

ISAIAH 29 | Woe to Ariel / Those Who Hide Their Counsel*Ariel Besieged*

1 Woe, Ariel (אַרְיֵאל), Ariel (אַרְיֵאל)¹ [Jerusalem], the city where David encamped! Add year to year. Let the festivals run their round. 2 Yet I will distress (צוֹק) Ariel, and there shall be moaning and lamentation, and she shall be to me like an Ariel [altar hearth]. 3 And I will encamp against you all around and besiege you with towers, and I will raise siegeworks against you,² 4 and you will be brought low.³ From the ground (אֲרֶץ) you shall speak, and from the dust (עָפָר) your speech will be bowed down. Your voice shall come from the ground (אֲרֶץ) like the voice of a ghost, and from the dust (עָפָר) your speech shall whisper.

Nations Like a Dream

5 But the multitude of your foreign foes shall be like small powder (אֶבֶק), and the multitude of the ruthless like passing chaff.⁴ And in an instant, suddenly, 6 you will be visited (פָּקַד) by Yahweh of hosts with thunder, with earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire. 7 And the multitude of all the nations (גוֹיִם) that fight against Ariel, all that fight against her and her stronghold and distress (צוֹק) her, shall be like a dream, a vision of the night.⁵ 8 As when a hungry man dreams, and behold, he is eating, and awakes with his hunger not satisfied, or as when a thirsty man dreams, and behold, he is drinking, and awakes faint, with his thirst not quenched, so shall the multitude of all the nations (גוֹיִם) be that fight against Mount Zion.⁶

¹ “Ariel could mean lion of God, or hero (2 Samuel 23:20), or altar hearth (Ezekiel 43:15–16)” (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016)).

² **2 Ki 25:1** 1 And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem and laid siege to it. And they built siegeworks all around it. **Eze 26:8** 8 He will set up a siege wall against you and throw up a mound against you, and raise a roof of shields against you.

³ **Is 2:11** 11 The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled....

⁴ **Is 17:13** 13 The nations roar like the roaring of many waters, but he will rebuke them, and they will flee far away, chased like chaff on the mountains before the wind and whirling dust before the storm.

⁵ **Is 37:36** 36 And the angel of Yahweh went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. **Zec 12:9** 9 And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. **Mic 4:11-12** 11 Now many nations are assembled against you saying, Let her be defiled, and let our eyes gaze upon Zion. 12 But they do not know the thoughts of Yahweh. They do not understand his plan, that he has gathered them as sheaves to the threshing floor.

⁶ This happened in 701 bc and will happen again at Jesus’ second coming.

Spirit of Deep Sleep

9 Astonish yourselves and be astonished. Blind yourselves and be blind! Be drunk, but not with wine. Stagger, but not with strong drink! 10 For Yahweh has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep/lethargy/idleness (רוּחַ תַּרְדֵּמָה),⁷ closed your eyes (the prophets (נְבִיאִים)), and covered your heads (the seers (הַזֵּיִם)).⁸

Like a Sealed Up Scroll

11 And the revelation (הַזְוִת) of all this has become to you like the words of a scroll/book (סֵפֶר) that is sealed up (חֶתֶם). When men give it to one who can read/know (יָדַע) saying, Read this!, he says, I cannot, for it is sealed.⁹ 12 And when they give the book to one who cannot read saying, Read this!, he says, I cannot read/know (יָדַע).

Hearts Far From Me

13 And the Lord (אֲדֹנָי) said:

Because this people [Judah] draw near with their mouth and honour me with their lips, while their hearts (לֵב) are far from me, and their fear (יִרָא) of me is a commandment taught by men,¹⁰ 14 therefore behold, I will again do wonderful (פִּלְאָ) things with this people [Judah], with wonder (פִּלְאָ) upon wonder (פִּלְאָ).¹¹ And the wisdom (חֵכְמָה) of their wise men (חֲכָמִים) shall perish, and the understanding (בִּינָה) of their understanding men (בִּינֵי) shall be hidden.¹²

⁷ **Pr 19:15** 15 Laziness casts into a deep sleep (תַּרְדֵּמָה), And an idle man will suffer hunger.

⁸ **Is 6:10** 10 Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed. **Ro 11:8** 8 ...As it is written, God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.

⁹ This reminds of the Chaldeans in Da 2 and 4. It also reminds of the sealed scroll of Re 5. **Is 8:16** 16 Bind up the testimony. Seal the teaching among my disciples. **Da 12:4** 4 But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.

¹⁰ **Mt 15:8-9** 8 This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. 9 In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. **Mk 7:6-7** 6 And he said to them, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. 7 In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

¹¹ **Hab 1:5** 5 Look among the nations, and see. Wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.

¹² **1 Co 1:19** 19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.

Deeds in the Dark

15 Woe, you who bury deeply (סתר) from Yahweh your counsel, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, Who sees us? Who knows us?¹³ 16 You turn things upside down! Shall the potter (יוצר) be regarded as the clay (המר), that the thing made should say of its maker (עשה), He did not make me! Or the thing formed say of him who formed it, He has no understanding (בין)?

Fresh Joy

17 Is it not yet a very little while until Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be regarded as a forest? 18 In that day [the Messianic kingdom] the deaf shall hear the words of a scroll (ספר), and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see.¹⁴ 19 The humble (ענו) shall obtain fresh joy (שמחה) in Yahweh, and the poor (אביון) among mankind (אדם) shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.¹⁵ 20 For the ruthless shall come to nothing and the scoffer cease, and all who watch to do evil shall be cut off, 21 who by a word make a man out to be an offender, lay a snare for him who reproves in the gate,¹⁶ and with an empty plea turn aside him who is in the right.¹⁷

No More Shame for Jacob

22 Therefore thus says Yahweh, who redeemed (פדה) Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob:

Jacob shall no more be ashamed. No more shall his face grow pale. 23 For when he sees his children, the work of my hands,¹⁸ in his midst, they will sanctify (קדש) my name. They will sanctify (קדש) the Holy One of Jacob and will show fear (ערץ) to the God of Israel. 24 And those who go astray in spirit will come to understanding (בינה), and those who grumble (רגז) will accept instruction (לקח).

¹³ **Eze 8:12** 12 Then he said to me, Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, each in his room of pictures? For they say, Yahweh does not see us. Yahweh has forsaken the land.

¹⁴ **Is 35:5** 5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. **Mt 11:5** 5 ... The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. **Jn 9:39-41** 39 Jesus said, For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind. 40 Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, Are we also blind? 41 Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would have no guilt, but now that you say, We see, your guilt remains.

¹⁵ **Is 61:1** 1 The Spirit of Lord Yahweh is upon me, because Yahweh has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound. **Mt 5:3** 3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹⁶ **Am 5:10** 10 They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks the truth.

¹⁷ **Am 5:12** 12 For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins—you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate.

¹⁸ **Ps 100:3** 3 Know that Yahweh, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his. We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Commentary

1. Overview.

- a. This chapter consists of two woe oracles:
 - (1) Woe to Ariel (vv. 1-14).
 - (2) Woe to those who hide their counsel (vv. 15-24).
- b. These are woes two and three of six in chs. 28-33.

2. Ariel Besieged (Is 29:1-4).

- a. **Is 29:1-4** 1 Woe, Ariel (אֶרִיאֵל), Ariel (אֶרִיאֵל) [Jerusalem], the city where David encamped! Add year to year. Let the festivals run their round. 2 Yet I will distress (צִוִּק) Ariel, and there shall be moaning and lamentation, and she shall be to me like an Ariel. 3 And I will encamp against you all around and besiege you with towers, and I will raise siegeworks against you [Nebuchadnezzar in 586 bc]. 4 And you will be brought low. From the ground (אֶרֶץ) you shall speak, and from the dust (עָפָר) your speech will be bowed down. Your voice shall come from the ground (אֶרֶץ) like the voice of a ghost, and from the dust (עָפָר) your speech shall whisper.
- b. Ariel (אֶרִיאֵל) (vv. 1-2) means lion of God, hero (2 Sa 23:20), or altar hearth (Eze 43:15-16).
 - (1) **2 Sa 23:20** 20 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was a valiant man of Kabzeel, a doer of great deeds. He struck down two ariels (אֶרִיאֵל) of Moab.
 - (2) **Eze 43:15-16** 15 ...And the altar hearth (הַרְאֵל), four cubits; and from the altar hearth (הַרְאֵל) projecting upward, four horns. 16 The altar hearth (הַרְאֵל) shall be square, twelve cubits long by twelve broad.
 - (3) Isaiah calls Jerusalem “altar hearth” because it is the city of the great altar of burnt offerings, where sacrificial offerings were burnt morning and evening.
 - (a) God’s altar hearth was a place of privilege but also peril. The continual fire was an outward, visible sign of God’s presence, signifying holy wrath *and* preserving favour.¹⁹
 - (b) **Ps 84:3** 3 Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars (מִזְבְּחָהּ), Yahweh of hosts, my King and my God.
 - (c) **Is 33:14** 14 The sinners in Zion are afraid. Trembling has seized the godless: Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings.
- c. Year by year, the Judeans practice the religious rituals required by the Mosaic law, but these repetitive rituals have become meaningless and useless (v. 1). God is no longer a reality to them. They are just going through the motions.
- d. As a result, Jerusalem will go from having an altar hearth to being an altar hearth (v. 2).
- e. God himself will besiege Jerusalem through Assyria (v. 3).

¹⁹ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 237.

- (1) “God is no mere spectator in the theater of history. God will be laying siege to Jerusalem when Assyria stands at the gate.”²⁰
 - (2) “David may have camped within Jerusalem, but God will camp against her.”²¹
 - (3) Could God be visiting us today through the secondary cause of Covid-19?
- f. Jerusalem will be so humbled, she will speak from the dust (v. 4).

3. Nations Like a Dream (Is 29:5-8).

- a. **Is 29:5-8** 5 But the multitude of your foreign foes shall be like small powder (קֶזַח), and the multitude of the ruthless like passing chaff. And in an instant, suddenly, 6 you will be visited (פָּקַד) by Yahweh of hosts with thunder, with earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind, tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire. 7 And the multitude of all the nations (גוֹיִם) that fight against Ariel, all that fight against her and her stronghold and distress (צוֹק) her, shall be like a dream, a vision of the night. 8 As when a hungry man dreams, and behold, he is eating, and awakes with his hunger not satisfied, or as when a thirsty man dreams, and behold, he is drinking, and awakes faint, with his thirst not quenched, so shall the multitude of all the nations (גוֹיִם) be that fight against Mount Zion.
- b. The nations allied against Judah, in Isaiah’s day, Assyria, will be like powder or chaff (v. 5).
- c. God will suddenly appear in a great and powerful way and destroy them (vv. 5-6). It will be an “eleventh-hour deliverance.”²²
 - (1) The near-term fulfilment of this prophecy was in 701 bc.
 - (a) **Is 37:36** 36 And the angel of Yahweh went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.
 - (2) The long-term fulfilment will take place at Jesus’ second coming.
 - (a) **Re 19:11-21** 11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. 13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. 14 And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. 15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. . . . 19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. 20 And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived

²⁰ 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), 527.

²¹ 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), 527.

²² J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 237.

those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur. 21 And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

(3) It will be a shock and awe deliverance involving thunder, earthquake, great noise, whirlwind, tempest, and a devouring flame (v. 6). God's intervention into history on Israel's behalf will be powerful and unmistakable.

(a) "...[U]nlike the pagan religions which identified the gods with natural forces, the Hebrews saw these manifestations only as accompaniments, not as essence (1 K. 19:13)."²³

d. The nations that fight against Israel will be a like a dream (vv. 7-8).

(1) "When we see issues from God's point of view, we are much less likely to rush into foolish attempts to extricate ourselves."²⁴

(2) We are to remember that all our troubles today are temporary. Our troubles will pass away like a dream.

4. Spirit of Deep Sleep (Is 29:9-10).

a. **Is 29:9-10** 9 Astonish yourselves and be astonished. Blind yourselves and be blind! Be drunk, but not with wine. Stagger, but not with strong drink! 10 For Yahweh has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep (רִיחַ תְּרִדָּמָה), closed your eyes (the prophets (נְבִיאִים)), and covered your heads (the seers (חֹזִים)).

b. Isaiah invites the prophets and seers of Judah to become astonished, spiritually blind, and spiritually drunk (v. 9). This is because they have rejected God's message. The more Isaiah speaks, the less intelligible he becomes to them.

(1) "Alright, go ahead and be blind; be insensible, like a drunk. But your problem does not come from alcohol, like the Samaritans"; your problem comes from God, whom you have offended so deeply that he no longer enables you to hear."²⁵

c. Because Judah's prophets have blinded themselves to God's word, God will blind their eyes even more (v. 10). They are going "beyond the point of no return into irretrievable heart-hardening."²⁶

(1) "There can be no more frightening motivation to listen to God than this, the thought that if you refuse to hear today, one day you might no longer be able to hear."²⁷

(2) "...[D]etermined spiritual insensitivity becomes judicial spiritual paralysis."²⁸

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), 529.

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), 528.

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), 531.

²⁶ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 238.

²⁷ 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), 531.

²⁸ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 239.

- (3) Pharaoh hardened his own heart ([]), so God hardened his heart even more ([]).
- (4) **Jn 9:39-41** 39 Jesus said, For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind. 40 Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, Are we also blind? 41 Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would have no guilt, but now that you say, We see, your guilt remains.
- (5) See *Order of Salvation* and *Negative Volition*.
- d. At Isaiah's call, he was warned Judah's majority would resist his ministry.
- (1) **Is 6:9-10** 9 And [the Lord] said, Go, and say to this people [Judah]: Keep on hearing, but do not understand. Keep on seeing, but do not perceive. 10 Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.
- e. Paul applied this concept to the Jews of his own day.
- (1) **Ro 11:8** 8 ...As it is written, God gave them [Israel] a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.

5. A Sealed Up Scroll (Is 29:11-12).

- a. **Is 29:11-12** 11 And the revelation (הַרְוִיחַ) of all this has become to you like the words of a scroll (סֵפֶר) that is sealed up (חֹתֵם). When men give it to one who can read (יִדַע) saying, Read this!, he says, I cannot, for it is sealed. 12 And when they give the scroll to one who cannot read saying, Read this!, he says, I cannot read (יִדַע).
- b. For Judah's prophets, Isaiah's revelation from God has become a sealed up scroll (v. 11).
- (1) "...[T]hose who should be gifted with discernment, who should be able to perceive the mysterious workings of God in history, are so stupid that they cannot understand God's ways even when they are presented to them in plain script. ... They [the prophets and seers] have the technical skills to understand God's word, but they lack the spiritual insight which would enable them to see the plain meaning. So, of course, the situation is hopeless for the common person. He cannot even read, let alone open and read. The Church today is in a perilously similar situation. The pews are full of people who look to someone who can 'read,' but for all too many who can do so, the document is still sealed."²⁹
- c. For Judah's people, Isaiah's revelation cannot be deciphered, even if it can be unsealed (v. 12).
- (1) "So long as a nation has prophets in sufficient number and with sufficient integrity, the religious functionaries can have their perceptions continually purified. But if those upon whom the nation depends for a word from God lose contact with God, that nation is lost like an airliner in a fog with dead radios."³⁰
- d. God doesn't throw pearls before swine.

²⁹ 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), 530-32.

³⁰ 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), 532.

- (1) **Mt 7:6** 6 Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.
- e. To those who want to understand, God gives understanding. But to those who don't want to understand, he takes away the understanding.
- (1) **Is 6:10** 10 Make the heart of this people [Israel] dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.

6. Hearts Far from God (Is 29:13-14).

- a. **Is 29:13-14** 13 And the Lord (יְהוָה) said, Because this people [Israel] draws near with their mouth and honour me with their lips, while their hearts (לֵב) are far from me, and their fear (יִרָא) of me is a commandment taught by men, 14 therefore behold, I will again do wonderful (פִּלְא) things with this people, with wonder (פִּלְא) upon wonder (פִּלְא). And the wisdom (חֵכְמָה) of their wise men (חֲכָמִים) shall perish, and the understanding (בִּינָה) of their understanding men (בְּיָדָיו) shall be hidden.
- b. The people of Judah honour God with their lips, but their hearts are far from him (v. 13).
- (1) Jerusalem prided herself on her pure worship as opposed to Samaria's idolatrous worship, but religious ritual is no substitute for a pure heart.³¹
- (2) Jesus quoted these verses when describing the religious leaders of his own day.
- (a) **Mt 15:8-9** 8 This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. 9 In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.
- (b) **Mk 7:6-7** 6 And he said to them, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. 7 In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.
- c. They fear God outwardly, based on human tradition, but they do not fear God inwardly (v. 13).
- (1) "...[T]he 'fear of the Lord' is a way of life which involves an accurate understanding of who God is and a corresponding ordering of one's affairs. To speak of reducing this to a set of 'do's' and 'don't's' is to move one's faith from the center to the periphery of life. No longer does living with a mighty, dynamic, and free Being demand one's whole attention. Now it can be relegated to the level of the automatic and unthinking. In the same way, when 'drawing near' to God becomes anything less than awesome and a little eerie, we have evidently forgotten Sinai and replaced interest in the Giver with interest in the gift."³²
- (2) God does not accept false worship. He wants relationship, not religion. He wants heart-worship, not lip-worship, internal reality, not external ritual. It's relatively easy to honour God with our lips only and to pretend we fear him. But God wants

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), 525-526.

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), 532-533.

- us to draw near to him with our hearts. He wants genuine fear, not a false fear (v. 13).
- (3) Example: political leaders always look foolish when they go to church or hold a Bible for show.
 - d. God's response will be wonderful, incredible acts (v. 14) of discipline and rescue.
 - (1) **Hab 1:5** 5 Look among the nations, and see. Wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.
 - e. These acts will destroy the "wisdom" of Judah's "wise men" (v. 14).
 - (1) **1 Co 1:19** 19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.
 - (2) God deals in surprising ways with those who put on a false religious front, who pay lip service to God. Their false wisdom will be seen for what it is.
 - (3) "Wisdom's role is to make the present and future manageable by studying the results of past actions and synthesizing these into patterns for effective living. There is nothing wrong with this except as it becomes the servant of a wholly worldly desire to control all things for one's own benefit. It is this wisdom which God's passion for newness keeps knocking askew. The true wisdom, asserts the NT, recognizes that the meaning of life is to be open to God, to give him freedom with us, and to live in radical trust of him...."³³
 - (4) Does our "wisdom" put God in a box?

7. Deeds in the Dark (Is 29:15-16).

- a. **Is 29:15-16** 15 Woe, you who hide deep (סתר) from Yahweh your counsel, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, Who sees us? Who knows us? 16 You turn things upside down! Shall the potter (יוצר) be regarded as the clay (חמר), that the thing made should say of its maker (עשה), He did not make me! Or the thing formed say of him who formed it, He has no understanding (בין)?
- b. This is the third woe (v. 15) of chapters 28-33.
- c. Judah's leaders have a secret plan to ally with Egypt and thereby avoid Assyrian domination (v. 15).
 - (1) "It is apparent that some sort of secret political plan had been made without consultation with people or prophet, and thus, in Isaiah's view, without consultation with God. Probably this is in reference to the decision to break the vassal-covenant with Assyria and to rely on help from Egypt (2 K. 18:7b)."³⁴
 - (2) We must not attempt to bury our plans or hide our deeds in the dark, as if God cannot see (v. 15). Our plans should be out in broad daylight, for all the world to see. Christians don't believe in "smoke-filled rooms." We are to practice integrity publicly and privately. We don't need to make secret deals or take advantage of people.
- d. Judah's leaders are turning things upside down because their view of God is erroneous. God is the Creator, and his understanding is infinite (v. 16).

³³ 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), 533.

³⁴ 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), 536.

- (1) We didn't create God; he created us. How dare we minimise him or his understanding. He's the potter, and we are the clay.
- (2) "It is the forgetting of God's right as Maker that leads to ethical relativism. After all, if he is but Bergson's 'élan vitale' or Tillich's 'ground of all being,' then he has only the most generalized will for my behavior and it becomes impossible to speak of overturning anything. There are no explicit standards to overturn. One must do what one feels. On the other hand, the Maker can say, 'that is good, and that is bad,' because he has a known design which he is seeking to work out. Whether or not 'the Force' even knows that I exist, my existence is of no importance to it. The Maker, says Isaiah, does know and cares passionately. Those who say he does not know and care confuse the clay with the Potter, and that is the fundamental error of all strictly human philosophies: they cannot admit of a transcendent God. God is either a part of the system or he does not exist."³⁵
 - (a) We must avoid both practical pantheism and practical atheism.

8. Fresh Joy (Is 29:17-21).

- a. **Is 29:17-21** 17 Is it not yet a very little while until Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be regarded as a forest? 18 In that day [the Messianic kingdom] the deaf shall hear the words of a scroll (סֵפֶר), and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see. 19 The humble (עָנִו) shall obtain fresh joy (שִׂמְחָה) in Yahweh, and the needy (אֶבְיֹוֹן) among mankind (אָדָם) shall exult in the Holy One of Israel. 20 For the ruthless shall come to nothing and the scoffer cease, and all who watch to do evil shall be cut off, 21 who by a word make a man out to be an offender, lay a snare for him who reproves in the gate, and with an empty plea turn aside him who is in the right.
- b. As usual, "in that day" (v. 18) refers to the coming Messianic kingdom. It will happen, prophetically speaking, in "a very little while" (v. 17).
- c. The Messianic kingdom will be characterised by:
 - (1) The humbling of the proud, and the exaltation of the humble (v. 17).
 - (2) Hearing for the deaf and sight for the blind so that they may understand God's revelation (v. 18; cf. 9-12).
 - (a) **Is 35:5** 5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped.
 - (b) **Mt 11:5** 5 ...The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.
 - (3) Fresh joy and exultation for the humble poor (v. 19).
 - (a) **Is 61:1** 1 The Spirit of Lord Yahweh is upon me, because Yahweh has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.

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), 537.

- (b) **Mt 5:3-5** 3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- d. As the Messianic age begins:
- (1) The ruthless, oppressive abusers of power, will come to nothing (v. 20).
 - (2) Scoffers, skeptics who mock moral absolutes and normal standards of truth, honour, and decency, will cease (v. 20).
 - (a) **Ps 1:1** 1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers.
 - (3) Evildoers, those who take advantage of the breakdown of law and order, will be cut off (v. 20).
- e. The common tactics of the wicked are to:
- (1) Falsely accuse law-abiding citizens (v. 21).
 - (2) Entrap those who protest injustice (v. 21).
 - (a) **Am 5:10-11** 10 They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks the truth. 11 Therefore because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him....
 - (3) Misuse the political and legal systems to take advantage of the poor (v. 21).
 - (a) **Am 5:12** 12 For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins—you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate.
 - (b) **Mic 2:1-2** 1 Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand. 2 They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away. They oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance

9. No More Shame for Jacob (Is 29:22-24).

- a. **Is 29:22-24** 22 Therefore thus says Yahweh, who redeemed (פדה) Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: Jacob shall no more be ashamed. No more shall his face grow pale. 23 For when he sees his children, the work of my hands, in his midst, they will sanctify (קדש) my name. They will sanctify (קדש) the Holy One of Jacob and will show fear toward (ערץ) the God of Israel. 24 And those who go astray in spirit will come to understanding (בִּינָה), and those who grumble (רגן) will accept instruction (לָקַח).
- b. This paragraph also refers to the Messianic “in that day” age (v. 18).
- c. The reference to Abraham (v. 22) hints at fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant. Just as Yahweh redeemed Abraham, he will redeem the remnant of Israel.
- d. The reference to Jacob (v. 22) indicates all twelve tribes of Israel will be restored in the Messianic kingdom.
 - (1) **Ge 48:16** 16 ...The angel who has redeemed me [Jacob/Israel] from all evil, bless the boys [Ephraim and Manasseh], and in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac.
- e. In the Messianic kingdom, the remnant of Israel will:
 - (1) No longer be ashamed (v. 22).
 - (2) Confess God’s name and reverence him as holy (v. 23).
 - (3) Come to understand him, his ways, and his plan (v. 24).

(4) Accept instruction from him with a heart of teachability (v. 24).

10. Application.

- a. Believe in the sudden, powerful intervention of God into our world (v. 6)
- b. Keep your heart close to God (v. 13).
- c. Seek to understand God, his ways, and his plan (v. 24).