

As we read the prophecies of Isaiah we need to keep in mind the overarching themes of the book: the coming captivity, the restoration, the coming Messiah and His kingdom. At this point in the text, the northern tribes had already gone into captivity (2 Kings 17:22-23). The southern tribes, referred to as Judah, were facing the powerful Assyrians. The questions on the minds of God's people were how would the dynasty of David continue and bring the Messiah if Assyria defeated them, and would they ever see the kingdom of God established? Our question today is, "Are we doomed to repeat the destructive cycle of the history of nations?"

When we read the text with these questions in mind, we can see God addressing both the sinners and the saints in Jerusalem. The sinners are warned of eventual judgment. The saints are encouraged with the promise of temporary relief and the ultimate coming of the Messiah and His kingdom.

God has already spoken to the men of Judah who trusted in Egypt (Isaiah 31:1). He has warned them of their rebellious refusal to hear from Him (Isaiah 30:9). He told them their effort to buy Egypt's help would just be to their shame (Isaiah 30:5).

Today our passage addresses the women of Judah. While the men wringing their hands and trying to come up with a plan, the women went about complacent. God has already spoken to them quite sternly with a frightening warning in chapter three (Isaiah 3:24-26), but they did not listen. The loving faithfulness of God is warning them again and pleading with them to hear Him.

*<sup>9</sup> Rise up, you women who are at ease, hear my voice; you complacent daughters, give ear to my speech. <sup>10</sup> In little more than a year you will shudder, you complacent women; for the grape harvest fails, the fruit harvest will not come.* Isaiah 32:9-10 The first warning to the women came quite a while before this one. Complacency had set in. While the men could see it coming, the women were at ease and just enjoying their worldly pleasures. But those pleasures were about to cease. To help end their complacency, God graciously gave them a timeframe. The physical things they looked to would fail them. Hardship was coming.

While God was about to rescue undeserving Judah, I imagine the crops and fields had been destroyed by the army of Assyria. It was the practice of invading armies to ruin the crops and cut the trees of a land they wanted to conquer. It was a way to destroy any future hope of the people they were fighting.

*<sup>11</sup> Tremble, you women who are at ease, shudder, you complacent ones; strip, and make yourselves bare, and tie sackcloth around your waist. <sup>12</sup> Beat your breasts for the*

**Commented [PW1]: 2 Kings 17:22-23 (NIV)**

<sup>22</sup> The Israelites persisted in all the sins of Jeroboam and did not turn away from them  
<sup>23</sup> until the LORD removed them from his presence, as he had warned through all his servants the prophets. So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria, and they are still there.

**Commented [PW2]: Isaiah 31:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD!

**Commented [PW3]: Isaiah 30:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the LORD;

**Commented [PW4]: Isaiah 30:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> everyone comes to shame through a people that cannot profit them, that brings neither help nor profit, but shame and disgrace."

**Commented [PW5]: Isaiah 3:24-26 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> Instead of perfume there will be rotteness; and instead of a belt, a rope; and instead of well-set hair, baldness; and instead of a rich robe, a skirt of sackcloth; and branding instead of beauty.

<sup>25</sup> Your men shall fall by the sword and your mighty men in battle.

<sup>26</sup> And her gates shall lament and mourn; empty, she shall sit on the ground.

*pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine,* <sup>13</sup> *for the soil of my people growing up in thorns and briars, yes, for all the joyous houses in the exultant city.* Isaiah 32:11-13 While the physical destruction of crops is probably a future event, God is using it as an analogy of the bad soil of the people of Judah. They had a godly king, but they did not want to hear from God. They wanted the blessings of godly leadership, but they wanted to go their own way. They said, "Don't tell us anymore about the Holy One of Israel." **Isaiah 30:11** They even mocked Isaiah's prophecies. God was telling the women that this is what they should be lamenting, bad soil and the bad fruit of the people of Judah. It's one thing to lose physical blessings, but it is much more ominous to lose a nation's spiritual health. That ends in a greater disaster both physically and spiritually.

**How is the soil in the USA? How is the fruit of our nation?** A vile film of perversion is a big hit this Valentine season. I won't even mention the name. It is simply soft porn and the Bible belt is where it's making the most money. The abortion industry receives federal funds. We hear on a regular basis how some expression of our Christian faith has come under fire. The majority of our states allow homosexual marriages. If we dare to comment on the destructiveness of that lifestyle we are labeled as bigots. Are we complacent? Are we at ease like the women of Zion? Perhaps it is we who should beat our breasts and don sackcloth as we cry out to the Lord for the hearts of people to have a desire to hear the Word of the Lord.

God said the people were growing up in thorns and briars. Jesus used this picture in the parable of the sower. You can always find the expressions of Jesus have their source in the Old Testament. Don't think for a moment that it is not as every bit as valuable as the New Testament. Jesus explained to His disciples that the thorns and briars were the worries of this life, deceitfulness of wealth, and desires for other things that choked them and made them unfruitful (**Mark 4:18-19**; **Matthew 13:22**). Judah's prosperity was a blessing on King Hezekiah's obedience. But prosperity can tend toward complacency. This was the condition of Judah which was about to face a wakeup call from God. It was a message for the joyous houses in the exultant city.

<sup>14</sup> *For the palace is forsaken, the populous city deserted; the hill and the watchtower will become dens forever, a joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks;* <sup>15</sup> *until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.* Isaiah 32:14-15 God will deliver them, but eventually it will take captivity to turn their hearts back to God. The prophecy now looks forward and tells the people of Judah who are willing to hear, the saints, that even though God will rescue them in the immediate future, the day is coming when captivity must take place. But that doesn't mean the promises of God will fail. In fact, it is a fulfillment of the promises of God. God promised the Jews that if they ignored His Word and worshiped idols that they would end up in a foreign land (**Deuteronomy 28:36**). He warned through Isaiah earlier that God would speak to them through a people of a foreign language (**Isaiah 28:11**).

**Commented [PW6]: Isaiah 30:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel."

**Commented [PW7]: Mark 4:18-19 (NIV)**

<sup>18</sup> Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; <sup>19</sup> but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.

**Commented [PW8]: Matthew 13:22 (NIV)**

<sup>22</sup> The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.

**Commented [PW9]: Deuteronomy 28:36 (ESV)**

<sup>36</sup> "The LORD will bring you and your king whom you set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known. And there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone.

**Commented [PW10]: Isaiah 28:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue the LORD will speak to this people,

What is the solution to this cycle of blessing, complacency, rebellion, judgment, and repentance? It is the pouring out of the Spirit of God on those who come to the Messiah. Only the fire of the Holy Spirit can cause us to move forward in the process of sanctification (Isaiah 30:21). If left to our own strength, we will backslide every time. Only the Spirit of God indwelling us can convict us to repent and forsake sin. Only He can replace complacency with zeal. In Him we can enter into intercessory prayer for our nation and individuals caught up in the deception of sin's lying promises (Romans 8:27).

Thank God we live in a day in which the Spirit has been poured out. We live after the coming of Messiah who by His Spirit indwells all who come to Him. We have a choice. We can move forward as child of God. We aren't doomed to a repeated cycle of apathy, fruitlessness, repentance, and restoration. While we experience that cycle in a small measure day by day, we as individuals don't have to go to the extremes the nation of Judah was experiencing.

When as a believer you find yourself slip into complacency and being at ease, build yourself up in your most holy faith (Jude 1:20). Turn on some praise music. Open your Bible. Sit down in prayer and tell God you aren't getting up until you hear Him speak to your heart. There are desperate prayer needs everywhere. Lift them up to God with your whole heart and you'll find the zeal you were lacking (2 Timothy 1:6).

The wording of the prophecy now takes on that of the Messianic Kingdom. *<sup>16</sup> Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. <sup>17</sup> And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.* Isaiah 32:16-17 Unlike the kingdoms of this world, the Messiah's kingdom will be thoroughly just and righteous throughout. That will result in peace, quietness and trust forever. The Hebrew word "trust" could also be translated "security." The women of Zion had a false sense of security. Our only real security is in the Lord.

These verses are true of any individual whose faith is placed in God. If through your life in Christ you are just and righteous, the effect on your life will be peace with God. When we are at peace with God, we have nothing to fear, for we know that He can see us through whatever we face (2 Timothy 1:7). The result is a life of quietness, trust, and security. We rest in knowing where we are headed and who and what awaits us.

The false security of the women in Zion was trust in their wealth and the warriors of Zion. They were no match for what was coming. The women's complacency would turn to horrible fear. But there would be those who trusted in God. Next week we'll see that the king trusted in God at first (2 Kings 18:7), but when things looked bad, he turned to wealth to save him (2 Kings 18:15-16). Finally, when wealth failed him, he turned to God as His last resort. God still graciously kept His promises, when He had reasons to abandon them.

**Commented [PW11]: Isaiah 30:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.

**Commented [PW12]: Romans 8:27 (ESV)**

<sup>27</sup> And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

**Commented [PW13]: Jude 1:20 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,

**Commented [PW14]: 2 Timothy 1:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,

**Commented [PW15]: 2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

**Commented [PW16]: 2 Kings 18:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> And the LORD was with him; wherever he went out, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him.

**Commented [PW17]: 2 Kings 18:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> And the LORD was with him; wherever he went out, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him.

*<sup>18</sup> My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places. <sup>19</sup> And it will hail when the forest falls down, and the city will be utterly laid low.*

*<sup>20</sup> Happy are you who sow beside all waters, who let the feet of the ox and the donkey range free.* Isaiah 32:18-20 "My people" in the Old Testament is a reference to the people of Israel. However, Hosea predicted that Gentiles would also be called "the people of God" (Hosea 1:10; Romans 9:26). Some commentators believe that only Jews will reign with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom. My personal opinion is that all the redeemed reign with Him. Thus, "my people will abide in peaceful habitations" would apply to all the redeemed who reign with Christ in the Millennium.

There is a contrast of words in verse 18 with those that describe the women in 9 through 11. The women are at ease and carefree because of a false hope. That is contrasted with the condition of those in the Messiah's kingdom who are at ease because of righteousness and true peace. The sense of being carefree can come from false security (another word play) or from true security. The false sense of security will be dashed and make the fear and calamity even greater. The true security that comes through faith will never disappoint us.

Verse 19 jumps back to the warning of what must happen first. Before the Messiah's Kingdom is established, Judah must first be disciplined. Some think this is referring to the Assyrian capital while others, myself included, think this is a reminder that Jerusalem will eventually fall. They can't put their hope in the city. It must be placed in God alone if we are to dwell in peace.

Then verse 20 returns to the joy and abundance of the kingdom. Every effort will bring a good result. Every obedient act today will bear fruit too, when we are obedient to the leading of God through His Spirit. As waters are a picture of the people of the world in Scripture (Revelation 17:15), and as productivity has been related to spiritual condition, this may be a poetic way of predicting the joy of those called to missions. While in the Millennial Kingdom all will know of Jesus and the message of salvation, I believe there will still be the need of teaching and sharing faith with the nations of the world. The closing line of the free ranging ox and donkey is about the lack of concern for predators. The lion will lie down with the lamb (Isaiah 11:6).

The promise of the coming victory continues in the next chapter. 33:1 begins with the sixth and final woe. The first five were to Israel. This final one is to their enemy, Assyria. After Assyria accepted a fee of gold and silver to turn away from their attack, they went back on their promise and insisted on surrender. *<sup>1</sup> Ah, you destroyer, who yourself have not been destroyed, you traitor, whom none has betrayed! When you have ceased to destroy, you will be destroyed; and when you have finished betraying, they will betray you.* Isaiah 33:1 Sennacherib was a treacherous destroyer and he would meet his end in treachery by his own sons (2 Kings 19:37). Babylon would

**Commented [PW18]: Hosea 1:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God."

**Commented [PW19]: Romans 9:26 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> "And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

**Commented [PW20]: Revelation 17:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> And the angel said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages."

**Commented [PW21]: Isaiah 11:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.

**Commented [PW22]: 2 Kings 19:37 (ESV)**

<sup>37</sup> And as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, struck him down with the sword and escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.

destroy the nation of Assyria just as Assyria had put an end to other nations. Even nations reap what they sow.

*<sup>2</sup> O LORD, be gracious to us; we wait for you. Be our arm every morning, our salvation in the time of trouble.* Isaiah 33:2 Seeing the gracious and merciful hand of God now turned against the enemy of Judah, Isaiah breaks out in a prayer for his nation. Be gracious! They didn't deserve it, but they certainly would welcome it.

In a previous passage God declared He was waiting on them to wait on Him. Now that every hope of man had failed, Judah was willing to wait on God (Isaiah 30:18). Isaiah is praying back to God what God had promised. God said He was waiting to be gracious and bless those who wait on Him. God didn't say, "Unless I'm their last resort." He had no such conditions. So Isaiah seized on it and made it a petition.

"Be our arm," means to be their strength and deliverance. Later in Isaiah, God refers to the Messiah as "the arm of the Lord" (Isaiah 53:1). In the passage next week we'll see how Jesus related to this passage as the divine warrior.

Even though it was a time of trouble, God was still willing to be their Savior. We can wait till the last moment, but why? Isn't it better to turn now? Only God knows if we will have another opportunity. The more we harden our heart, the easier it is to think we'll have another chance, when we just continue to grow harder until our end.

*<sup>3</sup> At the tumultuous noise peoples flee; when you lift yourself up, nations are scattered, <sup>4</sup> and your spoil is gathered as the caterpillar gathers; as locusts leap, it is leapt upon.* Isaiah 33:3-4 Moses declared, *<sup>3</sup> The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his name.* Exodus 15:3 When He lifts Himself, which is to take action, the nations are in tumult. He can take what He will from one nation and give it to another. Nothing and no one can stand against Him (Malachi 3:2)!

*<sup>5</sup> The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness, <sup>6</sup> and he will be the stability of your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is Zion's treasure.* Isaiah 33:5-6 God was the stability of Hezekiah's reign. While the people turned back to God, there was justice and righteousness. There was wisdom and knowledge. The fear of the Lord was their treasure. But like all nations and kingdoms of man, it did not last long. *Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.* Proverbs 14:34

The next king would be the nation's tipping point. Each generation must have their own relationship with God. Though they would hear the story of God's miraculous deliverance, they would turn to other gods. Injustice would become rampant. Innocent blood would saturate the ground (2 Kings 21:16). And God would keep His promise to send them into captivity to purge them of the evil that threatened to end them as a people.

**Commented [PW23]: Isaiah 30:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.

**Commented [PW24]: Isaiah 53:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

**Commented [PW25]: Malachi 3:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.

**Commented [PW26]: 2 Kings 21:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides the sin that he made Judah to sin so that they did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.

The message never changes. God is God and we are not. We so desperately need to hear Him for our good, but we seem to only turn as a last resort. There is a solution for this condition. The Spirit has been poured out. Your heavenly Father longs to fill you to overflowing (Luke 11:13). He invites you to ask Him, to wait on Him, and He will be your salvation. He will be the voice behind you saying, "This is the way. Walk in it" (Isaiah 30:21). Are you at ease in the world or in God?

**Commented [PW27]: Luke 11:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

**Commented [PW28]: Isaiah 30:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.

Questions

- 1 What were the saints' fears?
- 2 What was wrong with the women?
- 3 Which passage did Jesus refer to?
- 4 What is the cycle? The solution?
- 5 What does righteousness yield?
- 6 What words were contrasted?
- 7 What might verse 20 refer to?
- 8 What is true security?
- 9 Why is the sixth woe different?
- 10 Go over Isaiah's prayer.