

WHOSE WISDOM DO YOU FOLLOW?

Isaiah Chapter 29

WOE TO JERUSALEM

We often hear phrases like, “*You’ve got a brain, use it,*” “*God helps those who help themselves,*” “*Use your head,*” “*Think!*” all with the emphasis on self-help, self-reliance, and being independent. These phrases are even sometimes used to debunk turning to God in situations. They stress making your own plans and leaning on your own wisdom and ideas.

Today’s section in Isaiah deals with this idea of following man’s wisdom and making your own plans. It also touches on the questions: Can problems and trials ever lead to blessings? Can good things ever come out of punishment or judgment? As we look at chapters 29 and 30 of Isaiah, we will find some answers to these questions.

We’ve seen a lot of woes (oracles; burdens), which refer to warnings, in the book of Isaiah thus far. In fact you might be getting a little bit tired of them. But we’ve also gotten a lot of glimpses of the mercy and graciousness of God too. That is just an illustration of the truth of Romans 5:20:

Romans 5:20b, NAS:

... where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.

We also believe that reinforcing this theme and pattern over and over again in our minds will strengthen our faith and our understanding that it is futile to rely on the power of human beings over the power of God, and that God will provide without fail for those who trust and obey Him. In addition we also hear from Isaiah over and over again about the wonderful eternity that awaits those who receive Jesus Christ as their Savior. So let’s prepare ourselves anew this morning to explore the reality of God’s judgment on the disobedient and His forgiveness and blessing for those who receive Christ by faith and grace. And my God’s Word and the reality of what is to come energize us to hare the message with those who have never heard it.

We’ll also see in these next two chapters another aspect that we’ve seen frequently thus far. Isaiah can jump back and forth between events that happened in his day, around 700 B.C., and the *end times* which are yet to come in our future. He can be talking about the Assyrian attacks on Israel and Judah in one verse and then in the next be referring to events in the end times. So try to be alert for these shifts back and forth and if you want us to clarify something, please stop us and we’ll try our best to do so.

In this second of five "woes" in chapters 28-33, Isaiah continues with the theme of the last part of the first woe in Isaiah 28:14-29. Judgment was coming on Jerusalem and on Judah, and the purpose of this punishment was to get the nation to return to God. Unlike the judgment that would sweep away the Northern Kingdom of Israel, this judgment on Jerusalem in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, though very severe, would not result in the destruction of that city. God was not ready to let that happen. Jerusalem would not fall into the hands of the Assyrians.

THE JUDGMENT OF JERUSALEM (ISAIAH 29:1-4):

1 Woe, O Ariel, Ariel the city where David once camped! Add year to year, observe your feasts on schedule.

Ariel undoubtedly refers to Jerusalem as can be concluded by the parallel phrase *the city where David settled.*¹ Other interpreters say **Ariel** means "lion of God," in which case the city is seen as a strong, lion-like city. It is also noted here that the Jews have rigorously disciplined themselves to give their offerings and observe their rituals on time every year.

2 I will bring distress to Ariel, And she will be a city of lamenting and mourning; And she will be like an Ariel to me.

Ariel may also be translated *altar hearth.*² The city would be besieged and fighting and bloodshed would turn it into a virtual *altar hearth*. In other words there will be so much bloodshed of Israelis during this battle that the city will look like a sacrificial altar to God. Jerusalem would become a place of slaughter.

3 I will camp against you encircling you, And I will set siegeworks against you, And I will raise up battle towers against you.

4 Then you will be brought low; From the earth you will speak, And from the dust where you are prostrate Your words will come. Your voice will also be like that of a spirit from the ground, And your speech will whisper from the dust.

To be brought low means that God was going to humble the proud city that thought itself invincible. Instead of roaring and frightening the enemy, the city that was like a lion would only whisper from the dust in verse 4. Instead of their sacrifices being accepted by God in verse 1, the entire city would become a sacrificial altar; and God would make His people the sacrifice.³

DELIVERANCE FOR JERUSALEM (ISAIAH 29:5-8):

¹ 2 Samuel. 5:7, 9, 13.

² Isaiah 29:2; Ezekiel 43:15-16.

³ Wiersbe, W. W. 1996, c1992. Be comforted. An Old Testament study. Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill.

Isaiah 29:5, NAS

But the multitude of your enemies shall become like fine dust, and the multitude of the ruthless ones like the chaff which blows away; and it shall happen instantly, suddenly.

Here again we see the grace of God. “*The multitude of your enemies will become like fine dust.*” Jerusalem’s protection described in verses 5-8 refers to her deliverance from Assyria, which is recorded later in chapter 37. Even though God was disciplining His children, He would be even harder on the Assyrians who would be attacking Jerusalem. It reminds us of David who, when given the opportunity to select his own punishment, said he would prefer to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of man.

2 Samuel 24:14, NAS

Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let us now fall into the hand of the LORD for His mercies are great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man."

As the people of Jerusalem watched the advance of the Assyrian army toward them, it seemed impossible to avoid the destruction of the city. However, as soon as God’s punishment of Jerusalem was accomplished, Isaiah says that then the Assyrians themselves will suddenly come under God’s judgment. When the people of Jerusalem saw the Assyrian soldiers destroyed they were undoubtedly extremely joyful. God’s sovereign intervention had saved Jerusalem. But they soon forgot about it and life returned to normal in the city. Rather than turning back to God, the nation got more deeply involved in sin.⁴ Though verse 5 says the Assyrian soldiers became “*like . . . dust and chaff*” when they were slaughtered, verses 6-8 seem to be talking about the end times, when Jesus returns to the earth. Verse 6 refers to how Israel’s enemies will be treated during that time:

6 From the Lord of hosts you will be punished with thunder and earthquake and loud noise, With whirlwind and tempest and the flame of a consuming fire.

This verse refers to the judgments that accompany the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments during the Tribulation, that 7-year period that precedes the second coming of Christ during which there will be great destruction and loss of life.

*7 And the multitude of all the nations who wage war against Ariel (Jerusalem),⁴ Even all who wage war against her and her stronghold, and who distress her, Will be like a dream, a vision of the night.
8 It will be as when a hungry man dreams— And behold, he is eating; But when he awakens, his hunger is not satisfied, Or as when a thirsty man dreams— And behold, he is drinking, But when he awakens, behold, he is*

⁴ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological seminary. c1983-1985. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An exposition of the Scriptures*. Victor Books: Wheaton, IL.

⁴ Parentheses added.

faint And his thirst is not quenched. Thus the multitude of all the nations will be Who wage war against Mount Zion.

At the end of the Tribulation when nations will attack Jerusalem (Zechariah. 14:1-3), the LORD Almighty will come and destroy each attacking nation. Jerusalem's attackers will frustrate themselves as a dreamer who has the feeling that they eat or drink, but awaken to find themselves hungry and thirsty. The threat to Israel from those nations will then vanish like a dream and never return.

HOW JERUSALEM UNDERSTOOD GOD'S REVELATION (ISAIAH 29:9-24):

In this section a contrast is drawn between the people's present spiritual insensitivity and their future spiritual understanding.

*9 Be delayed and wait, Blind yourselves and be blind; They become drunk, but not with wine, They stagger, but not with strong drink.
10 For the Lord has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep, He has shut your eyes, the prophets; And He has covered your heads, the seers.*

The blindness and drunkenness referred to Jerusalem's inability to understand Isaiah's message about trusting God instead of Egypt. Just as the drunkard could avoid his drunken behavior by not drinking, so also could these people who had blinded themselves with the foolishness of sin and unbelief have avoided their condition as well. Despite all the ways God revealed His will to the people through His Word and the teaching of the prophets, they turned away to their own devices, living according to the desires of their own hearts. They had become drunk with the traditions and wisdom of mankind which made void the commands of God, and thus they failed to understand or act upon the messages sent to them by God through His prophets. They were not even capable at this point of understanding the truth of God's Word. They had a veil over their hearts according to 2 Corinthians 3.

Isaiah is also making the point about the blindness of practicing religion by ritual alone. The fact that **the prophets** and **the seers** of that day did not see and understand clearly was part of God's judgment for their disobedience. Even the prophets, except for Isaiah, had lost contact with God and no longer received messages from Him.⁶

*11 The entire vision will be to you like the words of a sealed book, which when they give it to the one who is literate, saying, "Please read this," he will say, "I cannot, for it is sealed."
12 Then the book will be given to the one who is illiterate, saying, "Please read this." And he will say, "I cannot read."*

No one, whether they could read or not, could understand this truth. They were not able to understand the warnings of the true and faithful prophets of God. Such teachings were

⁶ Pfeiffer, C. F. 1962. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament*. Moody Press: Chicago.

irrelevant to the “*modern men*” of the eighth century B.C., who felt that they had advanced far beyond their ancestors and no longer needed to be obedient to the authority of God’s Word.

Therefore, having no absolute authority outside themselves and their reason, they could not make heads nor tails of God’s message to them through Scripture. How interesting these passages should be to the people of the twenty-first century because isn’t that exactly the way the majority of the people in the world today view God’s Word in the Bible? They can’t understand it and it doesn’t make sense to them.

*13 Then the Lord said, “Because this people draw near with their words
And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from
Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote,
14 Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people,
wondrously marvelous; And the wisdom of their wise men will perish, And
the discernment of their discerning men will be concealed.”*

God is so interested in our hearts. He wants the love and obedience from deep within our hearts, not merely our words or adherence to rituals. **Simply performing religious rituals does not bring one close to God or please God.** Jesus used verse 13 to describe the behavior of the Jews, especially the Pharisees, of His day as well.⁷ Such ritual is not a substitute for the surrender of one’s heart. Their actions did not demonstrate any true love for God. What knowledge of spiritual truth that they did have would be taken away from them until they were left with only the feeling of one who is totally unconcerned about God.

15 Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the Lord, And whose deeds are done in a dark place, And they say, “Who sees us?” or “Who knows us?”

The Jews were carrying on secret negotiations with countries that might provide them military assistance, rather than relying on God to protect them. How often we tend to make all our plans without consulting God! A very dangerous practice, or as Isaiah is about to say, how upside down that approach is!

16 You turn things around! Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, That what is made would say to its maker, “He did not make me”; Or what is formed say to him who formed it, “He has no understanding”?

They were attempting to turn things around and put man at the top of the scale and God at the bottom. They were actually behaving as if the thing created matters more than the

⁷ Matthew 15:7-9; Mark 7:6, 7.

Creator. But God will not be influenced by man's interpretation of man's own importance, nor tolerate man's behaving as if he existed for his own sake independent of the will of God.

17 Is it not yet just a little while Before Lebanon will be turned into a fertile field, And the fertile field will be considered as a forest?

18 On that day the deaf will hear words of a book, And out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see.

19 The afflicted also will increase their gladness in the Lord, And the needy of mankind will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

20 For the ruthless will come to an end and the scorner will be finished, Indeed all who are intent on doing evil will be cut off;

21 Who cause a person to be indicted by a word, And ensnare him who adjudicates at the gate, And defraud the one in the right with meaningless arguments.

22 Therefore thus says the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: "Jacob shall not now be ashamed, nor shall his face now turn pale;

23 But when he sees his children, the work of My hands, in his midst, They will sanctify My name; Indeed, they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob And will stand in awe of the God of Israel.

24 "Those who err in mind will know the truth, And those who criticize will accept instruction.

Isaiah asked the people to look ahead and consider what God had planned for them. In their political strategy, they had turned things upside down; but God would one day turn everything around by establishing His glorious kingdom on earth. **Lebanon**, which was then occupied by Assyrian troops, will eventually be productive (fertile) again. When the Millennium (the 1000 year reign of Christ on the earth) comes the devastated land will become a paradise, the disabled will be healed, and the needy will rejoice in the Lord because of what He will do for them. Conversely the ruthless who deprived the innocent of justice will be punished. There will be no more injustice in the courts. The attitude of the people of Jerusalem and Judah will completely change. They will no longer be ashamed, according to verse 22, or, as we saw in verse 4, be brought low by foreign domination and their own sin (Isaiah 1:29). As their children grow up in safety they will realize that God has protected them and they will thus give thanks and worship Him.

The Lord's delivering them from Sennacherib in 701 B.C. was a foretaste of the ultimate deliverance they will experience in the end times. People who are disobedient and who complain will change and **will accept instruction**. In light of this glorious future, why would Judah turn to nations like Egypt for help? God is on their side, and they can trust Him. It's tragic when a nation or any group of people forgets its great spiritual heritage and turns from trusting the Lord to trusting the plans and promises of mere humans.

At the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787, Benjamin Franklin said:

“I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that God governs in the affairs of men. I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of heaven and its blessings on our deliberations be held in this Assembly every morning....”

Isaiah sought that attitude in Jerusalem; but instead, he found only scoffing and unbelief.⁵

Isaiah Chapter 30

This oracle and the next one (chapter 31) center on the foolishness of attempting to make an alliance with Egypt to ward off the Assyrian threat. At this time Egypt was declining as a world power and could be of no real assistance to Israel and Judah in their fight against the strong Assyrian Empire. But a strong faction in Judah, rather than turning to God for protection, wanted to seek aid from Egypt.⁶ Half of this chapter pronounces a woe and a prophecy to those who ignore God. The other half of this chapter talks of God’s graciousness and His desire to bless His people, along with His promise to deliver them from Assyria.

The Woe Pronounced (Isaiah 30:1-5):

1 “Woe to the rebellious children,” declares the Lord, “Who execute a plan, but not Mine, And make an alliance, but not of My Spirit, In order to add sin to sin;

2 Who proceed down to Egypt Without consulting Me, To take refuge in the safety of Pharaoh And to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!

This woe (see Isaiah 3:9) was pronounced against those in Judah who wanted to form an alliance with Egypt. The prophet spoke to those people as if they were obstinate children. Like children, they did not have the proper perspective to know what was best for them. They had forgotten King David’s words, **Psalm 20:7, NIV:**

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.

Floundering in their desire to save themselves and their nation, they were forming **plans** but they weren’t God’s plans. Actually their plans were sinful because they weren’t what

⁵ Wiersbe, W. W. 1996, c1992. Be comforted. An Old Testament study. Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill.

⁶ Wiersbe, W. W. 1996, c1992. *Be Comforted. An Old Testament Study.* Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill.

God wanted them to do.⁷ Isaiah condemned this reliance on Egypt because God had forbidden such alliances in Deuteronomy 17:16.

3 “Therefore the safety of Pharaoh will be your shame And the shelter in the shadow of Egypt, your humiliation.

Anyone with two brain cells would have known that the Egyptians couldn't be of any help to Israel. The Assyrians had recently defeated the army of Egypt not more than 100 miles from the Egyptian border.

*4 “For their princes are at Zoan And their ambassadors arrive at Hanes.
5 “Everyone will be ashamed because of a people who cannot profit them,
Who are not for help or profit, but for shame and also for reproach.”*

An alliance with Egypt, made without consulting the Lord, would put Judah to shame as Isaiah mentions in verses 3 and 5. The Jews even sent a delegation to two Egyptian cities, **Zoan** and **Hanes**, to talk about an alliance, but the talks were doomed to fail. The Egyptian officials were incapable of helping as we were told back in Isaiah 19:11.

The Lord had already said many times through Isaiah that He would use Assyria to wipe out the Northern Kingdom and to punish the Southern Kingdom. So to look to a crumbling empire like Egypt for help was useless and could only result in disgrace.⁸ Can we today learn the lesson? Any time we look for deliverance from something other than God, we are doomed to problems and pitfalls.

The oracle about the Negev (Isaiah 30:6-17)

*6 The oracle concerning the beasts of the Negev. Through a land of distress and anguish, From where come lioness and lion, viper and flying serpent,⁹ They carry their riches on the backs of young donkeys And their treasures on camels' humps, To a people who cannot profit them;
7 Even Egypt, whose help is vain and empty. Therefore, I have called her “Rahab who has been exterminated.”*

Isaiah then uttered an oracle (burden) concerning the caravan that was then traveling from Jerusalem to Egypt with treasures to buy protection against Assyria. He saw the burdened animals making their way through the difficult and dangerous terrain of the Negev (the south), and he cried, “*It is all to no profit! It is useless! The Egyptians will help in vain!*” In verse 7, which should be read in a recent translation, Isaiah gives a nickname to Egypt: “*Rahab-hem-shebeth*,” which means “*Rahab the do-nothing*.”

⁷ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c 1985. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: an Exposition of the Scriptures*. Victor Books: Wheaton, IL.

⁸ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* . Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

⁹ Egypt is depicted here as a land of ravenous beasts such as are found in African jungles.

(Rahab is one of the names for Egypt in the Old Testament.)¹⁰

8 Now go, write it on a tablet before them And inscribe it on a scroll, That it may serve in the time to come As a witness forever.

9 For this is a rebellious people, false sons, Sons who refuse to listen To the instruction of the Lord;

10 Who say to the seers, "You must not see visions"; And to the prophets, "You must not prophesy to us what is right, Speak to us pleasant words, Prophecy illusions.

11 "Get out of the way, turn aside from the path, Let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel."

It was bad enough that Judah rebelled against God by trusting Egypt instead of trusting Jehovah, and depending on money instead of on God's power, but they even went so far as to completely reject the Word of God. God told Isaiah to make a placard that said, "*This is a rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the Law of the Lord.*" He carried this sign as he walked around Jerusalem, and no doubt most of the people laughed at him.

The leaders did not want to hear God's truth; they wanted "*pleasant words*" from the false prophets (teachers), sermons that would not disturb their comfortable way of life. Is the situation much different today?¹¹

Isaiah 30:12-14, NAS

12 Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, "Since you have rejected this word, and have put your trust in oppression and guile, and have relied on them,

13 Therefore this iniquity will be to you like a breach about to fall, a bulge in a high wall, whose collapse comes suddenly in an instant.

14 "And whose collapse is like the smashing of a potter's jar; so ruthlessly shattered that a sherd¹² will not be found among its pieces to take fire from a hearth, or to scoop water from a cistern."

Immediately after they said they did not want to be confronted by the Holy One of Israel, ironically Isaiah did confront them with more words from **the Holy One of Israel**. Rejecting Isaiah's message and relying on fraud and plans to avoid God's counsel, and relying on deceit, they would undergo judgment.¹³ That judgment would come suddenly, like a cracked wall that would collapse on them. And it would be so severe that it would

¹⁰ Wiersbe, W. W. 1996, c1992. Be comforted. An Old Testament study. Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill.

¹¹ See Jeremiah. 6:14; 8:11; and 1 Kings 22:1-28.

¹² Any of a class of rare achondritic geologically young meteorites that are apparently composed of solidified lava from celestial bodies other than earth.

¹³ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. *The Bible knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Victor Books: Wheaton, IL.

be like a pot so **shattered** that the **pieces** cannot be used for anything.¹⁴

15 For thus the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has said, “In repentance and rest you will be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength.” But you were not willing,

16 And you said, “No, for we will flee on horses,” Therefore you shall flee! “And we will ride on swift horses,” Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift.

17 One thousand will flee at the threat of one man; You will flee at the threat of five, Until you are left as a flag on a mountain top And as a signal on a hill.

Though the Lord had called for **repentance** and **trust** so that the Judahites might have salvation and strength, they did not want any of it. Instead they depended on military might. But if for any reason they would have to make a run for it they would depend on the fast horses they would get from Egypt. God said because of that attitude, they would be forced to **flee**, being easily alarmed by the enemy. They would stand alone **like a banner on a hill** as a warning to others not to count on military strength.¹⁵ During Assyria’s invasion of Judah, the Jews were not able to flee on their horses imported from Egypt (Deuteronomy 17:16), and one enemy soldier was able to send a thousand Jews running for their lives! What humiliation! (See Deuteronomy 32:30.)¹⁶

More of The Lord’s Graciousness to His people (Isaiah 30:18-33):

18 Therefore the Lord longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.

Isaiah then turns from the subject of *rebellion* to the subject of *restoration*. God’s grace is His favor toward those who do not deserve it, and it is only because of His grace that we have any blessings at all. Isaiah describes that future day when the remnant of people in Israel who accept Christ as Savior will be restored to their land to enjoy the blessings of the kingdom along with all the people of the world who share that faith as well.

19 O people in Zion, inhabitant in Jerusalem, you will weep no longer. He (God)¹⁷ will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you.

20 Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures . Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

¹⁶ Wiersbe, W. W. 1996, c1992. Be comforted. An Old Testament study. Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill.

¹⁷ Parentheses Added.

will behold your Teacher.

21 Your ears will hear a word behind you, “This is the way, walk in it,” whenever you turn to the right or to the left.

22 And you will defile your graven images overlaid with silver, and your molten images plated with gold. You will scatter them as an impure thing, and say to them, “Be gone!”

Though the people had turned from the Lord, **He longed to be gracious and compassionate to them.** In the Millennium Israel will again be faithful to the Lord. And when she calls on Him and not on some other nation for help, **He will answer.** God will always answer anyone who calls upon Him (Matthew 7:7-12). Though Israel experienced difficulties, eventually God will bless her. At that time the Israelites will readily listen to the Word of God through the writings of the prophets and priests in contrast with rejecting them as they did in verse 10. The people will be sensitive to God’s Word, as if He were saying, “This is the way, walk in it.” They will be conscious of God’s leading at all times, as He wants us all to be. When they obey His instructions they will then get rid of their **idols,**² those things that are defiled and morally dirty.

23 Then He will give you rain for the seed which you will sow in the ground, and bread from the yield of the ground, and it will be rich and plenteous; on that day your livestock will graze in a roomy pasture.

24 Also the oxen and the donkeys which work the ground will eat salted fodder, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork.

25 On every lofty mountain and on every high hill there will be streams running with water on the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.

26 The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days, on the day the Lord binds up the fracture of His people and heals the bruise He has inflicted.

Isaiah then described what times will be like when the people live according to God’s Word and are obedient to Him. In the Millennium, the thousand year reign of Christ on earth, God will send rain, and crops will be **plentiful** (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). Even the animals will have plenty to eat. The day of the great slaughter may refer to the Battle of Armageddon,¹⁸ in which the army of Christ will destroy all the forces of evil in the world. After Israel’s and God’s enemies are defeated, Israel will enjoy great peace and an abundance in the land.

Also light will be increased, for the moon will be like the sun and the sun will be seven times brighter than normal. Perhaps this is figurative language but it’s difficult to know for sure. At that time the Lord will heal His people of the wounds (Isaiah 1:5) He inflicted, that is, He will restore them to the place of blessing.¹⁹

² Isaiah 31:7; Hosea 14:3; Micah 5:13-14.

¹⁸ Revelation 16:16; 19:17-21.

¹⁹ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures . Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

27 Behold, the name of the Lord comes from a remote place; **Burning is His** anger and dense is His smoke; His lips are filled with indignation And His tongue is like a consuming fire;

28 His breath is like an overflowing torrent, Which reaches to the neck, To shake the nations back and forth in a sieve, And to put in the jaws of the peoples the bridle which leads to ruin.

29 You will have songs as in the night when you keep the festival, And gladness of heart as when one marches to the sound of the flute, To go to the mountain of the Lord, to the Rock of Israel.

30 And the Lord will cause His voice of authority to be heard, And the descending of His arm to be seen in fierce anger, And in the flame of a consuming fire In cloudburst, downpour and hailstones.

31 For at the voice of the Lord Assyria will be terrified, When He strikes with the rod.

32 And every blow of the rod of punishment, Which the Lord will lay on him, Will be with the music of tambourines and lyres; And in battles, brandishing weapons, He will fight them.

33 For Topheth has long been ready, Indeed, it has been prepared for the king. He has made it deep and large, A pyre of fire with plenty of wood; **The breath of the Lord, like a torrent of brimstone, sets it afire.**

Isaiah's final theme in this "woe" is retribution, the announcement that God will defeat the Assyrians. In the year 701 A.D. God used Assyria to discipline Judah, but He would not permit the Assyrians to take the city of David. Isaiah used several images to describe God's judgment of Assyria: a storm of fire and hail, a flood, the sifting of grain (see Amos 9:9), and the harnessing of a horse so that the enemy is led off like a farm animal.

Just as Sheol was prepared for the king of Babylon (Isaiah 14:9ff), so Topheth was prepared for the king of Assyria. Topheth was a site outside Jerusalem where the worshipers of Molech sacrificed their children.²⁰ It was defiled by Josiah (2 Kings 23:10), turned into a garbage dump, and named "Gehenna," meaning "valley of the son of Hinnom." "Gehenna" is the New Testament word for "Hell." The funeral pyre for the great king of Assyria would be a garbage dump. How humiliating.

The Jews would rejoice greatly at the defeat of Assyria, similar to their rejoicing at Passover to commemorate the defeat of Egypt. When the Jews celebrate Passover, they still have "a song in the night" (Matthew 26:30); and the "tambourines and harps" remind us of the songs of Miriam and the Jewish women at the Red Sea (Exodus 15:20–21).²¹

Again we've seen that although God punishes and chastens those who disobey Him, He is rich in mercy and grace to all those who love Him, accept Christ as their Savior, and

²⁰ 2 Kings 16:3; 21:6; Jer. 7:31–32; 19:6, 11–14.

²¹ Wiersbe, W. W. 1996, c1992. Be comforted. An Old Testament study. Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill.

live in accordance with His will. God will fulfill His promises to Israel as He originally promised, but those promises will only be fulfilled to those who accept Christ as their Savior. These promises are not intended for those who continue to reject Christ. And of course the promises apply as well to those who are not Jews and also accept Christ as their Savior. There is a great time coming for all believers during the thousand year millennial kingdom and what follows for eternity in Heaven. Let's all make certain that we'll be there, and share the message of salvation with as many people as we can so that they might also be there as well.