

Thursday Evening Bible Study
Series: The Book of Isaiah

Teaching Summary for Week 29

Chapters 28-35 of Isaiah: The six “woe” passages and their message

Judah’s rebellion against the Lord in favor of trusting foreign nations
cannot cancel the **promises of God** for the remnant of Israel.

Chapters 28 & 29

Chapter 28: 1-13 address **Ephraim (the Northern Kingdom)**. Isaiah decries the evil rulers and predicts the complete destruction that is about to come. But note verses 5 and 6.: “in that day” , which gives hope for their distant future.

Chapter 28:14 through 29:24 teach the principles behind the Lord’s dealings with **Judah** and **Jerusalem**. The evil decisions of their rulers result in a destruction that is nearly complete. There is a veiled reference to their pact with Egypt. Yet the last section of chapter 29, verses 17-24, looks forward to the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom.

Chapter 28

Verses 1-13 pronounce woe on **Ephraim** (Israel) and her capital city, **Samaria**.

The Lord is about to unleash His agent Assyria to destroy the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Verses 14-29 Having finished with the drunken leaders in Samaria, it's now time for Isaiah to warn the **rulers in Jerusalem**, the capital of Judah.

Verses 14-15: These leaders scoff at Isaiah. In fact, they boast that the Lord's hand is too small to destroy them.

However, the same storm that is about to destroy Ephraim will not spare Judah either. Verse 17 b.

Verses 16-19: Once again, Isaiah pauses in the middle of his diatribe to speak on behalf of the Lord. The LORD God is laying in Zion a tested and costly cornerstone, which represents the LORD's salvation through the Messiah's rule in Zion. He is the only true sanctuary.

Verses 19c-22: We get the prophet's reflection on the Lord's words and works in verses 14-19b.

Their security arrangements with Egypt will be inadequate to protect them from the Assyrian onslaught.

There will be a complete destruction of the lands of Israel and Judah. Only the remnant of Jerusalem will be spared.

We pick things up tonight at **Isaiah 28:23. Let's read verses 23-29.**

Verses 23-29 are a parable about farmers, who plow, plant, and thresh in the proper seasons according to the methods that God has established for them.

Each crop receives its own prepared soil. The threshing methods differ for each kind of crop.

This is a metaphor for the Lord's dealings with Israel, Judah, and the remnant in Jerusalem. These are His three kinds of crop. He plowed and planted, and patiently waited for the fruit and the wheat. But the land has produced mostly weeds and very little wheat or fruit.



The time has come for Him to thresh (judge and discipline) His people. He will separate the wheat from the chaff. But He will not wipe them out completely. The remnant of wheat will be preserved.

The Lord will do precisely what is required to produce the crop He desires.

Judgment is not final. After that comes the fruitful harvest of the Lord's blessings for His people.

Chapter 29

Chapter 29 continues the sequence of judgment followed by hope. The chapter consists of two such sequences:

Present judgment		Future blessing
Verses 1-4		Verses 5-8
Verses 9-16		Verses 17-24

The chapter begins with the second woe, this time directed not at Ephraim but at **Jerusalem, the capital city of Judah**. Let's read **Isa 29:1-8**.

Verses 1-4 pronounce the **judgment** on Jerusalem.

Ariel is another name for Jerusalem, the city of David. Ariel in Hebrew has two meanings: "the lion of God" and "altar-hearth", the place of burning fire. Isaiah uses it in the second sense in verse 2.

The fire on the altar in the temple was always burning. Let's read **Lev 6:12-13**. The fire consumed the burnt offering and purified the sinner.

In the book of Isaiah, fire represents both destruction and salvation.

In **Isa 30:27-33**, fire depicts the Lord's judgment on, and destruction of, Assyria.

In **Isa 4:4-5**, fire represents both judgment and redemption for Jerusalem.

Back in Isa 29:2-3, notice the word “I”. The LORD is doing His strange work. The hand of the Lord directs the activities of Sennacherib’s army during the siege of Jerusalem in 701 BC.

Verses 5-8: the prophet abruptly switches to the **vindication and deliverance** of Jerusalem (Ariel).

In *verses 5-6*, the Lord will shortly destroy the besieging armies in single night. (see **Isa 37:36**).

In *verses 7-8*, the destruction of the armies of Assyria and her allies is but a foretaste of the battle of Armageddon in the day of the Lord. See **Zech 12:6-9**.

Verses 9-14: describes the self-imposed **famine for the word of God** in Judah.

After pronouncing woe on Assyria, Isaiah returns to Judah and her blindness.

They chose to blind themselves to the Lord’s word. See the falsehood and deception in **Isa 28:15** .

So the now the Lord will do the blinding. He will shut the eyes of the prophets, and put a hood over the seers. He will seal up His word to all of them, whether they can read or not.

See **Amos 5:11-12** for more on the famine of the word of God.

The “entire vision” in verse 11 refers to Isaiah’s prophecy about what the LORD is about to do both to Judah and to Assyria.

The sealed book is the same thing as the tablet in chapter 8 and chapter 30. See **Isa 30:8-11**.

He will deal with them marvelously. See the Lord’s unusual task and extraordinary work in **Isa 28:21**. Later on, Habakkuk will describe the invasion of the Babylonian army in similar fashion . See **Hab 1:5-6**.

Jesus quotes verse 13 when He condemns the leaders of Jerusalem in His day: the Pharisees and scribes. See **Matt 15:1-9**.

In verse 14, the wise men are the leaders of the pro-Egypt faction who thought they were wiser than God and the Lord’s prophet.

Verses 15-16: The **third woe**.

They thought that the Lord was blind to their schemes and deceptions. But they were the ones who were blind and self-deceived. See **Psalms 94:7-11**.

They had lost their senses. Isaiah uses the image of **the potter and the clay** to great effect, here and elsewhere in His prophecies. See **Isa 45:9; 64:8**. Paul also uses this image to describe the patience, mercy, and sovereignty of the Lord. **Rom 9:19-21**.

Verses 17-24: the **blessings in the Messianic Kingdom**.

Jerusalem is under siege by the armies of Sennacherib. Yet in the midst of this terrifying judgment, Isaiah gives hope to the Jews. The Lord will fulfill His promises to the descendants of Abraham and Jacob.

Judgment does not get the final word; blessing does. **Hos 6:1-3**

The blessings in verses 17-24 operate on two levels: the natural realm and the spiritual realm.

Verse 17 describes how nature will be transformed when the Messiah comes. On the natural level, this refers to the great flowering and productivity of the promised land. On the spiritual level, this refers to the waters of salvation, and the outpouring of the Spirit on their descendants. See **Isa 44:3-4**.

Verse 18 describes how the eyes of the physically blind and the ears of the physically deaf will be healed when Christ returns. **Isa 35:5**.

The Lord will also undo the curse of **Isaiah 6:10**, which had to do with spiritual blindness and deafness.

The words of the scroll refer to God's word, which was a closed book to them in **Isa 29:11-12**.

Verse 19: When the King returns to reign, He will vindicate the afflicted and save the children of the needy, and they will praise His name. He will also crush the oppressor. See **Psalms 72:4 and 74:21**.

Verses 20 & 21: Evildoers will be cut off, particularly those who corrupt justice.

Verse 22-24 give the results of these transformations. The nation of Israel will be redeemed. The Lord will fulfill all His promises to Abraham and Jacob. The end will be glorious and overflowing with blessing.

Shame and fear will be banished forever. See also **Isa 45:17**.

Isaiah expresses the fruit of Israel's redemption in the figure of many children. See also Isa **49:20-28**.

The people will stand in awe of the Lord, the Holy One of Jacob.

The nation that had once scorned the Lord's word will now be taught by the Lord. **Isa 54:13**.

We will see more about these blessings when we arrive at chapters 32 and 35.

Next week we will examine chapters 30 and 31 of Isaiah. Here is an overview:

Chapters 30 and 31 specify the names of Egypt and Assyria. Both chapters **begin with judgment and end with blessing**.

Chapter 30:1-17 describes the **punishment of Judah** for her alliance with **Egypt**.

Chapter 30:18-33 describe the **destruction of the Assyrian armies** and the glories of the **Kingdom**.

Chapter 31 repeats the pattern of chapter 30. Verses 1-3 predict the destruction of Egypt and the pro-Egypt faction in Judah. Verses 4-9 foretell the destruction of the Assyrian army and the deliverance of the remnant of Judah.