We are living in an age in which the belief in the life after death is being widely doubted and denied. This is to be expected in an atheistic age, for the belief in the future life is the necessary corollary of a belief in God. Atheistic groups have seized the government of nations, as in Russia and Germany, and seek to destroy the very remnants of those who still cling to the Bible. Investigations reveal that in our own country at least 40 percent of the young people in our colleges are turning

to atheism under the strong pressure of atheistic professors. Preachers, supposed to be Christian, disavow belief in the future life, although questionnaires show that the percentage of preachers who deny the existence of hell is larger than those who deny entirely the life after death! What more timely topic than to consider "The Teaching of the Bible Concerning the Future Life"?

The Christian is the salt that is to save a dissolute world from utter corruption; he is the light set on the hill to shine out and save the world from despair. Now is the time for Christians everywhere to obey the command of their divine Lord and preach the gospel. The belief in the future life is the very crown of glory which adorns this gospel. To preach the gospel in an age like this requires not merely an intimate mastery of the teaching of the Bible, but a thorough knowledge of the criticisms of the opponents of Christianity, and of the grounds on which they rest.

The universality of the belief in the life after death has always been a convincing argument. Even the most degraded savages have had their conception of the future life. It seems rather strange to hear so many voices of doubt raised in an age so boastful of its intellectualism, its culture and its own infallibility. But reflection upon this leads one to doubt the wisdom and worth of this generation rather than the truth and value of belief in eternal life. The more one studies this present generation and perceives its vaunting egotism, its shallow reasoning, its stupid prejudice and its polluted morals, the more one is inclined to cling to the anchor of hope which has sustained the Christian through the centuries.

VIEW OF THE ATHEIST

Those who question the teaching of the Bible in regard to the future life are divided into various groups. First, there is the outright atheist. Many sermons have been preached on "The Search for an Atheist." The thought of the sermons has been

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that such a person does not exist. It is said that deep down in the heart of the so-called atheist there is still the latent faith in God, smothered, but sure to break into a flame when misfortune or death comes. The speech of Robert Ingersol at the grave of his brother, when he could almost hear the rustle of angels' wings, was often cited. Likewise the dying statement of Voltaire that if the devil had ever had a hand in anything, it had been in his attacks on the Bible. But it is perhaps more than any one can affirm with assurance that every one who has denied the existence of God and the future life has sooner or later recanted. It is better to rest on the declaration of the Bible without qualifications: "The fool has said in his heart there is no God." H. J. Allen, of Kansas, tells of a young Russian guide, a college graduate, who ridiculed him, as he was touring Moscow, because he frankly admitted that he still read and believed the Bible. He finally asked her where she expected to go when she died. She replied, "Into fertilizer."

THE HUMANISTS' AND MODERNISTS' POSITION

The humanists who reduce God to a mere idea seem to be in utter confusion concerning the future life, and the impression most of them make is that they believe in annihilation, although they use a variety of phrases and illustrations and still talk about "eternity" as they do about "God." Modernists who are not so extreme center their attacks on the Old Testament to prove that the future life is not taught there, or at least only in a very vague way, until later books were written. This theory has been so widely disseminated that quite frequently preachers who think that they believe the Bible proclaim that the future life is not taught in the O.T., but only in the N.T. They think they are exalting Christ and the N.T. by so affirming, but the truth is they have merely consciously or unconsciously adopted a modernistic theory without examining its basis or implications. It is the purpose of this essay to examine both the O.T. and the N.T. to determine the general outline

of teaching concerning the life after death, with special emphasis upon the question as to whether the O.T. actually teaches the future life.

THE MODERNISTS' PRESUPPOSITION

The presupposition which underlies the modernists' denial that the Old Testament teaches the future life is their theory as to the development of the O.T. They deny that it is revealed of God, and affirm it is merely man's gradual discovery of what is therein affirmed. In support of this they dissect various O.T. books, such as the Pentateuch and Isaiah, and whenever they find a statement or teaching which their theory of evolutionary development of the O.T. supposes could not have prevailed until a late period in the thinking of the Jews, they immediately declare this passage is by some later writer, J, E, D, P, or a second Isaiah. A free use of the evolutionary shears enables them to cut up the O.T. and rearrange its contents so as to make a gradual development throughout of the idea of a life after death. Thus they slyly attempt to prove one presupposition by another presupposition, and depend upon their solemn use of big words and scientific terms to prevent the reader from discovering the hoax.

Prof. Kyrsoff Lake, the famous humanist of Harvard, was pressing in his class one day this theory that the O.T. does not teach the future life. A student spoke up and said: "But, Professor Lake, what about the time when the spirit of Samuel returned and talked to Saul before the battle where the latter was slain?" After a moment's hesitation, Prof. Lake responded: "Well, IF that is in the O.T., I will have to admit that it teaches the future life, but have not the critics been able to cut that passage out?"

A MORE MODERATE VIEW

Prof. A. C. Knudson, of Boston University, who is not so extreme in his modernism, has recently published a book

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entitled, *The Religious Teaching of the Old Testament*. He has a chapter on "The Teaching of the Old Testament Concerning the Future Life." He does not attempt to *cut* out the passages that affirm such a belief; he just tries to *rub* them out, to insist that these passages do not really represent the belief of the Jews of the time. At times he resorts to the dissection of books to relegate certain statements to a late period.

The Christian believes the Bible to be inspired of God. The miraculous proof it offers sustains its claim. That the teaching concerning the future should be more clearly and emphatically presented in the New Testament than the O.T. is to be expected, for the new and final revelation is superior to the old, and it was Christ who "brought life and immortality to light." But that the O.T. does not teach the future life is the theory of unbelievers like the Sadducees in the time of Jesus and the modernists of today. Anyone who has become confused upon this topic should read repeatedly the discussion of Jesus as to whether the O.T. teaches the future life in Matt. 22:23-33, and the great review of this problem in the 11th chapter of Hebrews.

HEATHENISM AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

Prof. Knudson quotes several authors on the question as to why the O.T. has so much less to say on the future life than the religions of Egypt, Greece and other nations. Prof. Salmond declares the O.T. to be below the standard of other religions of ancient times, "less tolerable than the Greek, less ethical than the Egyptian, less adequate and certain than the Persian. These had a more special mission than can be claimed for the Hebrew faith, in the preservation and transmission of the truth of a future life." Kant, the German philosopher, held that, because of this lack of emphasis on the future life, the O.T. lacks a genuinely religious character. While his compatriot, Schopenhauer, calls the O.T. on this basis, "The rudest of all religions."

REPLY TO THE ACCUSATION

A sufficient answer to all this unfavorable comparison of the O.T. to the heathen religions of the times is the reminder that it is not how much, but what is said on a subject that counts. Read the endless silly ideas advanced by these pagan religions. Visit the tomb of Tut-ankh-amen, filled with the rations and decorations prepared for the dead king. Is the religion of Israel inferior to Egypt because the O.T. is not filled with instructions about burying food and gold chariots, etc., with the dead, for them to use hereafter? Prof. Knudson claims that ancient Hebrew graves have been unearthed in Palestine that contain such primitive preparations for the future life. But if this be so, it only proves again what the O.T. continually relates that the Jewish people at times deserted the true faith and became contaminated by the false religions about them. Prof. Knudson cannot find any passage in the O.T. which instructs that such physical equipment be provided for the dead. He argues at great length that the Jews generally accepted the crude practices of their pagan neighbors concerning the future life, such as ancestor worship, citing Deut. 26:14; Jer. 16:7; Psa. 106:28; Hos. 9:4; Ezek. 24:17; Lev. 19:28; 21:5; II Sam. 15:30; Ezek. 24:17. A reading of these passages will show the absolute absence of proof; they warn against excess or mourning. Psa. 106:28 condemns Israel for having joined the heathen in the wilderness in "sacrifices of the dead," but such a reference, together with those that warn Israel against the practice of witchcraft in regard to the dead, shows that the teaching of the O.T. plainly recognizes the life after death, and warns the Jews against the false heathen practices concerning it.

The critics who argue that the O.T. does not teach the future life until a very late period, when they had borrowed the idea from their heathen neighbors, are in desperate straits trying to explain the amazing difference between the teaching of the O.T. and that of the surrounding pagan nations. Some suggest that the reason the future life is not emphasized more is the

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“strong sense of solidarity” which held the nation immortal. They say, “The Messianic hope rendered unnecessary the belief in personal immortality.” But this falsifies the facts as to the O.T. teaching and as to the natural and inevitable longings of the human heart. The Messianic hope was one that the individual was to share. Prof. Toy holds that the lack of teaching on the life after death is due to the lack of constructive imagination on the part of the Semites; the Jews knew nothing of drama or metaphysics. In other words, if the Jews could have just seen one or two Greek plays, it might have occurred to them that life after death would be desirable! Another explanation of this difficulty seems to have been overlooked: that it may be caused by a lack of eye-sight on the part of the critics.

EVIDENCE FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

What evidence does the Old Testament bear that the writers who led and molded the faith of the nation believed in the future life? What evidence that God was revealing to His chosen people in His own way and time the glories of the beyond, drawing them away from the foolish and degrading teaching of the heathen, and leading up to the natural climax of the revelation in Christ?

- (1) Actual cases of resurrection of the dead (I Kgs. 17:22; II Kgs. 4:35; 13:21)
- (2) Actual cases of translation where the individual did not die, but was translated by God. (Gen. 5:22-24; II Kgs. 2:11)

The modernists argue that these cases do not mean that the people would be led by such to believe in a future life. How so, unless we presume the Jews were a nation of imbeciles?

- (3) Actual case of reappearance of Samuel, after his death, to talk with Saul. (I Sam. 28:12-19)
- (4) Definite declarations of belief in future life.

After David's extravagant mourning on the ash heap

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during the illness of his child, as he prayed for forgiveness and for the child's life, his servants feared to report to him the death of his child, and were astounded at the calmness with which he heard the news and ceased his mourning. His statement is a classic for all time: "But now that he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me." (II Sam. 12:15-23). David's statement does not mean annihilation, for his whole conduct was that of hope instead of despair. And his repeated declarations voice his faith in the future life.

OVERLOOKING THAT EVIDENCE

Prof. Knudson overlooks the above incident. He quotes four Psalms (16, 17, 49, 73) as teaching vaguely (16, 17) or definitely (49, 73) the future life, but claims they are all of late origin. His theory compels him to hold that no clear statements of the future life were made until about the Maccabean period, when the Jews could have had time to learn this from the Persians. The apostle Peter did not feel compelled to trim the O.T. to fit the theory of evolution, for on the day of Pentecost he made the teaching of the O.T. on the future life one of the central points of argument in his sermon as he quoted David as saying in Psa. 16:8ff.: "Thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades, Neither shalt thou give thy holy one to see corruption." He declared that David was predicting the resurrection of Jesus.

Just to show that the belief in the future life underlies the whole O.T., and to take a Psalm which nobody denies is written by David, read the famous 23rd Psalm: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. . . ." He does not say "into the valley," but "through the valley." Death was not a destination to him, but a thoroughfare. He had the mountain-top vision. He was traveling through the valley and on to the heights of glory beyond. Hear him as he closes: "And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord *for ever.*"

THE RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT

Many other passages might be quoted, such as Ezek. 37:1-14; Isa. 14:9; 25:8; 26:19; 53:10-12; 66:24; Dan. 12:2. The last passage is particularly interesting: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Critics hold that this teaches man is immortal; i.e., some will be raised and some annihilated (not raised). But this would mean that man may achieve the resurrection by either pre-eminent righteousness or pre-eminent wickedness! Ewald holds the "many" means all Israelites as contrasted with the heathen; Charles and Knudson hold it means "The pre-eminently good and bad in Israel." But the next verse makes quite clear that all the wise and noble are to be raised to a blessed existence, and it immediately follows that all the wicked shall also be raised, but to everlasting punishment.

THE OLD TESTAMENT ANSWERS DOUBTERS

The fact that a number of O.T. writers argue the question of the future life, and state both the position of doubt and of faith, does not alter the fact of what the O.T. teaches. For the point is not that some verse may be quoted from Job or Ecclesiastes or Psalms which expresses doubt as to the life after death, but the question is: To what conclusion did the author come in the end? It is futile to quote the earlier expressions of doubt in Ecclesiastes. What does he say is his conclusion after he has considered the whole range of human pleasures, doubt and despair? "Man goeth to his everlasting home, and the mourners go about the streets: before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it . . . This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into

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judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:5-14). It is true that Job ponders the side of doubt as he asks, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). But hear his conclusion: "But as for me, I know that my Redeemer liveth, and at last he shall stand up upon the earth: And after my skin, even this body, is destroyed, then without my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25, 26). The same is true of the Psalmist.

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH?

A question of supreme interest is: What did Jesus have to say on the teaching of the Old Testament as to the future life? The skeptics of His day rendered a negative verdict as today. But hear the Son of God as He tore apart the flimsy argument of the Sadducees "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29). No better comment could be written across the face of many books on this subject, written by men who claim to be scholars. After answering the puzzle about the seven husbands and one wife, and pausing to press it home that there are angels in heaven even as there is a resurrection, even though the Sadducees denied both, Jesus offered just one passage from the Old Testament to prove that it teaches the future life. And what an extraordinary passage it is! Ye blind leaders of the blind, hear His words! "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Not invented by man; not learned in Egypt, Greece or Persia, but "spoken unto you by God." And as if to meet the critics of the 20th century, He does not quote Daniel, Isaiah or the Psalms; He quotes from the words of God to Moses, recorded in Exodus 3:6. No room for late development of ideas! His argument is this: Abraham had been dead many years, also Isaac and Jacob; but God does not say to Moses, "I was the God of Abraham"

(while he was living, but not now), but, "I *am* the God of Abraham"; he is alive now, for a dead person who is no longer in existence can have had a creator, but he cannot have a God. It is as if Jesus said: "Approach the Old Testament where you will, and scratch the surface; you will find the life after death implied, if not stated."

TESTIMONY IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

Like most problems which concern the Old Testament, the question as to its attitude toward the life after death finds a sublime discussion in the Epistle to the Hebrews. One might well write across the magnificent 11th chapter, the title, "The Teaching of the Old Testament Concerning the Future Life." It reviews the first glimmer of hope in Abel's obedient sacrifice; the translation of Enoch; the faith and hope of Abraham. "These all died in faith, not having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (11:13). By its emphatic study of the word "pilgrim" which Abraham used, Hebrews analyzes his faith. It pictures Abraham standing by the grave of Sarah and solemnly affirming that he was a pilgrim (Gen. 23:4). A pilgrim is a traveler with a destination. So with Abraham in his sojourn in Palestine: he dwelt in tents and kept looking for a permanent city. It was not Ur of the Chaldees, for the way was open to return there. "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city" (11:16). Hebrews pictures Abraham with uplifted knife, about to kill Isaac, in obedience to God's command. How was this possible? Because Abraham believed that death did not end all, but that God would be able to raise Isaac from the dead. What strong faith was this in the future life! The faith of Isaac and Jacob as they died, and the specific command of Joseph "concerning his bones," all are cited. The critics who cite this longing of Joseph to be buried with his fathers as proof that the O.T. leaders counted the geographical location of burial more important than righteous

living, ought to be given the first prize for intellectual confusion. It proves this much, however, that Joseph was looking forward to a blessed life hereafter, or why bother about any command "concerning his bones," that his body should be taken with the Israelites to Palestine? Moses' hope in the "recompense of reward," which was to offset all his sacrifice and suffering for the Lord here on earth, receives great emphasis. Special mention is made of the fact that "women received their dead by a resurrection; others were tortured not accepting their deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection" (Heb. 11:35).

The Old Testament thus was God's message to Israel to clear their minds of the confused and false teaching of pagan nations about the after life, and to prepare the way for His final and complete revelation in the New Testament. The second coming of Jesus, the end of the world, the judgment of men according to the deeds done in the body, the separation of the righteous from the wicked, the blessed life of the redeemed with God forever, the eternal punishment of the wicked—all this has tremendous emphasis in the teaching of Jesus and the whole New Testament. The resurrection of Jesus is the keystone on which all this is builded. It is the very type of our resurrection. It contains a double miracle: not merely the rejoining of the soul and body of Jesus, but the final translation of this earthly body into the heavenly at the time of the ascension.

PAUL'S TEACHING CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION

Of this mystery Paul speaks in I Corinthians, when he seeks to explain the fact that, although the Christian is to expect a resurrection, he is not expected to have in heaven exactly the same body as on earth. People were disturbed at Corinth with the question as to "how are the dead raised? . . . and with what manner of body do they come?" Paul illustrates by the grain of wheat planted in the ground. It is the same grain of wheat and it is not the same grain of wheat which comes forth.

We see different kinds of flesh here: beasts, birds, fish. This should illustrate God's power to give us a heavenly body according to His own will. "This corruptible shall put on incorruption." We shall preserve our identity. We shall be like Him when we see Him as He is. "These that are arrayed in the white robes, who are they and whence came they? . . . These are they that come of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:13, 14). In this blessed hope let us live and die, for death is but the beginning of life, unending and blessed, for those who follow the Son of God.

Addendum: For an excellent expose' of Modern Higher Criticism dealing at length with the Pentateuch, see Dr. John L. Campbell's book, *The Bible Under Fire*. Read especially the first chapter which deals with the Polychrome ("Rainbow") Bible where the critics literally took shears and cut and pasted until they made a Bible which would "prove" their theories of "gradual development."

D. PRESUMPTION, CHAPTER 39

1. PRIDE

TEXT: 39:1-4

- 1 At that time Merodachbaladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah; for he heard that he had been sick, and was recovered.
- 2 And Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious oil, and all the house of his armor, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not.

- 3 Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon.
- 4 Then said he, What have they seen in thy house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in my house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them.

QUERIES

- a. Why was the king of Babylon so interested in Hezekiah?
- b. Why did the prophet Isaiah question Hezekiah?

PARAPHRASE

About nine years before Hezekiah's confrontation with the Assyrian Rabshakeh, soon after his recovery from his illness, the king of Babylon, Merodachbaladan, son of Baladan, sent his envoys with a letter and a gift to Hezekiah. The King of Babylon was interested in the reports of Hezekiah's phenomenal recovery from terminal illness. Hezekiah was proud of the fact that the king of Babylon had sent envoys to inquire of his recovery so he took them on a tour of his palace, showing them the wealth of his treasury and the armaments in his armory. Hezekiah was so taken with the overtures of the Babylonians, he showed them everything in his city they wanted to see. Immediately, Isaiah the prophet confronted King Hezekiah and said to him, What did these men say to you—where are they from? Hezekiah did not tell Isaiah what the men said but did reply, They are from far away in Babylon. Then Isaiah asked the king, what have you shown them of your kingdom? Hezekiah replied, I have shown them everything about my kingdom—everything in my treasury and in my armory.

COMMENTS

V. 1-2 VANITY OF THE KING: II Chronicles 32:31 relates that the envoys from Babylon were sent to "inquire about the sign that had been done in the land." Evidently word had filtered into the courts of foreign potentates of the phenomenal, miraculous recovery of King Hezekiah from a terminal illness. Some commentators are inclined to think the inquiry of the envoys about Hezekiah's recovery was simply a ploy, a ruse, to approach Judah for a military alliance against Assyria. Whatever the case, the text in II Chronicles indicates Hezekiah did not seek the Lord's guidance in dealing with the Babylonians so, "God left him to himself, in order to try him and to know all that was in his heart."

If our chronology is correct (see comments on 38:1-3) the Babylonian envoys came to Hezekiah before the invasion of Sennacherib (Isa. 36-37). They came soon after Hezekiah's recovery. This would place their visit sometime in 710 B.C. Merodachbaladan (which means, Marduk has given a son) was probably named for the pagan god Marduk. He was the valiant leader of a people known as Chaldeans who gained power and rule over the southern territory of Mesopotamia. In 722 B.C. he rebelled against the Assyrian rule of that territory and formed his own kingdom. Sargon, king of Assyria (Isa. 20), recognized his domain in 721 B.C. so he reigned over that small southern territory for 11 years. About 710 B.C. he sent envoys to Jerusalem, supposedly to give his best wishes to Hezekiah at his recovery from illness. What the envoys really came for was to invite Hezekiah to join in an alliance against Assyria. Merodachbaladan had already persuaded Susa, Phoenicia, Moab, Edom, Philistia and Egypt to join him in a military attack upon Assyria. Sargon learned of the planned attack and set about to defeat these nations, one by one. He took Babylon and Bit-Yakin (Merodachbaladan's home in the swamps of southern Mesopotamia) and Merodachbaladan himself was captured. He managed to be reinstated as ruler of a small principedom at Bit-Yakin. Around 702 or 701 he occupied

Babylon and ruled there again but only briefly. Sennacherib, Sargon's son and successor drove him back to the swamps and Bit-Yakin. Later he was forced to flee to Elam (Persia) and Chaldean influence was silenced in Mesopotamia. Although Merodachbaladan was unsuccessful in his attempt to overthrow Assyria and revive the power of ancient Babylon, the Chaldeans rose after his death to the dominant power in Mesopotamia.

Merodachbaladan's escapades and seditions are documented in the Assyrian inscriptions of Sennacherib found by archaeologists (See *Archaeology and Bible History*, by Joseph P. Free, pg. 210-211).

The Hebrew word *samahk* expresses more than *gladness*. It often means *to shine cheerfully*. Hezekiah was evidently very impressed with his visitors. He was flattered that the king of Babylon would send him a present. He was also momentarily charmed by their invitation to join in the efforts to break the Assyrian yoke. With such charming visitors Hezekiah felt it would be an opportune time to "show off" the grandeur of his country's wealth and armament. He probably wanted to prove to them he was no second-rate king. Hezekiah committed a two-fold *faux pas*; a political blunder and a personal transgression. For the king of God's covenant people to display all his treasures and weapons to pagan envoys who represented inevitable enemies was political stupidity. The envoys undoubtedly made mental note of fortifications, weapons and financial resources for future use. The personal blunder was in succumbing to vanity, pride, egotism and self-sufficiency. This detracted from his faith and trust in Jehovah. And this almost immediately after his great psalm of praise and trust in Jehovah! How like us mortal men he was!

V. 3-4 VOICE OF THE PROPHET: It appears Isaiah came almost immediately after the tour of the envoys and confronted Hezekiah with his blunder. Isaiah was sent by Jehovah as verse 5 confirms. His approach reminds one of the confrontation between the prophet Nathan and King David. Hezekiah is so charmed by the prestige apparently accorded him by this visit he misses the ominous inferences of the

prophet. Isaiah asks, what have these men said? and where are they from? Hezekiah places first importance on where they were from—Babylon. Never mind what they say—even though they may be talking about a Babylonian-Judean alliance. The important thing to notice is how important I am that they would come all the way from the great city of Babylon to see me.

Isaiah's next question is one of foreboding also, What have they seen in your house? In other words, How much have you shown them of your armament and treasures? Have you been discreet or indiscreet? Still elated over being flattered by such auspicious visitors, the King blurts out that he has shown them *everything*! Nothing has been kept secret. Isaiah's questions were intended to reveal to the king his blunder. They were specifically to remind him he had not kept his promise to trust in Jehovah but he had been seduced through his egotism to trust in men.

QUIZ

1. What does II Chronicles 32 tell us about this incident?
2. When did the envoys from Babylon come to Hezekiah?
3. What was Hezekiah's reaction to their visit?

2. PUNISHMENT

TEXT: 39:5-8

- 5 Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of Jehovah of hosts.
- 6 Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith Jehovah.
- 7 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, whom thou shalt

beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the King of Babylon.

8 Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of Jehovah which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

QUERIES

- a. Why carried away to Babylon instead of Assyria?
- b. Why did Hezekiah say the prediction was "good"?

PARAPHRASE

Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, Hear the word of Jehovah of hosts. Behold, the time is coming when all of the armament and treasures which you have so boastfully shown your Babylonian visitors—everything your ancestors have worked so hard to accumulate and store up—will be carried off by the Babylonians as the booty of war. None of your wealth or weapons will be left, says the Lord. Your own sons and grandsons will be taken away by these same Babylonians and made slaves in the palace of their king. Hezekiah was humbled by the prophet's words and said, Yes, the word of the Lord is good and just. Furthermore, the word of the Lord is merciful. The Lord will make peace and truth to prevail for us at least for the rest of my days.

COMMENTS

v. 5-7 **CARRYING AWAY:** Isaiah came, not in a human advisory capacity, but as a prophet of God. His prediction carried all the authority of Almighty God. It was, in fact, *the word* of Jehovah.

It is ironic that all the treasures Hezekiah had shown to the Babylonian envoys will someday, Isaiah predicts, be carried off

by the Babylonians as the booty of conquest. Isaiah's prediction is enigmatic and problematical, to say the least. Here are the Babylonian envoys bringing gifts, expressing concern about Hezekiah's health, making friendly and charming inquiries about the grandeur of Judah's beautiful Temple vessels, diplomatically inviting Hezekiah to join forces with a great crusade against the common enemy, Assyria, and Isaiah is predicting they will be Judah's real conquerors. What appears to be the real threat, which has terrified the people, Assyria, Isaiah has predicted will disappear and pose no threat at all to Judah. What it really amounts to is a confrontation between the finite knowledge (limited only to the past and present) and the infinite knowledge of God (unlimited). Hezekiah's part in the drama is to decide which he will trust.

A prediction even more piercing to the heart of Hezekiah was the one concerning his sons. He does not even have a son yet! Now the dark news comes that when he shall have a son, his destiny is that of conquest and slavery in a pagan palace. The fulfillment of this prediction may be seen in Dan. 1:3-6; II Chron. 33:11; II Kings 24:12-16. Manasseh, Hezekiah's immediate son, was taken to Babylon by the Assyrians; Jehoiachin, a great-great-great-great grandson of Hezekiah was taken captive by the Babylonians. The throne of Judah, the house of David, so precious to Hezekiah, will not only cease to exist, but the sovereign crowned heads which sit upon it will be forced into shameful servitude in an unclean, idolatrous, pagan court.

V. 8 CALM ACQUIESCENCE: Hezekiah reacts to the rebuke of Isaiah and the word of the Lord as one would expect a man of his calibre to react. He is a man of great faith, but not a perfect man. He has weaknesses. But he is a man of a good and malleable heart. He is capable of acknowledging his sin and repenting when confronted with the will of God. In this respect, he is like his progenitor, David. It is not only the sin of Hezekiah that brings on the Babylonian captivity (cf. Deut. 28:32), but the whole nation has defaulted on their covenant with God. Already other prophets have arraigned Judah before

the judgment bar of God (Amos 2:4-5; Hosea 6:11, etc.).

Hezekiah should not be accused of a selfish attitude when he says, "For there shall be peace and truth in my days." He has resigned his will to that of the Lord and pronounced the will of the Lord "good"! What all does he mean? We cannot be certain. Perhaps he is acknowledging the justness of God's chastisement. Perhaps he is acknowledging the good that will result from the chastening of a rebellious and unfaithful people through the coming captivity. He himself has just endured a chastening in his illness, and it has made him a man more responsive to the revealed will of God. Now he thanks the Lord, not only for himself but for his nation, that there will be a time of peace and truth for Judah before the darkness of the Babylonian captivity falls. E. J. Young paraphrases Hezekiah, "There will be peace and truth at least in my days, but I am not spared the misfortune of the knowledge that my descendants will go into captivity."

The great forces of evil that oppose the redemptive work of God through His covenant loom on the horizon in Babylon. The mercy of God is extended to the covenant people for a short time. But soon they must be cast into the crucible and purified. Soon they must suffer the discipline of God that produces the fruit of righteousness. Soon the remnant must be refined that through it may come the Messiah and redemption to all peoples. It is no comfort to know that "peace and truth" will last only for Hezekiah's day. What about the future fortunes of the people of God? What ultimate and everlasting comfort can be given to God's people? What about peace and truth forever?

The answers to these questions are reserved for the second great section of the book of Isaiah, chapters 40-66.

QUIZ

1. What is so enigmatic about predicting captivity by Babylon?
2. Which sons of Hezekiah were taken captive?

3. Was Hezekiah selfish in being glad of peace and truth in his own days?
4. Where is the answer to the enigma of the captivities?

EXAMINATION

CHAPTERS THIRTY-EIGHT AND THIRTY-NINE

IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION

(Identify and locate the following by telling all you know about them.)

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 1. Hezekiah | 7. the house of Jehovah |
| 2. the wall | 8. cake of figs |
| 3. dial of Ahaz | 9. Merodachbaladan |
| 4. Sheol | 10. the house of his armor |
| 5. the loom | 11. Babylon |
| 6. the pit | 12. thy sons that shall issue
from thee |

MEMORIZATION

In those days was Hezekiah sick unto _____. And Isaiah the prophet the son of _____ came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith Jehovah, _____; for thou shalt _____, and not live. Then Hezekiah turned his _____ to the _____, and prayed unto Jehovah, and said, Remember now, O Jehovah, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in _____ and with a _____ heart, and have done that which is _____ in thy sight. And Hezekiah _____ sore. (Isa. 38:1-3)

Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, _____ is the word of Jehovah which thou has spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be _____ and _____ in my _____. (Isa. 39:8)

ISAI AH

EXPLANATIONS

1. Explain why Hezekiah was so distraught when he learned he would die (Isa. 38:1-22).
2. Explain why it was proper for Hezekiah to ask for a sign of his healing, when the N.T. denounces the Pharisees for continually seeking a sign from Jesus (Isa. 38:7-8).
3. Explain why Hezekiah could say the prediction of the Lord of the Babylonian captivity for Judah was "good" (Isa. 39:5-8).

APPLICATION

(In its context every scripture has one meaning—the author's intended meaning. How may the following be applied in the believer's life?)

1. What is the difference between the Old Testament concept of life after death and that of the New Testament and what difference should this make in our relationship to God?
2. What did Hezekiah do wrong in showing the Babylonians his treasury and what application could be made in the church's (the New Kingdom of God) relationship to the world?
3. What overall application could be made for the Church and the World in this whole section, chapters 24-39?

SPECIAL STUDY

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF DISCIPLINE

Hebrews 12:1-11

by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTION

I. WHAT HAS GIVEN BIRTH TO THIS MESSAGE?

- A. The general tenor of thought and action today

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1. Freedom means license.
2. Lawlessness is sin.

Note: Billy Graham, *Eternity*, November, 1965, says, "What we need in the Church today is a new holy discipline—and a disciplined life."

- II. DISCIPLINE DEFINED (Baker's *Dictionary of Theology*)
"Discipline implies instruction and correction, the training which improves, molds, strengthens, and perfects character. It is the moral education obtained by the enforcement of obedience through supervision and control."

The concept of discipline is usually, in Scriptural terms, called *chastening, chastisement, instruction*.

The concept is usually illustrated in the Scriptures by the correction of human fathers toward their sons.

- III. THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF DISCIPLINE (may be taken from this text)

- A. Demands (There are some who think man must be free of any authority or discipline to attain his greatest good.)
- B. Designs (Discipline is not an end in itself, but the means to an end . . . the means must be endured to reach the purposed end.)
- C. Derivatives (If we are to endure it and it is to reach the right end, discipline must have the right motivation or derivative.)

I. DISCIPLINE DEMANDED

- A. The nature of our being demands it.
 1. Man is an organism—without discipline he loses balance; without authority he disintegrates; an organism is an integrated structure and it must have discipline and authority to remain integrated.
 2. Without discipline man's life is chaotic—insecure—

purposeless—Psychologically we must have discipline to feel needed and cared for—look at Hebrews 12:8, “If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.” Illustration: A preacher took a 17 year old delinquent boy into his home. When the boy broke the rules that had been laid down, the preacher punished him bodily. Sobbing, the boy exclaimed that it was the first time anyone had shown true concern for him!

This is the heart rending cry of many despairing souls today . . . “We live in an indifferent universe . . .”

Reader's Digest, November, 1965: “There seems to be no doubt whatsoever that parents who have the least trouble with their children take the task of discipline seriously. Psychologists, once so permissive, now point out that the worst thing we can do for our children is to be too kind, for children whose parents love them too much to punish them are like pedestrians wandering in traffic where there are no stop signs. Frightened, children may provoke their parents with worse and worse behavior. It is as though they were saying, “If we get snarled up *enough*, somebody will *have* to take over.”

It's sobering to find that children themselves frequently testify they'd like their parents to be stricter. In a survey taken a few years ago, one high-school child in five thought the discipline in his life inadequate; 13% even felt that a good whack was a fine idea!

“Maybe I'm old-fashioned,” a young mother told me after she had dispatched a whining, showing-off five year old to her room, “but I can't believe that being allowed to make everybody else miserable now is going to make her more lovable twenty years

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from now.”

Perhaps parents would not be so afraid of discipline if they could think of it as something more than punishment and reward. In fact, it is a question of putting our children so in control of themselves that they can use their best qualities. It is a question of giving them the ability to make decisions and to accept the consequences of their choice.

3. A libertine existence, a life without the restraints of Godly discipline, leads inevitably to pessimism, cynicism and despair . . . sometimes to suicide. I could tell you of people I have known who, suddenly made bereft of the security of authority and discipline they had rested in, took their own lives.
 - a. Nietzsche went insane when he cast off all discipline of the mind and will.
 - b. Comte suffered a mental breakdown and attempted suicide as a result of his undisciplined philosophic ramblings.
 - c. King Saul, Herod the Great—both suffered similarly.
4. Yes, even man's thinking and learning processes are dependent upon discipline; authority; order. Without discipline, there is no learning. Illustration: Gary Boyd tells of the little boy attending a school of progressive education where the student was told that $2 + 2$ equals whatever he discovered he wants it to equal. His father showed him an old fashioned school book where students were taught the discipline of the multiplication tables on authority . . . HE WAS ALMOST OVERCOME WITH JOY.
5. Man's moral balance is dependent upon discipline. Man must obey and submit to what is right and orderly or else he comes to guilt, anarchy, disorientation.

B. The nature of our association demands it.

Illustration: Chas. E. Whittaker, former Supreme Court Justice, in December *Reader's Digest*, says, "Can a disorderly society survive? In all recorded history none ever has."

1. Every society must have order, and discipline is necessary to order.
 2. The church is a kingdom; a kingdom without authority and discipline results in anarchy.
 3. The church is a family; a home without discipline results in misery and heartache.
 4. The church is a body; an organism without discipline results in frustration.
 5. The church is a flock; a flock without discipline and submission to the leadership of its shepherds is destined for disaster through the straying of its lambs.
 6. The church is an army; an army without discipline, order and submission to its commanders is headed for certain defeat!
 7. The Christian life is like an athletic contest; an athlete without discipline will lose!
- C. The word of God and God's very nature demands it.

1. God ordered the church into existence.

By His Word He has given her a constitution; there is a sense of being under law to Christ, I Cor. 9:21.

By His Word He has appointed shepherds for His flock. When the church of the Lord, following the guidance of the word of the Lord, appoints elders and leaders—they have been appointed by the Lord.

2. Hebrews 13:17 - Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you.
3. Paul wrote to the young preacher, Timothy, listing certain disciplines for him to follow and said, "I hope

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to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth." I Tim. 3:14-15

4. There are many references to the Divine wisdom in God's demands for discipline.

"The rod of reproof gives wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother." Prov. 29:15

"Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart." Prov. 29:17

5. One very pertinent example: The chosen people of the O.T. intended to be a disciplined people . . . God said through Jeremiah, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk there in, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken." Jer. 6:16-17

So they were disciplined by judgment and captivity.

6. The Word of God demands that Christians live in harmony with the discipline of their employers, their homes, their governments. THE WORD OF GOD DECLARES BOTH BY PRECEPT AND EXAMPLE THAT THE BODILY LIFE IS A CONTINUAL LIFE OF DISCIPLINE.

THE VERY CALL OF CHRIST IS THE CALL TO BECOME A "DISCIPLE."

SO, EACH ONE OF US IS OBLIGATED TO CONFORM TO DISCIPLINE; OUR NATURE DEMANDS IT, OUR ASSOCIATION DEMANDS IT, OUR LORD DEMANDS IT!

One never outgrows in this life the obligation to follow discipline—the child must follow it; the teenager must follow it; the college student must follow it; the college teacher must follow it, THE PREACHER, THE PREACHER'S WIFE MUST FOLLOW IT!

II. THE DESIGN OF DISCIPLINE (Its Purpose)

- A. To build character - "the purpose of discipline is the correction, the improvement, the obedience, the faith, and the faithfulness of God's child. The outcome is a happiness (Job 5:17) a blessedness; and assurance (Rev. 3:15).
1. Moses learned discipline and grew in character from his 40 years of schooling in the deserts of Midian.
 2. David learned discipline and grew in character from his schooling in the caves and wilderness of Judea fleeing from Saul.
 3. Even the Lord Jesus Christ, accepting the limitations of flesh, returned to Nazareth as a boy and was obedient to Mary and Joseph and "increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man." Lk. 2:51-52 Yes, even Jesus experienced obedience through the things He suffered and has become the author of eternal salvation to all them who obey Him. Hebrews 5:9

YOU ARE BUILDING YOUR CHARACTER EACH MOMENT OF EACH DAY ACCORDING TO YOUR RESPONSE TO THE DEMANDS FOR DISCIPLINE. . . .EVEN IN SMALL MATTERS.

- a. When committing yourself to serve in a certain capacity . . . SEE IT THROUGH EVEN THOUGH IT INTERFERES WITH YOUR SOCIAL LIFE!
- B. To fit one as a vessel for use by Christ
- "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and earthenware, and some for noble use, some for ignoble. If any one purifies himself from what is ignoble then he will be a vessel for noble use, consecrated and useful to the master of the house, ready for any good work." II Tim. 2:20-21 So SHUN YOUTHFUL PASSIONS.
1. The discipline of the Lord is to make us more Christ-like; self-surrendering; self-giving.

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“When He had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master. . . . If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” John 13:12-17

YES, THERE ARE CERTAIN DISCIPLINES NECESSARY TO HUMBLE US THAT WE MAY BECOME PROPER VESSELS.

I REFER YOU TO JOHN 13 . . . the servant is not greater than his Master!

Have this mind in you, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross . . .” Phil. 2:5-8

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” I Cor. 6:19

Even our text says we are disciplined to share His holiness, 12:10.

- C. The discipline of the Lord is to cause you to bear fruit. “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes (disciplines) that it may bear more fruit . . .” Jn. 15:1-2
1. One of the clearest statements as to the purpose of discipline and chastening is found in II Cor. 1:3-11. Paul says there he was afflicted in order that he might

I S A I A H

learn to strengthen others who were afflicted . . . to bear fruit.

OUR TEXT IN Heb. 12 says "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." v. 11

2. Another important discussion of the discipline of the Holy Spirit within a man which bears fruit is Paul's discussion of Christian liberty and expediency in I Cor. 8 and 9. "All things are lawful but all things are not expedient."

"If eating meat causes my brother to stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall."

". . . we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ."

THIS IS THE DISCIPLINE WE ALL SHOULD SEEK. . .

III. THE DERIVATIVES OF DISCIPLINE

C. S. Lewis, in his book, *The Problem of Pain*, outlines the reasons for chastening of God as God's Omnipotence, God's Goodness.

- A. The Fear of God should motivate us to lead lives of holy discipline.

1. As Mr. Lewis says, "It is hardly complimentary to God that we should choose Him as an alternative to Hell; yet even this He accepts. The creature's illusion of self sufficiency must, for the creature's sake, be shattered; and by trouble or fear of trouble on earth, by fear of the eternal flames, God shatters it . . ."

Paul wrote, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men . . ." He wrote, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

He wrote, "For if we sin wilfully after we receive the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment,

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and fury of fire which will consume the adversaries.”

REBELLION WAS NOT TREATED LIGHTLY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT; NEITHER WILL IT BE FOR THOSE UNDER THE NEW.

IF YOU'RE IN REBELLION AGAINST DISCIPLINE, YOU HAD BETTER STUDY AGAIN WHAT THE N.T. HAS TO SAY ABOUT OBEDIENCE TO APPOINTED LEADERS!

YOU HAD BETTER CULTIVATE AGAIN AN AWESOME RESPECT AND HEALTHY FEAR OF GOD. . . . THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM.

B. Another derivative is the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. By His leading we may put to death the deeds of the body.
2. By the weapons He affords us we may bring every thought into captivity to Christ.
3. By His supernatural word is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
4. Being born again by the word of the Spirit planted in our hearts, having been raised with Christ we may “set our minds on things that are above, where Christ is seated. . . .”
5. We may purify our souls by obeying the truth.
6. By the exceeding precious promises we become partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world.

C. The ultimate derivative is the love of Christ.

1. Paul wrote, “The love of Christ constrains us . . .”
II Cor. 5:14 NOTHING WILL BRING US TO FOLLOW THE LEADING OF DISCIPLINE LIKE LOVE. . . .

Illustration: *Time*, Birds, Beetles and Butterflies.
“Timbertop, patterned largely after Gordonstoun, is a branch of Australia’s Geelong Grammar School, an exclusive institution operated by the Church of England. It is designed to toughen up 130 young aristocrats every year. The boys do all their own housekeeping except cook.

They make overnight hikes across 1,300 acres of rugged Crown land, watch birds, hunt beetles, collect butterflies.

Young Charles will live in a rustic wooden dormitory, get up at 7 a.m., dress in jeans, an open shirt, sweater and desert boots. He will take his turn at serving a breakfast of cooked meal, tea, toast and milk from a nearby dairy barn, attend compulsory chapel, then turn to rigorous academic work until 3 p.m. After that come the chores, which range from polishing the chapel's huge picture window to varnishing floors, feeding the pigs, washing the dishes, cutting and carting a portion of the 500 tons of wood that the school consumes each year. In the evening he will study under a master's eye. Lights go out at 9:15."

Spurgeon, that great preacher, once said, "Christ is our great example in discipline, cross-bearing. He had not where to lay his head in life, nor a rag to cover him in death, nor anything but a borrowed grave in burial. What manner of persons ought we to be in all unselfishness when we have such a Lord! He has not said to us in matters of self-denial, "Take up thy cross and go!" but "Come, take up thy cross and follow me." Well may the soldiers endure hardness when the King himself roughs it among us; and suffers more than the lowest private in our ranks. My soul, I charge thee, bear thy cross, and look not for ease where Jesus found his death."

"For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in His steps"; I Pet. 2:21.

JERUSALEM IN
DAVID'S TIME



TYROPOEON VALLEY

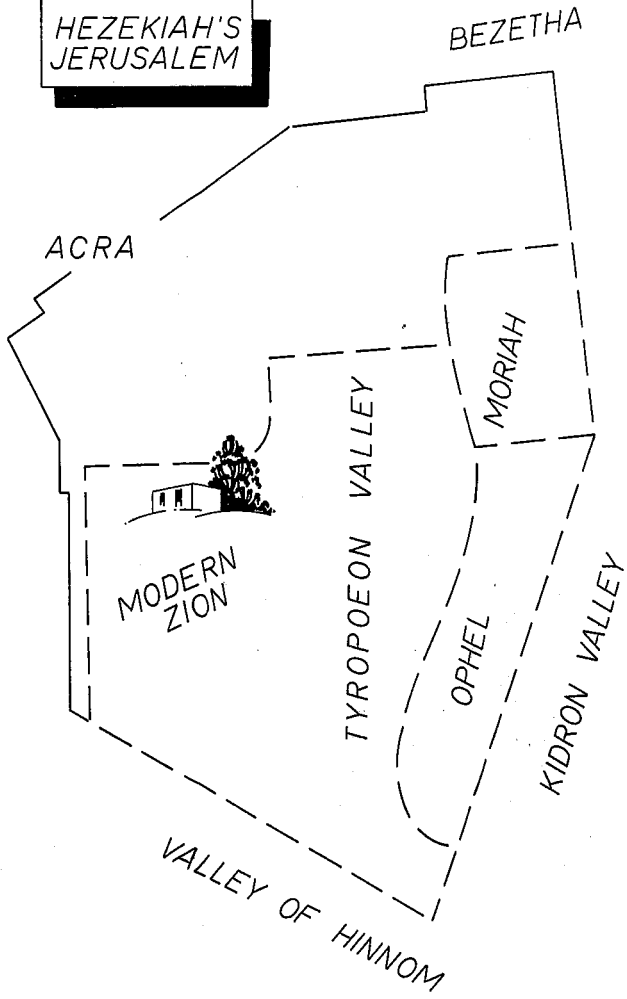
MORIAH
(Temple Area)

OPHEL (ZION)

KIDRON VALLEY

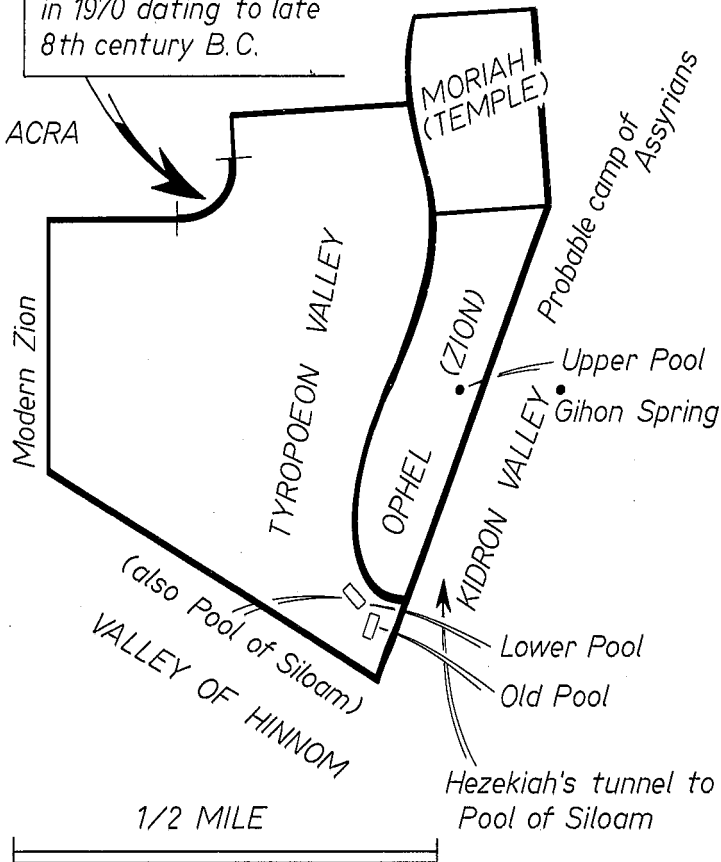
VALLEY OF HINNOM

HEZEKIAH'S
JERUSALEM



JERUSALEM IN HEZEKIAH'S TIME

Portion of wall discovered in 1970 dating to late 8th century B.C.



Original Jerusalem is indicated by areas labeled Moriah and Ophel.
The other area is inclosed by Hezekiah's outer wall.



"And when he (Sennacherib) heard say of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, Behold, he is come out to fight against thee; he sent messengers again unto Hezekiah, saying . . . Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee . . ."

(II Kings 19:9, 10).

"And they brought archers, chariots and horses of the king of Ethiopia, soldiers without number . . ."

With these words taken from the annals of his campaign, Sennacherib corroborated the statement in the Bible.

This is a bronze statuette of Pharaoh Taharka, called Tirhakah in the Bible. The short curly hair, high cheek bones, thick lips, round chin and short neck mark him out clearly as an Ethiopian. On the top of his close-fitting cap sat the double crown of Egypt with two heraldic vipers. When Taharka set out in 701 B. C. to assist Hezekiah he was in fact only commander-in-chief of the Egyptian army.

His intervention was unsuccessful as his army was defeated by Sennacherib's forces and he had to return to Egypt. In 689 B. C. Taharka became King of Egypt.

FROM: THE BIBLE AS HISTORY IN PICTURES
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