

ISAIAH 28 | *Woe to the Drunkards of Ephraim*

Crown of the Drunkards

1 Ah, the proud crown/garland/diadem (עֲטָרָה) of the drunkards of Ephraim, and the fading flower of its glorious beauty, which is on the head of the rich valley of those overcome with wine! 2 Behold, the Lord (אֲדֹנָי) has one who is mighty and strong. Like a storm of hail, a destroying tempest, like a storm of mighty, overflowing waters, he casts down to the earth with his hand.¹ 3 The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim will be trodden underfoot. 4 And the fading flower of its glorious beauty that is on the head of the rich valley will be like a first-ripe fig before the summer. When someone sees it, he swallows it as soon as it is in his hand.

Crown of Splendour

5 In that day Yahweh of armies will be a crown/garland/diadem (עֲטָרָה) of ornament/splendour (צְבִי) and a wreath (תְּפִאֲרֶת) of beauty/glory/splendour/radiance (שְׂאֵר) to the remnant (שְׂאֵר) of his people, 6 a Spirit (רוּחַ) of justice (מִשְׁפָּט) to him who sits in judgment, and strength (גְּבוּרָה) to those who turn back the battle at the gate.

7 These also reel with wine and stagger with strong drink. The priest (כֹּהֵן) and the prophet (נְבִיא) reel with strong drink. They are swallowed by wine.² They stagger with strong drink. They reel in vision. They stumble in giving judgment.³ 8 For all tables are full of filthy vomit, with no space left.

9 To whom will he teach (יִרֶה) wisdom (דַּעַת), and to whom will he make understand (בִּין) the revelation/report/news (שְׂמוּעָה)?⁴ Those who are weaned from the milk, those taken from the breast? 10 For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line (צֹוּ לְצֹוּ צֹוּ לְצֹוּ לְצֹוּ לְצֹוּ), here a little, there a little (זַעִיר שָׁם זַעִיר שָׁם).

11 For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue Yahweh will speak to this people [Israel]⁵ 12 to whom he has said, This is rest (מְנוּחָה)—give rest (נוּחַ) to the weary—and this is

¹ **Is 8:7-7** ... Therefore, behold, Yahweh is bringing up against them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory. And it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks....

² **Hos 4:11** 11 ... Whoredom, wine, and new wine, which take away the understanding.

³ **Is 9:15** 15 ... The elder and honored man is the head, and the prophet who teaches lies is the tail.... **Is 56:10** 10 His watchmen are blind. They are all without knowledge. They are all silent dogs. They cannot bark, dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber. **Is 56:12** 12 Come, they say, let me get wine. Let us fill ourselves with strong drink, and tomorrow will be like this day, great beyond measure.

⁴ **Jer 6:10** 10 To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ears are uncircumcised, they cannot listen. Behold, the word of Yahweh is to them an object of scorn. They take no pleasure in it.

⁵ **1 Co 14:21-22** 21 In the Torah it is written, By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord. 22 Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers.

repose.⁶ Yet they would not hear. 13 And the word (דְּבַר) of Yahweh will be to them precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little (צֹר לְצֹר צֹר לְצֹר קוֹ לְקוֹ לְקוֹ לְקוֹ זַעִיר זַעִיר שָׁם זַעִיר שָׁם), that they may go, fall backward, be broken, snared, and taken.⁷

Cornerstone in Zion

14 Therefore hear the word of Yahweh, you scoffers (לְצֹנִין) who rule (משל) this people in Jerusalem! 15 Because you have said,

We have made a covenant (בְּרִית) with death (מָוֶת), and with Sheol (שְׁאוֹל) we have an agreement (הֶזְקָה), when the overwhelming whip [Assyria] passes through it will not come to us, for we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have hid ourselves (סִתְרָה).⁸

16 Therefore thus says Lord Yahweh,

Behold, I am founding/establishing (יִסַּד) in Zion, a stone (אֶבֶן), a tried and tested (בִּיחֵן) stone (אֶבֶן), a scarce/precious/valuable (יָקָר) cornerstone (פְּנִיָּה), the laying of a foundation stone (מוֹסָד). Whoever believes/has trust (אֱמֵן) will not be in a hurry/give way (חֹרֵשׁ).⁹ 17 And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plumb line.¹⁰ And hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter/hiding place/protection (סִתְרָה).

18 Then your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol will not stand. When the overwhelming scourge passes through, you will be beaten down by it. 19 As often as it passes through it will take you. For morning by morning it will pass through, by

⁶ **Is 30:15** 15 For thus said Lord Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest you shall be saved. In quietness and in trust shall be your strength. But you were unwilling.... **Mt 11:28-29** 28 Come to me [Jesus], all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

⁷ **Is 8:15** 15 And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken. They shall be snared and taken.

⁸ Judah's leaders believe they have insulated themselves from God's judgment.

⁹ **Ps 118:22** 22 The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. **Mt 21:42** 42 Jesus said to them, Have you never read in the Scriptures: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? **Ac 4:11** 11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. **Ro 9:33** 33 ...As it is written, Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. **1 Pe 2:6** 6 For it stands in Scripture, Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.

¹⁰ **2 Ki 21:13** 13 And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria, and the plumb line of the house of Ahab, and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.

day and by night.¹¹ And it will be sheer terror to understand the report/news (שְׂמוּעָה).¹² 20 For the bed is too short to stretch oneself on, and the covering too narrow to wrap oneself in. 21 For Yahweh will rise up as on Mount Perazim.¹³ As in the Valley of Gibeon¹⁴ he will be roused, to do his deed—strange is his deed! and to work his work—alien is his work! 22 Now therefore do not scoff/brag/boast/rebel/put on airs/deride (לִיץ), lest your chains (מוֹסֵר) be made strong. For I [Isaiah] have heard a decree of complete destruction/annihilation (כְּלָה) from Lord Yahweh of hosts against the whole land/earth (אֶרֶץ).¹⁵

Farming Dill, Cumin, Wheat, Barley, and Emmer

23 Give ear, and hear my voice. Give attention, and hear my speech. 24 Does he who plows for sowing plow continually? Does he continually open and harrow his ground? 25 When he has levelled its surface, does he not scatter dill, sow cumin, and put in wheat in rows, barley in its proper place, and emmer as the border?¹⁶ 26 For he is rightly instructed/taught/brought up (יִסֵּר). His God instructs/teaches (יִסֵּר) him.¹⁷

27 Dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge, nor is a cart wheel rolled over cumin. But dill is beaten out with a stick, and cumin with a rod. 28 Does one crush grain for bread? No, he does not thresh it forever. When he drives his cart wheel over it with his horses, he does not

¹¹ “This can be seen to be a correct assessment of Assyrian military doctrine. The Assyrian annals report numerous returns to the same areas, each return being accompanied by vast slaughter and pillage. The steady hammer blows of such an attack spread out over years, whether calculatedly so, or as a result of political exigencies elsewhere, could be expected to reduce a people to shivering terror, as the prophet noted here.” John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 519–520.

¹² **2 Ch 32:18** 18 And [the Assyrians] shouted it with a loud voice in the language of Judah to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to frighten and terrify them, in order that they might take the city.

¹³ **2 Sa 5:20** 20 And David came to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there. And he said, Yahweh has broken through my enemies before me like a breaking flood. Therefore the name of that place is called Baal-perazim.

¹⁴ **Jos 10:10-14** 10 And Yahweh threw them into a panic before Israel, who struck them with a great blow at Gibeon and chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah. 11 And as they fled before Israel, while they were going down the ascent of Beth-horon, Yahweh threw down large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword. 12 At that time Joshua spoke to Yahweh in the day when Yahweh gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon. 13 And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day. 14 There has been no day like it before or since, when Yahweh heeded the voice of a man, for Yahweh fought for Israel.

¹⁵ **Is 10:23** 23 For Lord Yahweh of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth.

¹⁶ **Is 55:10-11** 10 For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, 11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth. It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

¹⁷ **Is 21:10** 10 O my threshed and winnowed one, what I have heard from Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, I announce to you.

crush it. 29 This also comes from Yahweh of hosts. He is wonderful (פלא) in counsel/advice/
planning (עצה) and great (גדל) in sound wisdom/prudence (תושקה).¹⁸

¹⁸ **Jer 32:18-19** 18 You show loyal love to thousands, but you repay the guilt of fathers to their children after them, O great and mighty God, whose name is Yahweh of hosts, 19 great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the children of man, rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds.

Commentary

1. Six Woes (Isaiah 28-33).

- a. The structure of Is 28-33 is six woes pronounced against Israel, Judah, and Edom, with Assyria and Egypt as a backdrop. God is the source of the woes, not Isaiah.
 - (1) **Is 28:1** 1 Woe, the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim....
 - (2) **Is 29:1** 1 Woe, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped!
 - (3) **Is 29:15** 15 Woe, you who hide deep from Yahweh your counsel, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, Who sees us? Who knows us?
 - (4) **Is 30:1** 1 Woe, stubborn children, declares Yahweh, who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin.
 - (5) **Is 31:1** 1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult Yahweh!
 - (6) **Is 33:1** 1 Woe, you destroyer, who yourself have not been destroyed, you traitor, whom none has betrayed! When you have ceased to destroy, you will be destroyed. And when you have finished betraying, they will betray you.
 - (7) “The structure of the segment appears to be tripartite. First, chs. 28 and 29 paint the picture for us: foolish leaders, a multitude of enemies, the false counsel that something must be done at once, humanly speaking, for there is no hope in God. Second, chs. 30 and 31 depict the proposed solution: dependence on Egypt and the folly of that solution. Chs. 32 and 33 then give the true solution: the revelation of the King and his presence in their midst.”¹⁹
- b. The thrust of Is 28-33 is the foolishness of trusting in the nations as opposed to trusting in God. The reason we are to trust in God is because he rules world history.
 - (1) The acts of God at this time in history (705-01 bc) are a pattern for his acts in the end times.²⁰
- c. Egypt and Assyria are the backdrop in these chapters. It should not be forgotten that Isaiah has already foretold that one day Israel, Egypt, and Assyria will be friends and allies in their worship of Yahweh.
 - (1) **Is 19:24-25** 24 In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, 25 whom Yahweh of hosts has blessed saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.

2. Woe to the Drunkards of Ephraim (Is 28).

- a. This chapter begins (vv. 1-6) and ends (vv. 23-29) with double illustrations drawn from nature and agriculture. Between lies a meditation in eight broadly equal parts on the consequences of Judah’s leaders rejecting God’s word of invitation to rest (vv. 7-22).²¹

¹⁹ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 505.

²⁰ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 227.

²¹ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 228.

- b. Isaiah first condemns the leaders of Israel at Samaria (vv. 1-6). He then condemns the leaders of Judah at Jerusalem (vv. 7-22).

3. The Proud Crown of the Drunkards of Ephraim (Is 28:1-4).

- a. **Is 28:1-4** 1 Ah, the proud crown/garland/diadem (עֲטָרָה) of the drunkards of Ephraim, and the fading flower of its glorious beauty, which is on the head of the rich valley of those overcome with wine! 2 Behold, the Lord (אֱלֹהִים) has one who is mighty and strong [Assyria]. Like a storm of hail, a destroying tempest, like a storm of mighty, overflowing waters, he casts down to the earth with his hand. 3 The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim will be trodden underfoot. 4 And the fading flower of its glorious beauty that is on the head of the rich valley will be like a first-ripe fig before the summer. When someone sees it, he swallows it as soon as it is in his hand.
- b. The judgment coming on Samaria's pride and drunkenness will be invasion by a strong nation, Assyria, who will walk all over her (vv. 1-4).
- (1) This paragraph was written sometime between Damascus's fall (732 bc) and Samaria's fall (722 bc).
- (2) Pride is Samaria's foremost sin, and its result is moral decadence (v. 1).
- (a) Ephraim was complacent in her revelry and had a false sense of security. The metaphor of drunkenness dominates.
- (b) "It is a figure of Israel's stumbling, bumbling life during the last decades of its existence (ca. 740-21 B.C.)."²²
- (3) Samaria's pride will be trampled down by Assyria (vv. 2-3).
- (a) These verses speak "of garlands of flowers worn on the heads of drunken partygoers. They had looked so attractive at first, but as the night wears on, neither flowers nor wearers look attractive any more. ... After the storm has swept over the party nothing will be left but a few bedraggled garlands trampled in the mud."²³
- (b) **Is 8:7** 7 ... Therefore, behold, Yahweh is bringing up against them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory. And it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks....
- (4) The hill of Samaria was known for its terraced vineyards and fertile valleys (v. 4).
- (5) Assyria's siege of Samaria (v. 4) took three years, but it was an instant in the long span of time.²⁴

4. Yahweh, the Crown of Splendour (Is 28:5-6).

- a. **Is 28:5-6** 5 In that day Yahweh of armies will be a crown/garland/diadem (עֲטָרָה) of ornament/splendour (צְבִי) and a wreath (צְפִירָה) of beauty/glory/splendour/radiance (תְּפִאָּרָתָא) to the remnant (שְׁאֵר) of his people, 6 a Spirit (רוּחַ) of judgment (מִשְׁפָּט) to him who sits in judgment (מִשְׁפָּט) and strength (גְּבוּרָה) to those who turn back the battle at the gate.

²² Watts, 362.

²³ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 508.

²⁴ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 508.

- b. God's end times promise to the remnant of Israel is to grace her with beauty, justice, and strength (vv. 5-6).
- (1) In that day (v. 5) refers to the end times.
 - (2) God will preserve a remnant not just from Judah, but from Ephraim as well (v. 5).
 - (a) **Is 11:11-13** 11 In that day Yahweh will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. 12 He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. 13 The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart, and those who harass Judah shall be cut off. Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim.
 - (b) "In every age there is a remnant which is a part of that great final one. They are characterized by the ability to see through the tinsel of life, beyond the trappings of appearances, to those truths which are eternal, which will prevail."²⁵
 - (3) In that day, the Holy Spirit will empower the remnant with judgment and strength (v. 6).

5. Drunken Priests and Prophets (Is 28:7-8).

- a. **Is 28:7-8** 7 These [in Jerusalem] also reel with wine and stagger with strong drink. The priest (כֹּהֵן) and the prophet (נְבִיא) reel with strong drink. They are swallowed by wine. They stagger with strong drink. They reel in vision. They stumble in giving judgment. 8 For all tables are full of filthy vomit, with no space left.
- b. The reason Jerusalem's priests and prophets stumble is because they are intoxicated with alcohol (vv. 7-8).
- (1) Isaiah turns his attention from the drunkards of Ephraim (vv. 1, 3) to the drunkards of Jerusalem (vv 7-8).
 - (2) Isaiah chooses "onomatopoetic words in Hebrew to mimic the staggering and stumbling of the drunkards: shagu-taghu, shagu-taghu, shagu-paqu."²⁶
 - (3) "...[B]odily indulgence saps spiritual perception."²⁷
 - (4) **Is 56:12** 12 Come, they say, let me get wine. Let us fill ourselves with strong drink, and tomorrow will be like this day, great beyond measure.
 - (5) **Hos 4:11** 11 ...Whoredom, wine, and new wine, which take away the understanding.
- c. As believer-priests, we are in danger of reeling, staggering, stumbling, and being swallowed by the things of this world, such that no space is left for God to speak to us through his word. Our "tablets" are full of filthy vomit, with no space left. We must guard ourselves from being intoxicated by the things of this world.

²⁵ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 508.

²⁶ T. Constable, 180.

²⁷ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 231.

- (1) **Mt 13:22** 22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

6. “Childish” Teaching (Is 28:9-10).

- a. **Is 28:9-10** 9 To whom will he [Isaiah] teach (יִרֶה) wisdom (דָּעָה), and to whom will he [Isaiah] make understand (בִּין) the revelation/report/news (שְׁמוּעָה)?²⁸ Those who are weaned from the milk, those taken from the breast? 10 For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line (לְקוֹ לְקוֹ לְקוֹ לְקוֹ לְצֹוּ לְצֹוּ לְצֹוּ לְצֹוּ), here a little, there a little (זָעִיר זָעִיר שָׁם זָעִיר שָׁם).
- b. The response of Jerusalem’s priests and prophets to Isaiah’s teaching is that it is too simplistic and repetitive, fit only for infants (vv. 9-10).
- (1) Judah’s drunken priests and prophets mocked Isaiah for the simplicity (v. 9) and repetition (v. 10) of his message. Isaiah built his hearers’ knowledge bit by bit, adding a little here and a little there (v. 10). This is, of course, the best method of teaching, but it has never appealed to proud intellectuals who consider themselves beyond the simplicity of God’s truth.²⁹
- (2) Isaiah is recalling criticisms directed against his ministry, especially the simplicity of its content and expression. The sophisticated dismiss that though that God’s word can add to their store of information. Isaiah’s teaching is mere playschool material to them. What they mocked was exactly what Isaiah aimed to achieve: the capturing and sharing in simplicity of revealed truth.³⁰
- (3) “There is no more hardened nor cynical person in the world than a religious leader who has seared his conscience. For them, tender appeals which would move anyone else become sources of amusement. They have learned how to debunk everything and to believe nothing (Heb. 10:26-31), all the while speaking loftily of matters of the spirit (Jas. 3:13-18).”
- (4) “Of course, the irony is that a drunk is more childish than a child. At least the milk an infant draws from its mother’s breast will make it more mature and not less so, unlike the alcohol they are drinking. How odd that the more correction we need, the less we think we need it.”³¹
- (5) **Mt 18:3** 3 ... Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
- (6) “Line,’ *qaw*, represents a measuring line, which along with a plumb line was used to determine whether a building could be repaired or must be destroyed (2 K. 21:13; Isa. 28:17; 34:11; Lam. 2:8; cf. also Amos 7:7-9). The crooked never

²⁸ **Jer 6:10** 10 To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ears are uncircumcised, they cannot listen. Behold, the word of Yahweh is to them an object of scorn. They take no pleasure in it.

²⁹ T. Constable, 180-81.

³⁰ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 231-32.

³¹ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 511.

wishes to be compared with the straight, which seems to the twisted mind so simple and uninteresting but is, in fact, so damning.”³²

- (a) The twisted mind views straightness as simplistic and uninteresting (i.e., modern literature, modern art, modern theology).
- c. There are many in the Christian world today for whom the Bible has become too simplistic. Liberalism of the 19th and early 20th century and Neo-Orthodoxy and Neo-Evangelicalism of the 20th and 21st century come to mind. For them, the Bible is “true” in a sense, but not inerrant. They explain away the plain meaning of Scripture, viewing the Bible as is as too simplistic. This is a great danger for us, and we must not fall for it (i.e., many Bible college and seminary graduates). We must continue to believe in God’s word understood in literal, grammatical, historical way. Some call this Biblicism. God’s word is simple, but not simplistic.

7. A New Curriculum (Is 28:11-13).

- a. **Is 28:11-13** 11 For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue Yahweh will speak to this people [Judah] 12 to whom he has said, This is rest (מנוחה)—give rest (נוח) to the weary—and this is repose. Yet they would not hear. 13 And the word (דבר) of Yahweh will be to them precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little (שָׁם זָעִיר שָׁם זָעִיר לָקוּ לָקוּ לָקוּ לָקוּ לָקוּ לָקוּ), that they may go, fall backward, be broken, snared, and taken.
- b. The consequence of Judah’s rejection of God’s word of rest and repose is invasion by Assyria (vv. 11-13).
 - (1) God’s simple word to Judah was to come and enjoy the rest and repose that he is able to provide (v. 12).
 - (a) God’s simple recipe for Judah’s national defense is trust.³³
 - (b) “Trusting in the Lord is not only an interior exercise of the soul in the calm of Sunday but a repose of the soul in the hard pressures of Monday.”³⁴
 - (c) **Is 30:15** 15 For thus said Lord Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest you shall be saved. In quietness and in trust shall be your strength. But you were unwilling....
 - (d) **Mt 11:28-29** 28 Come to me [Jesus], all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
 - (2) Because Judah has rejected God’s word, she will be spoken to in Akkadian by the Assyrian Rabshakeh (v. 11).
 - (a) “Since they would not learn the simple truths of life from God’s spokesmen, they will learn them at the end of whip and prod....”³⁵

³² John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 512.

³³ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 232.

³⁴ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 232.

³⁵ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 512.

- (b) Because the leaders of Jerusalem are drunken and senseless, the people are not able to understand the elemental truths of life. Therefore, God must teach them through the hard school of experience.³⁶
- (c) “If God’s people refused to listen to words spoken in simple intelligibility, He would give them unintelligibility as a judgment (cf. Matt. 23:37). Since they refused to learn from a prophet who appealed to them in their own language, He would teach them with plunderers whose language (Akkadian) they would not understand...”³⁷
1. **Mt 23:37** 37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!
- (d) “[I]n order for maturity to be reached, the child must be allowed to suffer the consequences of its actions. For the parent to intervene constantly and to nullify the results is to give the child a wholly misshapen understanding of life. So these events come upon God’s people in order that they may fall and thus learn.”³⁸
- (3) Paul uses this passage in an illustrative way in 1 Co 14:21 in speaking about the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues.
- (a) **1 Co 14:20-22** 20 Brothers and sisters, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. 21 In the Torah [Isaiah] it is written, By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord. 22 Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers.
- (b) Just as speaking in foreign tongues by the Assyrians was a sign of judgment to unbelievers in Isaiah’s day, so speaking in foreign tongues by the early church was a sign of judgment to unbelievers in Paul’s day.

8. Cornerstone in Zion / Warning to the Scoffers (Is 28:14-22).

- a. **Is 28:14-22** 14 Therefore hear the word of Yahweh, you scoffers (לְצִוּוֹן) who rule (מִשְׁלֵל) this people in Jerusalem! 15 Because you have said, We have made a covenant (בְּרִית) with death (מָוֶת) [Egypt], and with Sheol (שְׁאוֹל) we have an agreement (חֹזֶה), when the overwhelming whip [Assyria] passes through it will not come to us, for we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have hid ourselves (סִתַּר).³⁹ 16 Therefore thus says Lord Yahweh, Behold, I am founding/establishing (יִסַּד) in Zion, a stone (אֶבֶן), a tried and tested (בִּיחָן) stone (אֶבֶן), a scarce/precious/valuable (יָקָר) cornerstone (פִּנְיָה), the laying of a foundation stone (מוֹסָד). Whoever believes/has trust (אִמָּן) will not be in a hurry/panic (חֹזֵשׁ). 17 And I will make judgment (מִשְׁפָּט) the line, and righteousness the

³⁶ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 506.

³⁷ T. Constable, 181.

³⁸ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 513.

³⁹ Judah’s leaders believe they have insulated themselves from God’s judgment.

plumb line. And hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter/hiding place (סִתְר). 18 Then your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol will not stand. When the overwhelming scourge [Assyria] passes through, you will be beaten down by it. 19 As often as it passes through it will take you. For morning by morning it will pass through, by day and by night. And it will be sheer terror to understand the news (שְׁמוּעָה). 20 For the bed is too short to stretch oneself on, and the covering too narrow to wrap oneself in. 21 For Yahweh will rise up as on Mount Perazim [in the days of David]. As in the Valley of Gibeon [in the days of Joshua] he will be roused, to do his deed—strange is his deed! and to work his work—alien is his work! 22 Now therefore do not scoff/brag/boast/rebel/put on airs/deride (לִיץ), lest your chains (מוֹסֵר) be made strong. For I [Isaiah] have heard a decree of complete destruction/annihilation (כְּלֵה) from Lord Yahweh of hosts against the whole land/earth (אֶרֶץ).

- b. The secret plan of Jerusalem's elite is to avoid the consequences of Assyria's coming invasion (vv. 14-15).
- (1) “[S]coffers is the strongest negative term which the OT uses to describe the wicked. It is the diametric opposite of ‘faithful’ (cf. Ps. 1:1, 2). Not only does this person choose the wrong way, but he mocks the right way. He is not merely misled, he delights to mislead others. So he is the very opposite of the wise man, who understands the order of things correctly (Prov. 15:12; 21:24; 22:10; 29:8; Hos. 7:5). When such persons are in places of authority, as here, their impact is all the more serious. Faith is never easy for human beings and when the highest authorities model the opposite, it is not surprising if faith becomes increasingly rare among the people (1:21–23; 3:4, 5, 12–15; 5:22, 23; Jer. 21:11–14; 22:1–5; Hos. 4:1–6).”⁴⁰
 - (2) Judah cannot avoid the Assyrian onslaught through clever diplomacy. Her only real safety is Messiah. Lies cannot save anyone from the coming flood.
- c. God's response is to establish a stone in Zion by whom the remnant will believe and be saved (v. 16).
- (1) **Ps 118:22** 22 The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.
 - (2) **Is 8:11-16** 11 For Yahweh spoke thus to me [Isaiah] with his strong hand upon me and warned me not to walk in the way of this people saying: 12 Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. 13 But Yahweh of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. 14 And he will become a sanctuary, a stone of offense, and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15 And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken. They shall be snared and taken. 16 Bind up the testimony. Seal the teaching among my disciples.
 - (3) **Mt 21:42** 42 Jesus said to them, Have you never read in the Scriptures: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?
 - (4) **Ac 4:11** 11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.

⁴⁰ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 516.

- (5) **Ro 9:33** 33 ...As it is written, Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.
 - (6) **1 Pe 2:6** 6 For it stands in Scripture, Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.
 - (7) “Ancient cornerstones were not the same as modern western ones. They were the largest and most determinative stone in the foundation of a building. Builders oriented the rest of the foundation in reference to this stone (cf. Eph. 2:20), and it supported the major portion of the superstructure.”⁴¹
 - (8) “The cornerstone may be the whole complex of ideas relating to the Lord’s revelation of his faithfulness and the call to reciprocate with the same kind of faithfulness toward him. That entire message would one day be summed up in Jesus Christ.”⁴²
- d. Messiah will calibrate horizontal and vertical righteousness and truth, and all falsehood, lies, and propaganda will be swept away (vv. 17-18).
 - e. The secret agreements of Judah’s wicked rulers will annulled, and they will lie in terror (vv. 18-19).
 - f. Judah’s wicked leaders will experience sleepless nights (v. 20) instead of a bed of rest and repose (v. 12).
 - g. God will rise up in a surprising way, as he did in the days of David and Joshua (v. 21). His intervention in history will be very strange to atheists and pantheists who don't have room in their philosophy or a God who intervenes.
 - h. The scoffers of Jerusalem have an opportunity to repent. If they do not, their punishment will increase, for it is certain God will one day destroy the land of Israel and all the wicked upon it (v. 22). The reason Israel’s elite are not to scoff is because God’s complete destruction is coming upon the whole land (vv. 21-22). God’s message to mankind today is to stop scoffing!

9. God Knows How to Plant (Is 28:23-26).

- a. **Is 28:23-26** 23 Give ear, and hear my [Isaiah’s] voice. Give attention, and hear my speech. 24 Does he who plows for sowing plow continually? Does he continually open and harrow his ground? 25 When he has levelled its surface, does he not scatter dill, sow cumin, and put in wheat in rows, barley in its proper place, and emmer as the border? 26 For he is rightly instructed/taught/brought up (יָסַר). His God instructs/teaches (יָסַר) him.
- b. The wonderful plan of God is to prepare Israel for fruitfulness just as a farmer prepares his ground and sows seed (vv. 23-26).
 - (1) God teaches the farmer discrimination just as he himself practices discrimination in dealing with people and nations.
 - (2) Isaiah is pointing to a simple peasant who farms according to certain principles which he has learned from God. God is the true counselor and his counsel is simple, straightforward, and productive. [/] means more than legal judgment or

⁴¹ T. Constable, 183.

⁴² John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 518.

justice. It is in fact the creation order, both physically and spiritually. There are principles in both realms upon which life depends and which, if followed, will lead to life.⁴³

- (3) **Is 55:10-11** 10 For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, 11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth. It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.
- (4) Man so often complicates what God has proclaimed as relatively simple. This happened in the garden of Eden, and it happens in our own lives.

10. God Knows How to Harvest (Is 28:27-29).

- a. **Is 28:27-29** 27 Dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge, nor is a cart wheel rolled over black cumin. But dill is beaten out with a stick, and cumin with a rod. 28 Does one crush grain for bread? No, he does not thresh it forever. When he drives his cart wheel over it with his horses, he does not crush it. 29 This also comes from Yahweh of hosts. He is wonderful (פלא) in counsel/advice/planning (עצה) and great (גדל) in sound wisdom/prudence (חשיבה).
 - b. God created the world in such a way that each type of grain is harvested in its own appropriate way (vv. 27-28). This every farmer and gardener knows.
 - c. This “appropriateness” derives from the planning and wisdom of our Creator (v. 29).
 - d. The implication is that just as a farmer harvest dill, cumin, and grain in appropriate ways, so God deals with people and nations in appropriate ways. “There is a master-plan governing all.”⁴⁴
- (1) **Jer 32:18-19** 18 You show loyal love to thousands, but you repay the guilt of fathers to their children after them, O great and mighty God, whose name is Yahweh of hosts, 19 great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the children of man, rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds.
 - (2) In Isaiah’s day, God dealt uniquely with every individual nation, including Israel, Judah, Assyria, and Egypt.
 - (3) Today, God continues to deal uniquely with each individual nation, including New Zealand.

11. Application.

- a. Beware of becoming intoxicated by the things of this world (vv. 7-8). This includes anything having to do with media, from video games to pornography to social media to YouTube, to Netflix.
- b. Interpret the Bible simply and straightforwardly. Beware of viewing it as childish or repetitive (vv. 9-10).
- c. Believe in the cornerstone, Jesus, and don’t panic (v. 16).

⁴³ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 522-23.

⁴⁴ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 235.

- d. Understand God will sweep away the lies (misinformation and disinformation) that now proliferate in our world today (v. 17). A great calibration is coming.
- e. Seek to live in accordance with God's ways, just as a farmer does in planting and harvesting (vv. 23-29).