

Book of Isaiah



Chapter 28

Theme: The immediate invasion of Ephraim by Assyria is a picture of the future and a warning to Jerusalem.

**Michael Fronczak
564 Schaeffer Dr.
Coldwater, Michigan 49036**

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Chapter 28

Isaiah 28 begins an eight-chapter section (28-35) mostly directed to the southern kingdom of Judah. Since it is often most effective to address a sin present in a third party, and then apply it directly to the person, Isaiah will first speak of the sin of Israel, then switch the focus to Judah.

Prophetic Warning concerning Ephraim and Judah, Chapters 28-35. (Isaiah mainly prophet to Judah, or the Southern Kingdom. Northern Kingdom called House of Israel, or often Ephraim.)
Luxury of Samaria: Amos 3:1ff; 4:1; 6:1, 6.

This chapter brings us to an entirely new section. The prophecies which were totally future are included in chapters 24 -- 27 inclusively. From chapters 28 -- 35 we have prophecies which have a local and past fulfillment, and also there are those that reach into the future and cover the same period as in the previous section. This new section is identified by six woes, and it culminates in the great War of Armageddon in chapter 34, followed by the millennial benefits brought to the earth in chapter 35.

Now the chapter before us is a fine illustration of the combination of the near and far view, the past and future events, the local and immediate and the general and far distant prophecies. We will see that which has been fulfilled and that which is yet to be fulfilled.

The northern kingdom of Israel, designated here by the term Ephraim, was soon to go into Assyrian captivity. This was a preview of the coming future day, but it was to be a warning to the southern kingdom of Judah. The first part was fulfilled when Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, invaded Ephraim in 721 B.C., overthrew the northern kingdom, and took the people into captivity.¹

The folly of trusting the nations chs. 28—33

Chapters 28—35 are somewhat similar to chapters 13—27 in content and form. The same general pattern of argument unfolds, but the historical context is somewhat later. The historical context of chapters 13—27 was mainly Ahaz's reign, in which Judah faced temptation to trust in Assyria for her safety rather than in the Lord. As mentioned above, however, these chapters evidently contain a mosaic of prophecies that Isaiah delivered at various times during his ministry and then arranged in their canonical order for literary purposes. This theological arrangement of material marks the whole Book of Isaiah. Yet a general advance chronologically is also observable.

The historical context of chapters 28—35 was mainly Hezekiah's reign, in which Judah faced the temptation to trust in Egypt. The Judeans began looking more to Egypt for help while Assyria declined as a hope for Judah's salvation—as Ahaz had considered her—and instead became an increasing threat to the Southern Kingdom's security. Interest in alliance with Egypt

¹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

was especially strong between the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. and Sennacherib's unsuccessful attack on Jerusalem in 701 B.C. Also different is the emphasis in chapters 13—27 on Yahweh's sovereignty over the nations compared with the emphasis in chapters 28—35 on Judah's choice to trust Him or not. This is a matter of emphasis, however, since both sections deal with both issues.

The first part of the present section, chapters 28—33, serves the same general function as chapters 13—23: they focus on the particular situation in Isaiah's day to warn Judah against trusting neighbor nations. The second part, chapters 34—35, like chapters 24—27, again project further into the future and deal more with Israel's eschatological hope.

The presence of six "woes" also marks off chapters 28—33 as a distinct unit of Isaiah's prophecy (28:1; 29:1, 15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1; cf. 5:8-10, 18-23; Matt. 23:13-39; Rev. 8:13; 9:12; 11:14; 12:12). Delitzsch referred to this section (chs. 28—33) as "the book of woes."³ It is quite similar to the Book of Micah. Like chapters 13—27, his section is also divisible into three parts. Chapters 28—29 paint the picture of Judah's foolish leaders concluding that something must be done at once, other than trusting God, to save the people from their enemy. Here the principles involved in Judah's situation emerge clearly. Chapters 30—31 focus on the proposed solution, trust in Egypt, and the folly of that option. Chapters 32—33 stress the proper solution, namely: acknowledgment of Israel's true King and trust in Him. In these last four chapters, the application of the principles in history and in the eschaton receive more attention.²

"The section begins (1-6) and ends (23-29) with double illustrations drawn from nature and agriculture. Between lies a meditation in eight broadly equal parts on how Jerusalem's leaders refused the word of invitation and inherited the word of wrath (7-22)."

¹Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!

[Seven woes] Seven woes of Isa. 28:1 -- Isa. 33:1;

1. Woe to the drunkards of Ephraim (Isa. 28:1).
2. Woe to the drunkards of Judah (Isa. 28:7).
3. Woe to Jerusalem (Isa. 29:1).
4. Woe to deceivers and hypocrites (Isa. 29:15).
5. Woe to the rebellious children (Isa. 30:1).
6. Woe to them that trust in Egypt (Isa. 31:1).
7. Woe to treacherous dealers (Isa. 33:1).³

[to the drunkards of Ephraim] Two things cursed:

1. Woe to the crown of pride -- Samaria.
2. Woe to the drunkards of Ephraim -- the northern kingdom of Israel.⁴

² <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁴ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

[the crown of pride] The proud and haughty crown or the capital of Ephraim -- Samaria.

[glorious beauty is a fading flower] Samaria was built on a hill surrounded by a rich valley about 8 miles wide. Beyond the valley it was surrounded by higher hills which were cultivated in terraces, sown with grain, and planted with fig and olive trees. The valley was planted the same way, making Samaria beautiful, as though it had a crown or wreath of flowers. Its beauty was to be destroyed, as a cut flower soon withers and fades away. This was fulfilled in the defeat and captivity of Ephraim to Assyria (2Ki. 17).⁵

[head of the fat valleys] Samaria rose out of the valley like a head, and on its mountain the drunkards of Ephraim lived in revelry and seeming security.

[overcome with wine] A man's reason, conscience, moral feelings, and physical strength are all subdued by alcohol.⁶

Ephraim and Israel are synonymous terms for the ten northern tribes, also called Samaria. The picture here of drunkards is both literal and spiritual. They were in a stupor as far as spiritual understanding was concerned. To be spiritually drunk is to be filled with pride.⁷

Samaria, the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel, represents the entire kingdom, ruled by a line of evil kings. When Israel split into two kingdoms after Solomon's reign, Jerusalem ended up in the southern kingdom. Leaders in the northern kingdom, wishing to stay entirely separate from their relatives to the south, set up idols to keep the people from going to the Temple in Jerusalem to worship (see 1 Kings 12). Thus, the people in the northern kingdom were led into idolatry. Isaiah gave this message to Israel to warn them that destruction was certain. It was also meant to encourage Judah to repent before being punished, as the northern kingdom would be only a few years later.⁸

In this first woe (hōy, an interjection suggestive of impending doom or grief; cf. comments on 5:8), Ephraim, a prominent tribe representative of the Northern Kingdom, is likened to a drunkard. The area of the North was fertile at that time. Samaria, the capital city built by Omri (1 Kings 16:24), over-looked a fruitful valley (cf. Isa. 28:4). Because of Samaria's beauty it was called a wreath (cf. v. 3). The possibility of material prosperity was great. However, the Northern Kingdom was throwing away the blessings of God as a drunkard throws away his money in the pursuit of wine. Apparently drunkenness was a problem in both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, so the figure of a drunkard is apt.⁹

To the drunkards of Ephraim: In Ephraim (another name for the northern nation of Israel, because the tribe of Ephraim was a prominent tribe in that nation), drunkenness was a significant enough problem that the LORD directed Isaiah to directly address the drunkards of Ephraim.

⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁶ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁷ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁸ Life Application Study Bible.

⁹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

This is one of several passages of Scripture that speaks to drunkards. Proverbs 23:29-35 speaks of the folly of drunkenness. Ephesians 5:18 tells us to be filled with the Spirit instead of being drunk. Romans 13:13, 1 Corinthians 5:11; 1Co_6:10; 1Co_11:21, Galatians 5:21, and 1 Peter 4:3 each contain commands against drunkenness. Jesus specifically warned against drunkenness in the last days (Luke 21:34-36).

Our society pays a terrible price for drunkenness; the direct effect on the drunkard is bad enough, but the extended costs are staggering. Yearly, in the United States, alcohol is responsible for almost 100,000 deaths (25,000 by drunk drivers alone), 6 million non-fatal injuries, and more than \$100 billion in economic losses such as unemployment and loss of productivity.

Drunkenness is behind many other crimes and sins. Many drunkards either commit violent or sexual crimes, or become victims of violent or sexual crimes. 75% of the men and 55% of the women involved in date-rape situations had been drinking or taking drugs just before the attack. The FBI says that 50% of all rapes involve alcohol.

Drunkenness is heavily promoted in our culture, and advertising often targets young people, recruiting them to a future of heavy drinking. The average television viewer sees 90,000 incidents of drinking on TV by age 21, and 100,000 beer commercials by age 18. Many of the commercials use cute animals and upbeat music that appeal to young audiences.¹⁰

Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim: Like any other sin, drunkenness is connected to pride, so much so that Isaiah likens the drunkards of Ephraim to a crown of pride. Much of the self-hatred and self-despising drunkards feel is rooted in too much focus upon one's self, which is the essence of pride.

Whose glorious beauty is a fading flower: Drunkenness makes everything beautiful and good in our lives fade away. Many men and women have gone from the top to skid row because of drunkenness.

To those who are overcome with wine: When alcohol overcomes us, we are in sin. When it impairs our senses, our thinking, our judgment, or our reflexes, we are overcome with wine and it is sin.

One might wish that there was a strict prohibition against drinking alcohol in the Bible, but there isn't. Jesus made wine (John 2:1-10) and drank wine (Mark 14:22-26), and was even unjustly accused of being a drunkard (Matthew 11:19). Paul recommended the use of wine to Timothy, knowing that it was more pure to drink than plain water (1 Timothy 5:23). The Bible regards drink, moderately used, as a gift from God (Psalms 104:15). So, while the Bible allows the moderate use of alcohol, it strictly condemns drunkenness.

What is drunkenness? Some only consider a person drunk if they are "passed-out drunk." But whenever alcohol impairs our senses, our thinking, our judgment, or our reflexes, we are overcome with wine and it is sin. Whenever we feel compelled to drink, or have difficulty not drinking, we are overcome with wine and it is sin. If we have to hide our drinking, or are secretly ashamed of our drinking, we are overcome with wine and it is sin.

Overcome is the Hebrew word *halam*, which literally means "to strike down" and by implication means "to hammer, to conquer, to beat down, to overcome, to hit with a hammer." The same word is translated *pounded* in Judges 5:26, describing when Jael pounded a tent peg through the head of Sisera. When you get drunk, that's what you are doing to yourself.¹¹

¹⁰ <http://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

¹¹ <http://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

"Woe" (Heb. hoy), as mentioned earlier (cf. 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22; 6:5), is a term of lament and threat. It expresses emotion, summons others, and connotes sympathy. Here the object of the prophet's "woe" was the leaders of Ephraim, the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The reason for his "woe" was the pride of these representatives that was their outstanding mark and that resulted in their complacent revelry (cf. Amos 4:1; 6:1, 6). This nation and its leaders had been objects of admiration, but now their glory was fading, like the flowers they wore in garlands on their heads as they indulged in drunken revelry. Ephraim's capital, Samaria, stood like a crown at the eastern end of the fertile Shechem Valley, which drained into the Mediterranean Sea to the west. A false sense of security led these leaders to spend too much time drinking wine, which now controlled them.

"The metaphor of drunkenness dominates the episode. It is a figure of Israel's stumbling, bumbling life during the last decades of its existence (ca. 740-21 B.C.).¹²

Ephraim was a tribe of Israel whose inheritance in the promised land was in the north. God often used this name to describe all of the northern kingdom (Isa. 7:9), whose capitol was Samaria.

The sin of the northern kingdom was rampant and continually unrepentant. Their lack of the fear of God led to blatant pride. Right up the line to their king, they were disobedient to and presumptuous against the Lord.

In the first of six woes in this eight-chapter section of Isaiah, the prophet describes them in picturesque language. You may recall that when Jesus was outside of the city of Sychar, He looked up at the crowds which were streaming out of the city to come see Him. He said to His disciples,

John 4:35 "Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest."

Jesus described the crowds hungry for salvation as being a field ready for harvest. But the Lord described the drunkards of Ephraim as a fertile valley ready to be picked clean and trodden under foot.¹³

²Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, *which* as a tempest of hail *and* a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand.

Cf. Dan 9:26.

This refers to the king of Assyria who was to destroy Samaria and take the ten tribes into captivity (2Ki. 17). He was to come upon Ephraim and Samaria like a hail storm, a destroying storm (a tornado), and like a mighty flood, leaving the country barren as a fading flower when it is cut down and like a piece of summer fruit when it is eaten up (Isa. 28:2-4).¹⁴

¹² <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

¹³ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah2801.php>

¹⁴ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

The Assyrian is designated here as a strong one, a destroying storm, and a flood of mighty waters.¹⁵

Behold, the Lord has a mighty and strong one: The drunkard needs to know that God is stronger than the drunkard, stronger than the power of alcohol, stronger than anything. If the drunkard is powerless to stop his drinking, God has the power to help him stop - or the power to judge him (the drunkards of Ephraim will be trampled underfoot).¹⁶

2-4 Isaiah predicted that Assyria, like a strong hailstorm and windstorm, would go against the 10 Northern tribes. Samaria, like an ornamental wreath (cf. v. 1), would be trampled underfoot by Assyria with no regard for its worth. Samaria, the beauty of Israel overlooking a fertile valley (cf. v. 1), would become like a ripened fig, which is eaten by a stranger before it can be harvested. Early figs were considered a delicacy (cf. Hosea 9:10; Micah 7:1). The Northern Kingdom would have no safety; she would be taken into exile.¹⁷

Ephraim was in danger because the Lord had an irresistible agent who would humble her pride, as a storm overwhelms the unprepared. Assyria was that agent, but the prophet did not name it, perhaps because he wanted to emphasize the principles involved in the judgment.¹⁸

³The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet:

Maybe you don't like this, but God does not apologize for it; He simply tells us that this is what He did. The prophet picks up the future of the drunkard here. A high level of civilization had been developed in the northern kingdom with its comforts and outward beauty expressed in homes and gardens and trees. All you have to do to confirm this is go to the hill of Samaria and see the palace built by Omri and Ahab. This is the place where Ahab and Jezebel lived. It seems that the Lord always gives the wicked and the rich the best places to live, and I think it is poetic justice. It is not going to be so good for the wicked and rich in the next world; so they have it pretty good here. The hill of Samaria is one of the most beautiful spots in the land. When I stood there I could see the Mediterranean Sea, the Jordan valley, Mount Hermon in the north covered with snow, and the walls of Jerusalem in the south. My friend, you could not ask for a more beautiful place to live. If a real estate man develops that hill and sells lots, I hope I can buy one and build a house there. It's a great place, but God judged these people in the northern kingdom, and He brought down their high civilization.¹⁹

With prophetic perfect tenses, Isaiah predicted the overthrow of Ephraim and its leaders. It was as good as accomplished. With hand (v. 2) and foot (v. 3), God would throw down and trample His people.

¹⁵ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

¹⁶ <http://www.study-light.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

¹⁷ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

¹⁸ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

¹⁹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁴And the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.

Fig before summer?

Like the first fruit before the summer, which an observer sees; he eats it up while it is still in his hand: The drunkard needs to learn the value of delayed gratification. The gratification of drinking may be intense and immediate, but it fades quickly and crashes hard. The drunkard must learn the value delaying immediate gratification for a future benefit, instead of eating the fruit . . . while it is still in his hand.

The importance of appreciating the value of delayed gratification has been measured in what has been called the marshmallow test. A researcher gave this choice to a four year old: "I am leaving for a few minutes to run an errand and you can have this marshmallow while I am gone, but if you wait until I return, you can have two marshmallows." Researchers at Stanford did this test in the 1960s, and a dozen years later they found that the kids who grabbed the single marshmallow tended to be more troubled as adolescents, and the one-marshmallow kids also scored an average of 210 points less on SAT tests. Learning to delay gratification is important!²⁰

Ephraim's pride (v. 3) made her ripe for judgment. Her enemy would pluck her and consume her as greedily and as easily as a person who sees a ripe fig on a tree at the beginning of the fig season picks it, pops it into his mouth, and swallows it (cf. Hos. 9:10; Mic. 7:1).²¹

⁵In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people,

Now the prophet begins to move into the future. The expression "in that day" refers to the Day of the Lord, which begins with the Great Tribulation and extends on through the Millennium. This looks into the future to the millennial Kingdom which is coming. The thing that caused the downfall of Ephraim, the northern kingdom, was their pride -- they wore a crown of pride. But in that future day when God brings them back to the land, it will be a crown of glory.²²

The Day of the Lord.

[In that day] In that day -- the day Ephraim and Samaria are destroyed by Assyria, which was within a few months after the prophecy was spoken. Ephraim was to be totally destroyed and go into captivity, but Judah was to become the remnant of Israel and be spared. God was to be for a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the rest of Israel who were not defeated and taken captive to Assyria (Isa. 28:5-6). Thus, Isa. 28:5 is the beginning of a prophecy to Judah and Jerusalem in particular, while Isa. 28:1-4 are a prophecy about Ephraim. God was to preserve Judah and be their protector when the Assyrians would come into the land. This was fulfilled as in Isa. 36:1 -- Isa. 37:38.²³

²⁰ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

²¹ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

²² Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

²³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

[crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty] Four things God was to be to Judah:

1. A crown of glory (Isa. 28:5)
2. A diadem of beauty
3. A spirit of judgment (Isa. 28:6)
4. Strength to the army²⁴

"Residue": "li-she'ar" (to the remnant) The word is the same as that which is consistently used for "the remnant" or true believers who are among the nation which is slated for destruction. The remnant are those who trust their future in Zion in spite of any calamity that can over take them in the "world system." Isaiah's son "She'aryashuv" was born before the prophetic utterances were given to Israel recorded in Isaiah 7:3. His name means "a remnant shall return." The remnant is mentioned many times in Isaiah and refers to the faithful seed among all the tribes who keep their trust in God in every generation. Isaiah 10 has references to the remnant which include the faithful in Israel which will return from captivity after the Assyrian destruction and those in Judah after the Babylonian exile and also the remnant who will return to Zion in the "second time" when the Messiah will call the remnant out of all nations.²⁵

5-6 Though Samaria, the capital of Ephraim, has twice been described as a wreath (vv. 1, 3), now the Lord Almighty is said to be like a beautiful wreath. He, not a prosperous beautiful city, should be honored. In that day, when the Lord establishes the Millennium, the remnant will be honored by the Lord and will be under the One who sits in judgment. Even in the Assyrian siege of Samaria the Lord gave strength to the Israelite soldiers, enabling them to hold off the siege for three years.²⁶

The LORD of hosts will be for a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty: Sometimes when we see the faded glory that comes with sins like drunkenness, we can grow discouraged or depressed. But even if all the glory of man fades because of disobedience and sin, God's glory remains. When we are completely "ungloried" because of the wreckage of sin, we can set our focus on the glory of the LORD.²⁷

5-6: "In that day," when Ephraim would fall, the Lord would also preserve a remnant of the Northern Kingdom. He would be the true crown (king, cf. 11:1-9) of His people and a source of glory for them, in contrast to their present fading garlands (cf. v. 1; 4:2-6). He would also become the standard and facilitator of justice for their judges and the strength of their soldiers (cf. 11:2). This does not mean that the faithful Ephraimites would turn on their enemies and defeat them, but that they would find in the Lord all that they had looked for previously in the wrong places. Note that this note of mercy concludes a pronouncement of judgment.

²⁴ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

²⁵ <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa28-29.htm>

²⁶ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

²⁷ <http://www.study-light.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

⁶And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.

Vs 6-7: A businessman recently told me some of the things that go on in big business. I don't suppose there is a day that goes by that he doesn't make deals with men who make big investments for large profits. He told me about one of these men who was beginning to indulge in sin. He was not faithful to his wife, and he was drinking heavily. He has recently made certain judgments about investments that have caused this businessman to withhold loaning money to him. He told me that when a man begins to drink and indulge in sin he loses his sharpness in business. He said, "Because I am a Christian I may be biased, but I have found over the long haul, over a period of years, that this is factual. I have learned it through bitter experiences." Now God is making this same observation regarding the northern kingdom: "they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment."²⁸

For a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment: When our glory has faded because of our sin, we may lose our judgment and discernment. But then we can receive them from the LORD.

And for strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate: When our glory has faded because of our sin, we may lose our strength and ability to fight. But then we can receive them from the LORD.²⁹

⁷But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble *in* judgment.

[they also have erred through wine] Judah also (like Ephraim, Isa. 28:1,3) had given themselves over to alcohol.³⁰

Seven Sins of Judah through Drink

1. They have erred (Isa. 28:7).
2. Have gone out of the way.
3. Are intoxicated and overcome by wine.
4. Stumble in judgment.
5. Live in uncleanness (Isa. 28:8).
6. Stumble at the way God has instructed them by the prophets (Isa. 28:9-13).
7. Scoff at God's way of revelation, and reject His message to them by the prophets.³¹

Isaiah admitted here that Judah was also sinful like Ephraim, and was likewise destined to judgment if they continued in these sins. The difference between the two kingdoms was that Ephraim had gone further into sin and apostasy than Judah, for they did not have one righteous king in all their history of separation from Judah. God delayed judgment in Judah because they had periods of national revival. Several of their kings were godly and led Judah back to God.

²⁸ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

²⁹ <http://www.study-light.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

³⁰ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

³¹ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

Godly people from the ten tribes continually came back to Judah which became representative of all thirteen tribes. Furthermore, Judah was chosen by God to rule, and He had made a special covenant with David and his house to be rulers of Israel eternally. All these factors delayed Judah's judgment, but by their continued sin and apostasy it did come about 133 years after the ten tribes were destroyed (2Ki. 25).³²

[priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink] The priests and prophets mentioned here were representative of the higher religious and ruling classes in Judah who had gone into sin. Having erred in truth, in judgment, and in the way of right, they were destined to be punished like Ephraim.³³

They also: Since Isaiah mentions the priest and the prophet in this section, it seems that they also refers to the people of Jerusalem and Judah. If the people of Ephraim had a problem with drunkenness, so did they also.

“Judah had caught this disease of Ephraim . . . Sin is more contagious and catching than the plague.” (Trapp)

They also have erred through wine and through intoxicating drink are out of the way: Drunkenness always leads to error and takes us out of the way - the way of wisdom and God's will.

The priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink: Drunkenness is something that can touch any person, at any stage of life. Even the priest and the prophet can find themselves under the tyranny of drunkenness (swallowed up by wine).³⁴

7-8 Returning again to the picture of the Northern Kingdom as a drunkard (cf. v. 1), Isaiah referred to the people and their leaders (priests and prophets) being drunk at a banquet where the tables are covered with vomit. They were intoxicated even when supposedly seeing visions (the false prophets) or when rendering decisions (the false priests). No wonder the nation was ripe for judgment!³⁵

Counted among the drunkards in Ephraim were priests and prophets. Lacking any fear of God, they drank liquor even while doing the work of the ministry. The prophets would reel with drunkenness even while having their visions. The priests would be tottering with drunken instability while making decisions and sacrificing animals. They were often so drunk that they were vomiting right on the sanctified tables. They had made the entire place unclean.³⁶

⁸For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.

This verse pictures the whole nation as being sinful and unclean, living in the filthiness of their own vomit of corruption.³⁷

³² Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

³³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

³⁴ <http://www.study-light.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

³⁵ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

³⁶ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah2801.php>

³⁷ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that no place is clean: Drunkenness leads to this kind of degradation and disgrace. This is because of the way alcohol works. Alcohol is a depressant; it “loosens” people because it depresses their self-control, their wisdom, their balance and judgment.

This makes the idea of being “drunk in the Holy Spirit” especially unbiblical and offensive. The Holy Spirit does not depress us; He has the exact opposite effect. The Holy is a stimulant, and He moves every aspect of our being to better and more perfect performance. Of those who act silly or crazy claiming to be “drunk in the Holy Spirit,” the most charitable thing to say is that they are simply acting in their own flesh, because they certainly are not being led by the Holy Spirit of God.³⁸

9Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.

Milk is for infants; meat for adults.

Scoffing

The sense of this passage (Isa. 28:9-13) is that of contempt, scoffing, and rejection of the way God had been speaking to them by Isaiah. The scoffers mentioned in Isa. 28:14 said of Isaiah, Whom will he instruct? To whom will he impart his doctrines? Will he treat us as mere babes and infants just weaned? He does nothing but stammer about law upon law and line upon line as though we cannot understand anything but the most elementary lessons. Is he going to regard us as children and treat us as senseless babes by giving us endless repetitions (Isa. 28:9-10)? Isaiah answered their mockery by acknowledging their complaint was true and that they (drunkards as they were) should be dealt with by such methods seeing they weren't capable of receiving sound doctrine, in their drunken stupor. Even though God would speak to them with stammering lips and in foreign and strange languages which would be rest and refreshing for the weary, yet this people would not hear (Isa. 28:11-12). In other words, since they considered the prophet's messages unintelligible (like words of stammerers and foreigners whose tongues they could not understand) God would use these very methods to reveal Himself to them and thereby give rest and refreshing; but this would be rejected also as foolish and unintelligible.³⁹

9-10 The speakers in verse 9 are probably the priests and prophets mentioned in verses 7-8. They were angry that Isaiah was treating them as if they were young children. They felt they were adults who could think for themselves; they had no need for someone to tell them what to do or think. So they mimicked Isaiah as if he were speaking "baby talk" to them (v. 10). Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule (cf. v. 13) is a series of sounds in Hebrew (ṣaw lāṣāw, ṣaw lāṣāw, qaw lāqāw, qaw lāqāw). Mocking Isaiah's messages, the leaders were acting as if he were an adult "lecturing" a little child. A little here, a little there was a method used in teaching children, inculcating a little at a time. In other words they were refusing to take Isaiah's words seriously. They wanted nothing to do with his message or his ministry.⁴⁰

³⁸ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

³⁹ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁴⁰ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

9-14 These verses characterize the people's reaction to Isaiah. In effect, they were saying, "He's speaking to us like a schoolteacher speaks to small children. We don't need to be taught. We'll make up our own minds." For this attitude, Isaiah prophesied that the Assyrians would teach them in a way they would like even less.⁴¹

With nearly every adult in the northern kingdom too sinful to repent and too drunk to stand, Isaiah asks the question: To whom is God going to teach His Word? And who will be able to teach others His Word?

At this point, the only choices He has left are the babies. Of course, having just been weaned, they are not old enough to comprehend systematic theology, or even basic Bible teachings.

God's Word requires some basic intelligence to understand. It is beyond the grasp of babies drinking milk, and beyond the ability of confused drunkards to read and understand.

But it's not rocket science. God has made His Word accessible to anyone who desires to learn it. He says that He has given it to us in an orderly fashion. If we simply read it line by line, we will quickly pick up the basics.

This is why I'm so sold out to the line-by-line teaching method. Teaching the Bible verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book, cover to cover is the best way I know to quickly acquaint people with God's Word. Because no matter where we are in Scripture, you will learn about God's nature and God's plan. You'll hear that God hates sin but loves sinners. He has established this form of communication to us line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little. It's the perfect way to learn!⁴²

Whom will he teach knowledge? These are the words of the drunk, ungodly prophets and priests described in Isaiah 28:7-8. They ask Isaiah, the godly prophet, Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? In their mocking minds, Isaiah's message is fit only for children (Those just weaned from milk).

"Isaiah 28:9-10 portray the sarcastic reaction these Judean leaders had to Isaiah's words of rebuke. They were tired of Isaiah's strictness and of his recurring application of God's laws. The string of monosyllables in Isaiah 28:10 may mean that the Judean leaders regarded Isaiah's message as meaningless or as child's play." (Wolf)

"Many commentators have been puzzled by Isaiah 28:10 and have wrestled to make sense of the Hebrew. The truth of the matter seems to be, as the NIV margin suggests, that it is not meant to make sense. Isaiah's words had hardly penetrated the alcohol-impregnated atmosphere that surrounded his hearers." (Grogan)

"Thus this good prophet became the drunkard's song. Any man may be witty in a biting way, and those that have the dullest brains have commonly the sharpest teeth to that purpose." (Trapp)⁴³

⁴¹ Life Application Study Bible.

⁴² <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah2801.php>

⁴³ <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

¹⁰For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little:

The truth of God is distributed throughout the Scripture. This is the strategy that a communications engineer would adopt if he were designing it. [Hologram analogy: a Fourier Transform of an image. Distributed redundancy; no desirability detected in “natural light;” however, illuminated by the (laser) light that originated it, it reveals an image. Removing a portion does not lose the image (only resolution); etc.]⁴⁴

[precept] Hebrew: tsav (HSN-<H6673>), injunction; commandment; precept. From tsavah (HSN-<H6680>), enjoin; appoint; charge; set in order. Literally, mandate must be upon mandate, mandate upon mandate; line (Hebrew: qav (HSN-<H6957>), a rule; measuring cord) upon line (rule upon rule); here a little and there a little (Isa. 28:10,13).⁴⁵

Precept upon precept: With this, the drunk, ungodly prophets and priests mock Isaiah’s teaching. “It is too simple. It is simply precept upon precept . . . line upon line . . . here a little, there a little. We are so smart and spiritually sophisticated and advanced that we can go on to deeper things.”

In their mocking of Isaiah’s message, they actually pay him a great compliment. It is a beautiful thing for God’s truth to be presented precept upon precept . . . line upon line . . . here a little, there a little. When the word of God is properly presented, there is something for both the simple and immature to receive, and also something for the great saint to rejoice in and be fed.⁴⁶

10-13: "precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little;" Hypocritical formalism is condemned: This passage is often accommodated to show that we should learn each precept of the Bible clearly and repeatedly. However, without inner conversion, this produces a dead formalism and this method rather than being suggested, rote learning of the precepts of religious truth is ridiculed here rather than urged. This is made clearer in the next chapter in the following verse: "29:13 Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: "⁴⁷

¹¹For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.

1 Cor 14:21. Assyrian.

Tongues

Hebrew: la`eg (<H3934>), jester; mocker; stammerer. From la`ag (<H3932>), to deride; speak unintelligibly; mock; stammer; laugh. The idea here is that since the drunkards of Judah regarded the messages of the Lord through Isaiah as suitable only for children, He would teach them in a

⁴⁴ Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, khouse.org

⁴⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁴⁶ <http://www.study-light.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

⁴⁷ <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa28-29.htm>

manner they did not like and instruct them through the language of foreigners as a sign of their unbelief. Paul used this passage speaking of the gift of tongues in the church as a sign to unbelievers (1Cor. 14:21-22). The word stammering does not mean that the language would not be real, but that the people hearing it would not understand it (Isa. 28:11; 33:19). These Hebrew words are translated mockers (Ps. 35:16); mock (2Chr. 30:10; Neh. 4:1; Job 11:3; 21:3; Prov. 1:26; 17:5; 30:17; Jer. 20:7); laugh to scorn (2Ki. 19:21; Neh. 2:19; Job 22:19; Ps. 22:7; Isa. 37:2); laugh (Job 9:23; Ps. 80:6); and have in derision (Ps. 2:4; 59:8). All this points to the experiences of the book of Acts, especially to the 120 who were baptized in the Spirit on the day of Pentecost and spoke in other languages as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-21). This was in fulfillment of Isa. 28:11. They became an object of mockery, laughter, scorn, and ridicule, and were accused of being drunk on new wine.⁴⁸

11-13 Following up on the leaders' mimicking, Isaiah said that if they did not want to listen to his "lecturing" then they would be "lectured" by another people who had a difficult and different speech. Foreign lips would deliver the message of judgment on them. Isaiah was referring to the Assyrians who were advancing on Israel and would soon conquer it. Though God had offered Israel rest and repose they refused to listen to Him and His messenger. Therefore the Lord would turn their mocking back on them and they would be injured... snared, and captured by a people whose language they did not understand.⁴⁹

With stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people: If the simple, straightforward message is rejected, God will find another way to communicate to the hard-hearted. He will send unusual messengers to bring the word.⁵⁰

11-12: Isaiah turned his critics' words back on themselves; what they had said about his words in mockery would overtake them. 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, but whose lances they would take in. They would learn to rest on Yahweh from their foreign foe's treatment of them if they refused to learn that lesson from Isaiah.

The Apostle Paul used verse 11 to remind the Corinthians that messages in tongues (foreign languages), far from being a sign of spirituality, indicate that the recipients are spiritually immature (1 Cor. 14:20-21). Likewise, Isaiah revealed that when people are so spiritually dull that simple messages do not move them, God will teach them through experience.⁵¹

¹²To whom he said, This is the rest *wherewith* ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing; yet they would not hear.

Mt 23:37; Acts 17:18 (too late?).

⁴⁸ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁴⁹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁵⁰ <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

⁵¹ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

Two personal benefits of tongues here:

1. This is the rest to the weary.
2. This is the refreshing to the weary⁵²

Tongues Predicted

God not only predicted the spiritual exercise of speaking in various languages by the Holy Spirit, as fulfilled in Acts 2,10,19; 1Cor. 12 -- 1Cor. 14 , but He also predicted that men in general would not hear or be open to such exercise during the time it was to happen (Isa. 28:12). That this refers to N.T. spiritual experiences is not only clear from Paul's application of it to the church in 1Cor. 14:21-22, but also from the fulfillment of Isa. 28:16 (quoted by Peter and others in the N.T.) in connection with Christ in N. T. times, as the Stone and foundation of the church (Mt. 21:42-44; 1Cor. 3:11; Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20; 1Pet. 2:4-8). Thus the speaking with stammering lips and another tongue does not refer to judgment upon Judah by a foreign nation, such as the Assyrians and Babylonians who were to teach them certain lessons, but to spiritual experiences which would be rest and refreshing to all who would hear in the church age.⁵³

This is the blessed way to present God's word: precept upon precept, line upon line. Isaiah takes the taunt of the drunkards and receives it as a compliment. God's messengers are to present all of God's word (without skipping a line), and to present it simply.

This also implies that we can't receive all aspects of God's message at once. "It is an excellent thing that the gospel is taught us by degrees. It is not forced home upon men's minds all at once, but it comes thus, 'Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little.' God does not flash the everlasting daylight on weak eyes in one blaze of glory, but there is at first a dim dawn, and the soft incoming of a tender light for tender eyes, and so by degrees we see." (Spurgeon)⁵⁴

¹³But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

Backward: Gen 49:10.

[fall backward] The message was to the drunkards of Judah and Ephraim. Through their rejection of the gospel, as foretold here, they themselves were to fall backward and stumble at the Messiah, the stumbling Stone, and live in darkness and be destroyed (Rom. 9:32-33; Lk. 21:20-24).⁵⁵

[broken] Hebrew: shabar (HSN-<H7665>), to break off; break in pieces; be crushed. Judah and Ephraim were broken off because of unbelief in Christ and the gospel (Rom. 11:7-29). They

⁵² Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁵³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁵⁴ <http://www.study-light.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

⁵⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

were not broken by falling upon the Stone; they were crushed by the Stone falling upon them (Mt. 21:42-44; Lk. 20:18).⁵⁶

[snared, and taken] Judah was snared and taken into captivity among all the other nations for rejecting Christ (Mt. 23:37-39; Lk. 21:20-24; Rom. 11:25-29).

Sections like this have caused some expositors of the past to call Isaiah "the prophet of the commonplace." Teaching is a slow, patient, and continuous work. This is the way that even spiritual truth is imparted. God does not impart it in a flash to a lazy and lethargic soul. As the people lapse into apostasy in any age, it becomes increasingly difficult to impart spiritual truth. There are many Christians today who are not satisfied with their Christian lives. To be brutally frank, they are ignorant of the Word of God. Then they hear about a wonderful two-week course that will give them the answers to all their problems. They will learn how to handle their marital problems, how to get along with their mother-in-law, how to guide their children aright, and how to become model employees. My friend, let me say this to you very candidly. Neither a little course nor some great emotional experience will solve your problems. There is no shortcut to success in the Christian life. There is only one way to grow as a Christian, and it is so commonplace and ordinary that I hesitate to say it. The Word of the Lord was given unto Israel precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, and there a little. It was the daily grind of getting into God's Word. What happened? Israel did not follow through. They fell backward; that is, they were in a backslidden state. There are many Christians in the same condition today. It is not that they are weaker than anybody else; it is simply that they do not spend enough time in the Word of God. I realize that this method is not very exciting, but line upon line and precept upon precept is the only way you are going to grow in the Christian life.⁵⁷ precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; The repetition of this phrase is in a context of ridicule. The outward performance of ritual learning does little to change the heart. It is not that they did not know the scriptures and the cardinal doctrines of the Torah,--on the contrary they had learned them by heart but they did not know the truth nor experience a sense of obedience to YHWH.

14Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem.

The message to Israel of destruction by foreign invaders was also for Judah. Though she would not be completely destroyed, because Jerusalem would not be taken, Judah would face much suffering. The people of the Southern Kingdom had much the same attitude as their Northern brothers. They too were scoffing at God's revelation through Isaiah.

God further rebuked the scornful men of Judah who ruled Jerusalem, warning them that their covenant with death and hell would not make them secure when the overflowing scourge passed through the land (Isa. 28:14-15).⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁵⁷ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁵⁸ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

The judgment coming to Israel in the north should be a warning to Judah in the south. Ephraim speaks to Jerusalem, Jerusalem speaks to us today, and the Word of God speaks to all of us. It looks as if God wrote this Book, not yesterday, but tomorrow. In fact, it is way ahead of tomorrow's newspaper.⁵⁹

14-22 The people of Judah should not think they were guiltless before God. The leaders of Jerusalem, like their counterparts in the North, were responsible to guide and lead the people toward godliness. But they scoffed, boasting of several things. They said since they had made a covenant with death, the scourge could not touch them, and a lie and a falsehood were their hiding place (vv. 14-15). Why would the rulers of Jerusalem say such a thing? It seems that Isaiah was using imagery rich in the symbolism of Semitic mythology. For example, in the Ugaritic pantheon death was personified as the god of the underworld. The Jerusalem leaders were trusting in other gods to save them from the coming scourge, the Assyrian invasion. However, to trust in false gods was futile. The Lord sets the stone and the sure foundation, that is, only He is the basis for physical and spiritual salvation (v. 16). Whether Isaiah thought of the cornerstone as the Messiah or simply as genuine belief in the Lord is not clear. In other passages the cornerstone refers to Christ (Zech. 10:4; Eph. 2:20; 1 Peter 2:6).

The Lord responded to each of these boasts. Their covenant with death would be annulled (Isa. 28:18), their lie would be swept away (v. 17), and they would be defeated by the scourge (v. 18) that would continue day after day (v. 19). This message of judgment would bring sheer terror (v. 19) as the people realized its implications. To seek protection from false gods would be as inadequate as lying in a bed that is too short or trying to cover oneself with a blanket that is too small. The destruction would sweep down into Judah (Mount Perazim and the Valley of Gibeon, 1 Chron. 14:11, 16, are near Jerusalem, where David defeated the Philistines). Therefore they should stop... mocking Isaiah's message given by the Lord Almighty.⁶⁰

You scornful men, who rule this people who are in Jerusalem: Sadly, some of the simple and immature were those who rule this people. They needed to hear the word of the LORD just as everyone did.

There is no one too high, too exalted, too mature, too advanced for the word of the LORD, and to hear it precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little.⁶¹

How had the Jews made a "covenant with death"? It was a bargain they had made that would lead to their death.

It is probably that Isaiah is not quoting them directly. It is more likely that they had been boasting about their new alliance.

You see, instead of relying on God's direction when He said, "I am the One you need to turn to for rest and safety against this coming judgment," they had turned to Egypt for assistance. The Jews were now touting their alliance with Egypt. This was their new safety, how they thought they would be delivered.

But the covenant they had made had sealed their fate. It was truly a covenant with death. Egypt would be no help to them when the Babylonians came. Jeremiah tells us that when the Babylonians were besieging Jerusalem, Egypt came marching up to rescue them. But when the

⁵⁹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁶⁰ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁶¹ <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

Babylonians left Jerusalem to go face the Egyptian army, Pharaoh had them turn around and go home (Jer. 37:7). Seeing this, the Babylonians returned and finished the job on Jerusalem. The Jews should have made their covenant with God, not with Egypt.⁶²

14-15: The rulers in Jerusalem scoffed at the Lord's Word, but Isaiah called on them to listen to it. The woe oracle against the northern kingdom's rulers in verses 1-13 was something that Judah's leaders needed to learn from.

"Scoffer" is the strongest negative term that the Old Testament writers used to describe the wicked (cf. Ps. 1:1-2; Prov. 1:22; 13:1; 14:9; 21:24; 29:8). A scoffer not only chooses the wrong way, but he or she also mocks the right way. He or she is not only misled, but he or she delights in misleading others. The rulers had made a covenant with some nation (probably Egypt) that involved deception and falsehood (probably against Assyria). Israel had already made a covenant with Yahweh that guaranteed her security (Exod. 19—Num. 10). Why did she need to make another? The rulers thought that as a result of their covenant, the scourge of their dreaded enemy (Assyria) would not touch them. But Isaiah sarcastically told them that their covenant was really with Death and Sheol; death would be the outcome of their pact. They were the naive ones, not he (cf. vv. 9-10).⁶³

¹⁵Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we 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:

Job 5:23; Hos 2:18; Dan 9:27 (may be same covenant).

[covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement] The idea is that Judah felt so secure about judgment, it was as if they had made a covenant with death not to destroy them and with hell not to swallow them.⁶⁴

[when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us] The overflowing scourge could refer to the Babylonians (2Ki. 25; 2Chr. 36; Jer. 25), or to the Romans in A.D. 70 after the rejection of the Stone of Isa. 28:16 (Lk. 21:20-24); or, it could refer to both these destructions, for both did completely destroy Jerusalem and make the land empty, as predicted here (Isa. 28:14-22).⁶⁵

[made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves] They trusted in deception and believed the opposite of what the prophets had told them; therefore, they thought they were secure.

Humanity, Death—In the prophets, the term “lie” is often used as a synonym for idolatry which is false faith. False religion can lead people to believe they have a commitment which will overcome death. Religious rites can seek to appease gods who supposedly rule the underworld.

⁶² <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah2801.php>

⁶³ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁶⁴ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁶⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

Only the true God controls death and has power to give victory over death. Even He does not promise escape from death.⁶⁶

What is this covenant with death and Sheol? Daniel tells us about a future covenant which Israel will make with the Antichrist, the prince who is coming, the Man of Sin, the godless man, the willful king, the beast out of the sea and the beast out of the land, the one who is controlled by Satan (see Dan. 9:27).⁶⁷

Judah was afraid of the Assyrians. Instead of trusting God, the Judeans turned to other sources for security. God accused them of making a deal with the grave, referring to the state of being dead. This passage may refer to Hezekiah's alliance with Pharaoh Tirhakah against Assyria (2 Kings 19:9; Isaiah 37:9). God would cancel this agreement—Egypt would be of no help when Assyria attacked. Is it worth selling out what you believe in for temporary protection against an enemy? If you want lasting protection, turn to the only one able to deliver you from eternal death—God.⁶⁸

We have made a covenant with death: The rulers of Jerusalem were extreme in their rejection of God, and felt they had an “agreement” with death and the grave (Sheol). They proudly believed the overflowing scourge of God’s judgment and correction would not come against them.

They had no fear of death, and thought they had made friends with death and the grave. This same way of thinking is common in our modern world. The ungodly should fear death, because with death ends all opportunity for repentance, and their eternal doom is sealed. Satan has a significant interest in making the wicked feel that death is their friend.

A 1996 Los Angeles Times article told the story of Heidi, a 15-year-old who lived in Rancho Palos Verdes. She attended one of the nation’s finest public schools, where she played soccer as a sophomore. She loved horses, and had recently been baptized into the Mormon Church. Chris was a 16-year-old surfer from San Pedro, who got A’s and B’s, took college prep courses, and had a part time job working a gas pump. His grandfather said he was a well-adjusted kid. Chris played guitar in a garage band, and was deeply affected by the suicide of grunge singer Kurt Cobain, and how he had devoted a creative writing project to the subject of suicide. A friend of Chris’ said: “He was kind of death-happy. Not sad, but more like, ‘The other side is gonna be so much more fun.’ More like, ‘I can’t wait to die.’” On Saturday, March 16, Heidi swiped the keys to her mom’s white Plymouth Horizon, sneaked out and met Chris in San Pedro. Late that night, Heidi and Chris hiked 100 feet down a rugged path, then ducked through a hole in the chain-link fence to get to a narrow concrete spillway known as “the diving board.” On the ledge, they set down a blue cigarette lighter, and cigarette butts arranged in an arrow point to the sea, which lay 150 feet below. Then they both jumped to their deaths. Chris and Heidi were both deceived into thinking that death could be their friend, but the moment they passed into eternity, they would have given anything to go back to the world where they could repent and get right with God.

We have made lies our refuge: This is their strength! This is their protection! What slender confidence!

⁶⁶ Disciples Study Bible

⁶⁷ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁶⁸ Life Application Study Bible.

In his sermon titled *Refuges of Lies and What Will Become Of Them*, Charles Spurgeon lists six lies that men try to take refuge in: 1. The lie that we are, or can be good enough. 2. The lie that fate or predestination determines all, so there is nothing for us to do. 3. The lie that places confidence in new, false teachings. 4. The lie that religious profession is enough. 5. The lie that one can have a saved soul and an unchanged life. 6. The lie that trusts an old experience instead of an ongoing relationship.⁶⁹

¹⁶Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

Therefore... Adoni... Behold... Cf. 7:14.

Stone (in Zion): Gen 49:24; Deut 32:4; Isa 8:14,15; Ps 118:22; Rom 9:33; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:6-8.

Ten Symbols of the Messiah

1. A foundation stone (Isa. 28:16; Eph. 2:20)
2. A tried stone (Mt. 21:42-44; Acts 4:11)
3. A precious corner stone (1Pet. 2:4-8)
4. A sure foundation (1Cor. 3:11)
5. A smitten rock (Ps. 78:16; Num. 20:8-11; 1Cor. 10:4)
6. Head stone of the corner (Ps. 118:22)
7. Rejected stone (Ps. 118:22; Acts 4:11)
8. Stumbling stone (Isa. 8:14; Rom. 9:32-33)
9. A living stone (1Pet. 2:4)
10. A Rock (stone) of offense (Isa. 8:14; 1Pet. 2:8)⁷⁰

[Zion] Zion is Jerusalem, never the church or a spiritual kingdom of God on earth (note, 2Sam. 5:7).

[he that believeth shall not make haste] He that confides and trusts in the sure foundation is secure and will not make haste or be ashamed (Rom. 9:33; 1Pet. 2:6).

What is the answer today to the falsehood in the lives of people and the deception that is abroad which will continue to snowball right on down into the Great Tribulation period? Well, God has already put that answer down. It is a foundation; it is a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation. One who believes in it doesn't need to be in a hurry. He can rest in Him. 1Peter 2:6-8 speaks of Him: "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed." Simon Peter makes it very clear that this stone is Christ.⁷¹

⁶⁹ <http://www.studyLight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

⁷⁰ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁷¹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

If you're building anything, you need a firm base. Isaiah speaks of a foundation stone, a precious cornerstone, that will be laid in Zion. This cornerstone is the Messiah, the foundation on whom we build our lives. Is your life built on the flimsy base of your own successes or dreams? Or is it set on a firm foundation (see Psalm 118:22; 1 Peter 2:8)?⁷²

Therefore: In response to the people's scoffing, the Lord promises to establish His future kingdom on the sure foundation of justice and faith. I lay refers to the future, "I will lay." The apostles identified the stone for a foundation as Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:4–6). hail waters: For similar descriptions, see v. 2.⁷³

Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation: In contrast to the weak, narrow foundation of the wicked (we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood we have hidden ourselves), God has a solid foundation for our lives - a stone for a foundation.

What is this foundation? 1 Peter 2:6 applies this passage directly to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. He is the foundation for our lives, and only with a secure, stable foundation can anything lasting be built. Anything "added on" to the house, not built upon the foundation, is sure to end up in wreckage.

Who lays this stone? Behold, I lay in Zion. It is God's work. We are unable to provide the right kind of foundation for our lives, but God can lay a foundation for us. We are asked to behold God's foundation, appreciate it, wonder at it, value it, and build our lives upon it.

A tried stone: Our Messiah was tried, was tested, and was proven to be the glorious, obedient Son of God in all things.

A precious cornerstone: Our Messiah is precious, and a cornerstone. The cornerstone provides the lines, the pattern for all the rest of the construction. The cornerstone is straight and true, and everything in the entire building lines up in reference to the cornerstone.

A sure foundation: Our Messiah is a sure foundation, and we can build everything on Him without fear.⁷⁴

The Lord God's response to His people's lack of faith in Him was to reveal that He was doing something too. He was laying a firm foundation in Jerusalem that they could and should build on. This huge "stone" was tested, planted securely, and a sound basis for security. 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. What was this stone? I believe it was Messiah (cf. Ps. 118:22; Zech. 3:9; 10:4; Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Rom. 9:33; 10:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6).

The commentators have offered many interpretations of this cornerstone, and several of them have written extended discussions of the figure. In biblical usage, the figure of God as a stone goes back to Genesis 49:24 (cf. Deut. 32:4; Isa. 8:14-15). Since Messiah would be God (9:6), the interpretation of this stone as Messiah is in harmony with these other biblical uses of the figure (cf. 8:14). God was doing something that would make possible a stable edifice (Israel), namely, preparing for Messiah. Those in Isaiah's day who believed that God was working for His people

⁷² Life Application Study Bible.

⁷³ The Nelson Study Bible

⁷⁴ <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

would not panic. Perhaps Isaiah's hearers did not recognize this as messianic prophecy when the prophet gave it (cf. 7:14; 9:6). Perhaps they thought that Isaiah just meant that God was doing something hidden that would result in the security of their nation, and they should trust Him.⁷⁵

17 Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

[Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet] I will judge Judah according to the strict rule of law, and require righteousness as straight as a plumb line -- a string with a weight that makes a straight line as it hangs down.⁷⁶

[and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place] Judgment was to come upon Judah like a hail storm and a mighty flood overflowing whatever things were being trusted in.⁷⁷

Judgment for these people is going to come gradually. I think it comes that way today. Sometimes it comes suddenly. But gradual judgment is worse than sudden judgment, for usually the process is so slow that you don't detect it.⁷⁸

Justice the measuring line, and righteousness the plummet: In God's building, it isn't just as if He establishes the cornerstone and then walks away and allows the building to be built any way it pleases. Instead, He keeps the building straight with justice and righteousness.

The hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters will overflow the hiding place: The ungodly leaders of Jerusalem made lies their refuge, and found a hiding place under falsehood (Isaiah 28:15). But the storms of life and God's judgment would sweep away their refuge of lies and their hiding place. They had built on the wrong foundation, and would therefore see destruction.⁷⁹

18 And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

Humanity, Death—"Annulled" is the normal word for burial. In a graphic play on words, the false commitment the people depended on to avoid death would one day be buried. Political actions do not provide an escape from death. Treaty partners may turn against us and become agents of death. Humans cannot avoid death.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁷⁶ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁷⁷ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁷⁸ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁷⁹ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

⁸⁰ Disciples Study Bible

Your covenant with death will be annulled: The ungodly leaders of Jerusalem thought they made a “deal with death,” but will find that God will annul their covenant with death. When His scourge of judgment comes, they will surely be trampled down by it.

And the scourge of judgment will not touch them lightly. Morning by morning and by day and by night they will feel the sting of God’s correction.⁸¹

¹⁹From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only *to understand the report.*

[From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night] Whenever judgment began it would continue until its purpose was accomplished.

[take you] "Take you" must refer to being taken captive, as in Isa. 28:13.

[only to understand the report] The judgment will be so terrible that it will be vexing even to hear the report of it. This was particularly true in A.D. 70 when so many people were crucified there wasn't room for another cross; bodies were piled up outside the walls of Jerusalem in heaps.⁸²

²⁰For 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.*

Have you ever gone to a hotel or a motel and found that the covers on the bed were not quite long enough? They don't come up to your neck, and if you pull them up, then your feet stick out. Have you ever slept in a short bed, where your feet hang over the edge, or you have to prop your head up, or you have to sleep at an angle? That's not so good, is it? God says to these people, "I am giving you a short bed. The cover won't be quite long enough." From then on the judgment of God will come. It didn't come to Judah for about one hundred years, but it finally came.⁸³

Too short a bed (28:20). This is likely a proverbial saying, much like one of our own time: "You've made your bed, Israel. Now lie in it."

The bed is too short . . . the covering so narrow: The rulers of Jerusalem had to realize that their present place was precarious, and they could find no refuge where they were at right then.

Their rejection of God gave them no peace, no rest, and no warmth. What can be worse than trying to sleep in a bed that is too short? With trying to keep warm with something so narrow that he cannot wrap himself in it? Yet this is a picture of the world, working, striving, longing for their bed - and when they gain it, it is too short and has no proper blankets! The child of God, on the other hand, is given rest and peace and covering by Jesus Christ. We shouldn't long for the

⁸¹ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

⁸² Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁸³ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

short beds and narrow coverings of the world; we should thank God for the place He gives us in Jesus Christ and enjoy it!⁸⁴

²¹For the LORD shall rise up as *in* mount Perazim, he shall 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.

Baal Perazim, 2 Sam 5:20. Strange work: judgment of sin.
Valley of Gibeon: Joshua vs. Canaanite kings.
Josh 10:8-14. Hail vs sword...

[rise up] This indicates that the Lord will rise up in judgment as one rises to accomplish a particular work.

[mount Perazim] See 2Sam. 5:20-21; 1Chr. 14:11.

[as in the valley of Gibeon] This refers to David's victory over the Philistines (1Chr. 14:16).

[strange work] The judgment upon Judah is called a "strange work" because of being God's complete destruction of His own people, instead of their enemies as had often been the case before.⁸⁵

God fought on Joshua's side at the battle of Gibeon (Joshua 10:1-14) and on David's side at Mount Perazim (2 Samuel 5:20). But here he would fight against Israel, his own people, in these same places.⁸⁶

For the LORD will rise up: The rulers of Jerusalem had to realize that fighting against God was always a losing proposition. There was no way they could win that battle, because God would always do His work, His awesome work.

At Perazim, the LORD accomplished a great victory for Israel in the days of David (2 Samuel 5:20). At Gibeon, the LORD accomplished a great victory for Israel in the days of Joshua (Joshua 10:11). In those cases, the LORD fought for Israel, but if her leaders did not repent, they would soon find the LORD fighting against Israel. This use of God's strength against His people is surely His awesome work, or as the King James Version puts it, His strange work.⁸⁷

²²Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth.

Determine...whole earth: Cf. 10:23; Dan 9:27.

⁸⁴ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

⁸⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁸⁶ Life Application Study Bible.

⁸⁷ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

Isaiah warned Judah not to remain as mockers and scornful men (Isa. 28:14,22), or make their bands strong, for God had determined a consumption of the whole land.⁸⁸

Now therefore, do not be mockers: The rulers of Jerusalem had to realize the danger of mocking God with their “deals with death” and haughty words against God.

23 Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech.

Fourfold command to mockers:

1. Give your ear.
2. Hear My voice.
3. Hearken.
4. Hear My speech.⁸⁹

The rulers of Jerusalem had to listen to God’s word, and pay attention to His voice.

23-29 The farmer uses special tools to plant and harvest tender herbs so he will not destroy them. He takes into account how fragile they are. In the same way God takes all our individual circumstances and weaknesses into account. He deals with each of us sensitively. We should follow his example when we deal with others. Different people require different treatment. Be sensitive to the needs of those around you and the special treatment they may need.⁹⁰

23-29 Isaiah then inserted a word of comfort into this message of woe and judgment. The judgment would last for only a short while as it was designed to purge the people. A farmer must crush his crops to get the desired results. For example, caraway and cummin, aromatic herbs, are beaten out with a rod or stick, not threshed, because their seeds are so small. Grain is ground by millstone, after the wheat stalks are threshed. Various crops must be treated differently so no one step (plowing, harrowing, planting, or threshing) is done continuously.

Similarly God would bring about judgment but not forever. He is the Master "Farmer," who knows how to handle each "crop." Therefore the Southern Kingdom should submit to Him because He is wonderful in counsel (cf. 9:6) and magnificent in wisdom (cf. 11:2).⁹¹

23 - 29: These verses are used by Isaiah to indicate that the plan of God is underway. It has already been predetermined how it will turn out and Israel will play a part in the final outcome. Each kind of work takes time and some events will require special care and some future events will require groundwork to be laid first. Thus there is a systematic plan that will be fulfilled in God's own time. Be patient and wait for it.⁹²

⁸⁸ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁸⁹ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁹⁰ Life Application Study Bible.

⁹¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁹² <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa28-29.htm>

24Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground?

[Cf. "field" of Mt 13?]

[plowman plow all day] God used the illustration of a farmer who does many things to secure a harvest, to point out that He had dealt with Judah in many ways hoping to bring them to righteousness -- and without success. He was now going to do this "strange work" which would be just as certain as a harvest when the farmer obeys the law of nature (Isa. 28:23-29).⁹³

Does the plowman keep plowing all day to sow? The end of Isaiah 28 is a poem relating the work of God to the work of a farmer. A farmer doesn't only plow; he knows when to stop plowing and when to level the ground, when to plant, and what to plant where. He uses different tools at different times, and works them all together to produce crops. In the same way, God knows what instruments to use in our life, and what time to use them. We don't have to doubt or despair at what God is doing in our lives, because He is an expert farmer, working on us with all His wisdom.

"He used the proper instrument and procedure at the proper time to accomplish His purposes among His stubborn people." (Wolf)⁹⁴

25When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rie in their place?

The remainder of this chapter is almost the parable of the wheat and the tares. He talks about the different kinds of grain, the hard grains and the soft grains, and the different methods of threshing it.

[made plain the face thereof] Meaning he has tilled the ground and broken up the clods, as in Isa. 28:24.

[fitches] Fitch was a vegetable like the common pea. The Hebrew word (used only in Isa. 28:25,27) denotes fennel or dill seed that was mixed with bread for flavor. Not the same word found in Ezek. 4:9.⁹⁵

[cummin] Cummin, a condiment used for seasoning in sauces and soups (Isa. 28:25,27; Mt. 23:23).

[wheat and the appointed barley and the rye in their place] Wheat, barley and rye were common grains in Palestine.

The grains are "fitches" (sometimes translated fennel or dill), "cummin, wheat, barley, and rie."⁹⁶

⁹³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁹⁴ <http://www.study-light.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-28.html>

⁹⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁹⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

A wise farmer follows a plan in his plowing and planting so each type of seed will grow best. Some seed requires planting under the ground and other seed on top. God teaches the farmer this discrimination just as God Himself practices discrimination in dealing with people. Earlier in this chapter Isaiah offered a promise of blessing (vv. 5-6), but later he promised blasting (vv. 14-22). God would use both instruments to deal with His people. Using both was not inconsistent.⁹⁷

²⁶For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him.

a [instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him] God has instructed man in most activities of life. To what extent He taught man agriculture is not known, but it is here stated as a fact (cp. Gen. 6:14-16; Ex. 31:2-6).⁹⁸

²⁷For the fitches are not threshed with a 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.

Dill (“fitches”): *nigella sativa* (aromatic seeds).

Cummin: *cuminum stinum*; ~fennel, condiment seeds.

Spelt, rye: *cussemeth*: poor man’s bread wheat.

Note Lev 19:19: do not mingle seed...

Affection matched to needs; not to crush.⁹⁹

Threshing methods:

1. Fitch was beaten with a staff.
2. Cummin seeds were beaten out with a rod. Even wheat was threshed this way when there was a small amount (Ruth 1:17) and when it was necessary to hide it from the enemy (Judg. 6:11).
3. Wheat, barley, and rye were trampled by oxen (Dt. 25:4); by riding a sled over the sheaves, then using a fork to throw the straw up so the grain would fall to the ground; or by rolling over the sheaves with a cart that had three or four heavy rollers of wood, stone, or iron (Isa. 28:28; 21:15; 2Sam. 24:22; 1Chr. 21:23; Prov. 20:26).¹⁰⁰

²⁸Bread *corn* is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break *it with* the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it *with* his horsemen.

A farmer has to be careful about the way he harvests soft grains. Each grain is different. Now he says that this is the way God judges. Judgment is spoken of as the harvest. The individual or nation actually determines the character of the judgment which is to fall upon them. In other words, if you are hard and resist God, you are a hard grain. You are a hard nut to crack,

⁹⁷ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁹⁸ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁹⁹ Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, khouse.org

¹⁰⁰ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

and the judgment is going to be severe for you. A man came to me and told me that he had lost his wife and two children before he came to himself. He said, "God had to knock me down three times because I was such a hardened sinner." God will thresh you; and, if you are hard, the judgment will be hard.

The Lord Jesus put it like this in Matthew 13:30, "Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." In Matthew 13:41 the Lord goes on to say, "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity." How tremendous this is! We ourselves determine our own judgment. If we only will listen to Him, He will put us over where the wheat is and spare us the severity of His judgment.¹⁰¹

²⁹This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, *which* is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.

Who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in guidance: The phrase wonderful in counsel is the same words used to describe the Messiah in Isaiah 9:6 (Wonderful Counselor). It reminds us of the perfect timing and wisdom of God's work in our lives.

¹⁰¹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.