

Isaiah Chapter 29

The next prophetic “woe” is pronounced against “Ariel, the city where David dwelt”.

Ariel is another name for Jerusalem.

The prophet condemns religious formality, pointing out that their empty religion will not stop the judgment of God.

Therefore, Jerusalem will become “as Ariel,” meaning that God will turn it into what in fact that it is, a place of burnt sacrifice.

Isaiah 29:1 "Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city [where] David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices."

The word Ariel means “lion of God,” referring to the city’s strength and perhaps “hearth of God,” referring to the place where the altar of God always burns.

Verses 7-8 show this to be a name for Jerusalem and the chapter looks to the invasion of Jerusalem because of unbelief.

David named Jerusalem the city of David where he had once camped.

Jerusalem’s cycle of religious ceremonies was meaningless to God.

This year to year could be saying within a year from then.

It appears, this means they could go ahead and sacrifice for that next year.

Isaiah 29:2 "Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel."

The distress will come after the year mentioned (in verse 1).

There will be much sorrow for the attack on Jerusalem.

Jerusalem will not fall completely.

Isaiah 29:3 "And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee."

God encamped against Jerusalem through His instruments, first the Assyrians (701 B.C.) and then the Babylonians (586 B.C.).

The siege that comes against Jerusalem is by another country, but it is really sent against them by God as judgment.

The Assyrians camp around the walls of Jerusalem.

They are not aware God is using them in this way.

Isaiah 29:4 "And thou shalt be brought down, [and] shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust."

“Out of the ground ... out of the dust”:

Jerusalem will be like a captive, humbled to the dust.

Her voice will come from the earth like that of a medium spirit, like the voice of the dead was supposed to be.

This would be fitting for her sins of necromancy.

The haughtiness of Jerusalem will be no more.

They will be brought so low, it will appear they are speaking from the ground.

Sometimes evil people pretend to communicate with the dead.

The evil spirit will speak from underneath the ground.

Verses 5-8

In God's time, after Jerusalem's punishment, those who fought against the city will themselves come under God's judgment.

Isaiah 29:5 "Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones [shall be] as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly."

“Instant suddenly”:

God's demolition of Israel's enemies will be very abrupt, as was the repulsion of the Assyrians from Jerusalem (in 701 B.C.).

Isaiah 29:6 "Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire."

“Thunder ... earthquake ... great noise”:

This terminology points to the storm theophany marking the termination of the seals, trumpets and bowls in Revelation (Rev. 8:5; 11:19; 16:18).

Now, we see the reason the enemy fled.

God has always fought for Jerusalem.

The enemies quickly saw that God would fight for Jerusalem, when the earth quaked, it thundered and the storm came.

The flame of the devouring fire is the very presence of Almighty God.

God appeared in a flaming fire to hold Pharaoh away from the Israelites at the Red sea.

This flaming fire has come against the unbelievers more than once.

2 Thessalonians 1:8 "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:"

When the Assyrians see they are not coming against Jerusalem alone, but against God, they flee.

Isaiah 29:7 "And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision."

All the threat to the city from enemy nations will fade like a bad dream when one awakens.

The attack will be so short lived; it will appear to have been a dream.

God fights for Jerusalem.

It would not matter, if it were all the nations coming against Jerusalem.

They would still lose.

They are no match for God.

Isaiah 29:8 "It shall even be as when a hungry [man] dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, [he is] faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion."

Jerusalem's attackers will frustrate themselves, as a dreamer who has the illusion that he eats and drinks, but awakens to find himself still hungry and thirsty.

The nations who come against Jerusalem believe it is easy to win.

They have the victory in the palm of their hands and then, God comes into the picture.

The enemy could visualize victory, but they did not take God's care of Jerusalem into consideration.

They went away sorrowful.

It happened so quickly, it seems like a dream.

"Mount Zion" means Jerusalem, but it also means the church.

To come against Jerusalem, or the church, is to come against God.

You cannot win.

Verses 9-14

The prophet returned to the theme of the blindness of mechanical religion.

Isaiah 29:9 "Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink."

The blindness and drunkenness came from the people's inability to comprehend Isaiah's message about trusting God instead of Egypt.

Isaiah warns them to be steadfast in their beliefs.

They are not impressed at all with Isaiah's prophecies.

He warns them to be astonished at the great work of God on their behalf.

We saw in another lesson, where the people were drunkards.

This is not the same thing here.

These people act like drunkards, but have drunk nothing intoxicating.

Their weakness is from God.

Isaiah 29:10 "For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered."

“Spirit of deep sleep”:

Because Israel refused to hear her true prophets initially; their ability to hear has been impaired.

God gave them up judicially to their own hardness of heart.

Paul applied this verse specifically to the general condition of Israel’s blindness during the age of the church (Romans 11:8).

“Prophets ... seers”:

False prophets and seers have blinded their listeners with their false prophecies.

The deep sleep, here, is an unawareness of their surroundings.

They have eyes to see, but do not see.

This blindness is toward things of God.

They do not heed the warnings God has sent.

They do not believe the warnings to be true.

They will not believe God's prophets.

Isaiah 29:11 "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which [men] deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it [is] sealed:"

Those with ability to read could not do so because they had surrendered their spiritual sensitivity (Isa. 6:9-10; Matthew 13:10-17).

This is just saying that Isaiah's warnings are not believed by the people.

They will not even read them to see what they say.

It is as if the book is closed on the matter.

For instance, the Bible is a sealed book to every man, learned or unlearned, till he begins to study it with a simple heart and a teachable spirit, that he may thence learn the truth and the will of God.

To worship God, is to approach him.

And if the heart be full of his love and fear, out of the abundance of it the mouth will speak; but there are many whose religion is lip-service only.

Isaiah 29:12 "And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned."

The uneducated had two reasons for not knowing the book's contents:

- (1) The book was sealed; and
- (2) He could not read it even if it was not.

It is deplorable when no one is capable of receiving God's rich revelation.

This message is even given to the unlearned people, but they will not receive it either.

It seems everyone has an excuse.

Theirs is that they are unlearned.

I have heard many people use that excuse for not reading their Bible.

Verses 13-24

Jesus (Mark 7:6-7 quotes verse 13), as the epitome of Pharisaism.

The prophet condemns his own people for honoring God with their "mouth" and "lips" but not their "heart".

He further notes that their "fear" or reverence was merely an intellectual accommodation "taught by the precept of men".

True worship must begin with a proper reverence for God and His Word.

Isaiah further announces that since the intellectual leaders of Israel will not follow the Lord, the "deaf, blind, meek," and "poor" (i.e. the Gentiles), "shall rejoice" in Him.

Isaiah 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:"

Empty ritualism does not bring closeness to God.

Jesus used this verse to describe the Judaism of His day (Matthew 15:7-9; Mark 7:6-7).

We see a following who are not really sold out to God.

They are believers in word only.

They say they are believers, but they do not believe in their hearts.

These inhabitants of Jerusalem, and many of our church people today, profess belief with their mouth, but their hearts do not believe.

"Precept of men":

I believe, has to do with going through the motions of worship (rituals), but having no real commitment to God.

Isaiah 29:14 "Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, [even] a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise [men] shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent [men] shall be hid."

“Wisdom ... perish ... understanding ... hid”:

The principle of resorting to human wisdom rather than divine wisdom was the spiritual plague of Jerusalem.

The same principle was the downfall of the Greek world in Paul’s day (1 Cor. 1:19).

The marvelous work, I believe, is the coming of their Messiah.

He is the Savior of all mankind.

The wonder of it all is that mankind did not deserve to be saved.

Jesus brought salvation to whosoever will as a free gift.

The only part we play in that is we must believe, and then receive so great a salvation.

Their wise men would be the Pharisees and rulers in the temple who would not receive Jesus as Messiah.

Their (wise men), denied Jesus, and even were instigative in crucifying Him.

They were so wise?

They crucified the Lord of Glory.

Isaiah 29:15 "Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?"

The prophet probably referred to a secret plan of the leaders to join with Egypt to combat the Assyrians.

The LORD had counseled otherwise, so they had their strategy from Him.

There is nothing hidden from God.

They believe their evil will be hidden, because it is done in the dark.

The Light reveals all the hidden things.

Light does away with darkness.

Isaiah 29:16 "Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?"

“He made me not”:

For man to make plans on his own without God is a rejection of God as Creator.

Paul reasons that it is also a questioning of the sovereignty of God (Romans 9:19-21).

Does the clay think itself equal to the potter?

God is Omniscient.

Omniscient means having perfect and complete knowledge of all things.

How ridiculous for the thing that was created by God, to not realize God knows everything about them.

He is the Potter, we are the clay.

He can mold us as He wishes.

How could any creation of God doubt His ability to know His creation fully?

Isaiah 29:17 "[Is] it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?"

“Fruitful field ... a forest”:

In the future, a reversal of roles between the mighty and the weak will transpire, when God intervenes to bless Jerusalem.

The moral change in the Jewish nation will be as great as if the usually forested Lebanon were turned into a field and vice versa.

In the last few years, we have seen this come to pass.

That part of the world has certainly become fruitful.

They ship fruit and vegetables to many parts of the world.

Isaiah 29:18 "And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness."

"Deaf hear ... blind shall see":

The spiritual blindness of Israel will no longer exist.

Jesus gives the words an additional meaning, applying it to His ministry of physical healing for the deaf and blind (Matthew 11:5; Isa. 35:5).

Jesus had said, they have ears to hear, and they do not hear.

There is a receiving unto you that comes with the type of hearing, spoken of here.

The book, of course, is the Bible.

Their understanding will be opened.

They had eyes to see, and did not see.

Their spiritual eyesight will be opened, and they will see and know the truth.

Their spiritual darkness shall be turned into light.

Verses 19-20

The future messianic age will bring a reversal of status.

Rejoicing will replace the hardships of the oppressed; the oppressors' dominance will end.

Isaiah 29:19 "The meek also shall increase [their] joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."

Look with me, at two Scriptures that Jesus spoke about the poor.

Matthew 11:5 "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord [is] upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,"

The meek and the poor accepted Jesus as their Savior, when the more learned in the law rejected Him.

Isaiah 29:20 "For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off:"

The terrible one is Satan.

He is defeated by Jesus.

Remember, the scorners are those who scorned God.

This says they are destroyed.

Those who look for sin will find it.

The sinners will be cut off.

Isaiah 29:21 "That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought."

Those with political and judicial authority are no longer to misuse their power to oppress.

It seems this is someone speaking false accusations against another.

It could also, be some sort of false words being spoken about the character of another.

The gate area was where many of the people went to accuse others.

This was similar to our court.

The one word I see of importance in this is reprove.

It seems these verbal, false attacks are against someone like Isaiah, who has reproved them for their wrongdoing.

Isaiah 29:22 "Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale."

God delivered Abraham from his pagan background when He brought him from beyond the Euphrates River into the land of Canaan (Joshua 24:2-3).

Paul elaborates on the theme (in Romans 4:1-22).

“Not now be ashamed”:

Israel in her history had frequently suffered disgrace, but the personal presence of the Messiah is to change that (45:17; 49:23; 50:7; 54:4).

After the salvation of Israel in the end time, the children of Jacob will no longer cause their forefathers to blush over their wickedness.

Abraham lived in a land filled with idolatry.

When God told him to leave and go where He would show him, he believed and went.

Abraham's faith was counted unto him for righteousness.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac was the father of Jacob (Israel).

In this, God remembers His covenant with Abraham and restores Jacob.

He will no longer be ashamed, for God will help him.

It happens, because the LORD said it.

Isaiah 29:23 "But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel."

“Sanctify ... fear the God of Israel”:

Jacob's descendants will marvel at the strong deliverance of the LORD and set Him apart as the only one worthy of utmost respect.

God will cleanse Israel (54:13-14).

God restores Jacob to his former greatness.

The descendants of Abraham belong to God.

They are a separated people.

They are set aside for God's purpose.

The chastisement of God's people is to help them become what God wants in their lives.

The Holy One of Jacob is the LORD.

The surrounding people will see that God fights for Israel (Jacob), and will fear their God.

They are not afraid of Jacob, but they are afraid of Jacob's God.

Isaiah 29:24 "They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine."

With their newfound respect for God, the formerly wayward ones were to gain the capacity for spiritual perception.

Now, we see why they were chastised.

They understand better about the loyalty they must have to God.

They learned more about God's ways and stopped murmuring (complaining).

The growth of these Israelites was that their understanding in their spirit is improved.

What can we learn from this lesson?

We must realize that we are not exempt from punishment from God, just because we have professed faith in Him.

We must live like Christians every day to please Him.

Isaiah Chapter 29 Questions

1. What is Ariel?
2. Who dwelt there?
3. How long will it be from the time Isaiah spoke this, until judgment came?
4. Ariel means what?
5. Who is really behind this siege against Jerusalem?
6. What are the Assyrians unaware of?
7. Explain the speaking from the ground in verse 4.
8. What happens to the enemies of Jerusalem in verse 5?
9. What show of power from the LORD turns the enemy away?

10. What does the flame of fire indicate?
11. When did God appear in a flaming fire to Pharaoh?
12. What is the battle likened to in verse 7?
13. In verse 8, What physical comparisons are made to the enemy's thoughts?
14. What does "Mount Zion" mean?
15. What is the staggering in verse 9 caused by?
16. What is the deep sleep in verse 10?
17. What is the vision of all this likened unto?
18. What excuse do they give in verse 12, for not reading the book?
19. What is the book they are talking about?
20. What are these people like in verse 13?
21. What is meant by "precept of men"?
22. What is the marvelous work mentioned in verse 14?
23. Who did Jesus offer salvation to?
24. Who were the wise men of verse 14?
25. Light does away with _____.
26. Who has control of the clay?
27. What does "Omniscient" mean?
28. What will Lebanon be turned into?
29. When was that fulfilled?
30. What kind of blindness is verse 18 speaking of?
31. Who is the terrible one, mentioned in verse 20?
32. Who are the scorers?
33. What restoration does God make in verse 22?
34. What causes the surrounding people to fear God?

35. They that erred in spirit shall come to _____.

36. They that murmured shall learn _____.

37. What lesson can we take from all this?