

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes: Isaiah Chapter 27 - 29

4/2/14

Chapter 27 Study Notes

Israel Will Be Saved - Verses 1-13

1 At that time the LORD will punish Leviathan with his sword. His great, powerful and deadly sword will punish the serpent that glides through the sea. He will kill that twisting sea monster. 2 At that time the LORD will sing about his fruitful vineyard. He will say, 3 "I am the Lord. I watch over my vineyard. I water it all the time. I guard it day and night. I do it so no one can harm it. 4 I am not angry with my vineyard. I wish thorns and bushes would come up in it. Then I would march out against them in battle. I would set all of them on fire. 5 So the enemies of my people had better come to me for safety. They should make peace with me. I will say it again. They should make peace with me." 6 In days to come, Jacob's people will put down roots like a vine. Israel will bud and bloom. They will fill the whole world with fruit. 7 The LORD struck down those who struck Israel down. But he hasn't punished Israel as much. The LORD killed those who killed many of his people. But he hasn't punished his people as much. 8 The LORD will use war to punish Israel. He will make them leave their land. With a strong blast of his anger he will drive them out. It will be as if the east wind were blowing. 9 The people of Jacob will have to pay for their sin. That must happen in order for their sin to be taken away. They will make all of the altar stones like chalk. They will crush them to pieces. No poles that had been used to worship the goddess Asherah will be left standing. No incense altars will be left either. 10 Cities that have high walls around them will become empty. They will be deserted settlements. They will be like a desert. Calves will eat and lie down in them. They will strip the branches of their trees bare. 11 When their twigs are dry, they will be broken off. Then women will come and make fires with them. The people of Jacob don't understand the Lord. So the One who made them won't be concerned about them. Their Creator won't show them his favor. 12 At that time the LORD will separate Israel from other people. He will gather the Israelites together. He will gather them one by one from the Euphrates River all the way to the Wadi of Egypt. 13 At that time a loud trumpet will be blown. Those who were dying in Assyria will come and worship the Lord. So will those who were taken away to Egypt. All of them will worship the LORD on his holy mountain in Jerusalem.

ISAIAH 27:1

"That day" is a reference to the end of the evil world as we know it. In ancient Aramean (Ugaritic) literature, Leviathan was a seven-headed monster, the enemy of God's created order. Thus, Isaiah is comparing God's slaughter of the wicked to the conquering of a great enemy. Although evil is a powerful foe, God will crush it and abolish it from the earth forever.

ISAIAH 27:2-6

The trampled vineyard of chapter 5 will be restored in God's new earth. God will protect and care for the vineyard, his people. It will no longer produce worthless fruit but will produce enough good fruit for the whole world. Gentiles will come to know God through Israel.

ISAIAH 27:9

Only God can take away sin, but to be driven out of the land was considered the penalty that would purify God's people. Deuteronomy 28:49-52, 64 explains God's warning about these consequences.

ISAIAH 27:11

Isaiah compares the state of Israel's spiritual life with dry twigs that are broken off and used to make fires. Trees in Scripture often represent spiritual life. The trunk is the channel of strength from God; the branches are the people who serve him. Tree branches sometimes waver and blow in the wind. Like Israel, they may dry up from internal rotteness and become useless for anything except building a fire. What kind of branch are you? If you are withering spiritually, check to see if you are firmly attached to God.

ISAIAH 27:12

To "thresh" means to "judge." God's purpose in judging the earth is not vengeance, but purging. He wants to correct us and bring us back to him. God does not punish us for our sin just to make us suffer, but to make those who are faithful better equipped for fruitful service.

Chapter 28 Study Notes

The LORD Will Judge Israel - Verses 1-29

1 How terrible it will be for the city of Samaria! It sits on a hill like a crown of flowers. The leaders of Ephraim are drunk. They take pride in their city. It sits above a valley that has rich soil. How terrible it will be for the glorious beauty of that fading flower! 2 The Lord will bring the strong and powerful king of Assyria against Samaria. The Lord will throw that city down to the ground with great force. It will be like a hailstorm. It will be like a wind that destroys everything. It will be like a driving rain and a flooding storm. 3 That city is like a crown. The leaders of Ephraim are drunk. They take pride in their city. But its enemies will walk all over it. 4 It sits on a hill above a rich valley. It's like a crown of flowers whose glorious beauty is fading away. But it will become like a fig that is ripe before harvest. As soon as someone sees it, he picks it and swallows it. 5 At that time the LORD who rules over all will be like a glorious crown. He will be like a beautiful wreath for those of his people who will be left alive. 6 He will help those who are fair when they judge. He will give strength to those who turn back their enemies at the city gate. 7 Israel's leaders are drunk from wine. They can't walk straight. They are drunk from beer. They are unsteady on their feet. Priests and prophets drink beer. They can't walk straight. They are mixed up from drinking too much wine. They drink too much beer. They are unsteady on their feet. The prophets see visions but don't really understand them. The priests aren't able to make good decisions. 8 They throw up. All of the tables are covered with the mess they've made. There isn't one spot on the tables that isn't smelly and dirty. 9 My people are making fun of me. They say, "Who does he think he's trying to teach? Who does he think he's explaining his message to? Is it to children who do not need their mother's milk anymore? Is it to those who have just been taken from her breast? 10 Here is how he teaches. Do this and do that. Do that and do this. Obey this rule and obey that rule. Obey that rule and obey this rule. Learn a little here and learn a little there." 11 All right then, these people won't listen to me. So God will speak to them. He will speak by using people who speak unfamiliar languages. He will speak by using the mouths of strangers. 12 He said to his people, "I am offering you a resting place. Let those who are tired rest." He continued, "I am offering you a place of peace and quiet." But they wouldn't listen. 13 So then, here is what the LORD's message will become to them. Do this and do that. Do that and do this. Obey this rule and obey that rule. Obey that rule and obey this rule. Learn a little here and learn a little there. So when they try to go forward, they'll fall back and be wounded. They'll be trapped and captured. 14 Listen to the LORD's message, you who make fun of the truth. Listen, you who rule over these people in Jerusalem. 15 You brag, "We have entered into a covenant with death. We have made an agreement with the grave. When a terrible plague comes to punish us, it can't touch us. That's because we depend on lies to keep us safe. We hide behind what isn't true." 16 So the LORD and King speaks. He says, "Look! I am laying a stone in Zion. It is a stone that has been tested. It is the most important stone for a firm foundation. The one who trusts in that stone will never be shaken. 17 I will use a measuring line to prove that you have not been fair. I will use a plumb line to prove that you have not done what is right. Hail will sweep away the lies you depend on to keep you safe. Water will flood your hiding place. 18 Your covenant with death will be called off. The agreement you made with the grave will not stand. When the terrible plague comes to punish you, you will be beaten down by it. 19 As often as it comes, it will carry you away. Morning after morning, day and night, it will come to punish you." If you understand this message, it will bring you absolute terror. 20 You will be like someone whose bed is too short to lie down on. You will be like those whose blankets are too small to wrap themselves in. 21 The LORD will rise up to judge, just as he did at Mount Perazim. He will get up to act, just as he did in the Valley of Gibeon. He'll do his work, but it will be strange work. He'll carry out his task, but it will be an unexpected one. 22 Now stop making fun of me. If you don't, your chains will become heavier. The LORD who rules over all has spoken to me. The Lord has told me he has ordered that the whole land be destroyed. 23 Listen and hear my voice. Pay attention to what I'm saying. 24 When a farmer plows in order to plant, does he plow without stopping? Does he keep on breaking up the soil and making the field level? 25 When he's made the surface even, doesn't he plant caraway seeds? Doesn't he scatter cummin? Doesn't he plant wheat in its proper place? Doesn't he plant barley where it belongs? Doesn't he plant spelt along the edge of the field? 26 His God directs him. He teaches him the right way to do his work. 27 Caraway seeds are beaten out with a rod. They aren't separated out under a threshing sled. Cummin seeds are beaten out with a stick. The wheel of a cart isn't rolled over them. 28 Grain must be ground up to make bread. A farmer separates it out. But he doesn't go on doing it forever. He drives the wheels of a threshing cart over it. But he doesn't let the horses grind it to dust. 29 All of those insights come from the LORD who rules over all. His advice is wonderful. His wisdom is glorious.

ISAIAH 28:1 - 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.

ISAIAH 28:9-14

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.

ISAIAH 28:15

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.

ISAIAH 28:16

If you're building anything, you need a firm base. Isaiah speaks of a foundation stone, a 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)?

ISAIAH 28:21

God fought on Joshua's side at the valley 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.

ISAIAH 28:23-29

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.

Chapter 29 Study Notes

The LORD Will Judge Jerusalem - Verses 1-24

1 Jerusalem, how terrible it will be for you! Ariel, you are the city where David settled. The years will come and go. Keep on celebrating your regular feasts. 2 The LORD says, "Ariel, I will surround you. Jerusalem, I will get ready to attack you. Your people will sob. They will sing songs of sadness. I will make you like the front of an altar that is covered with blood. 3 I will be like an army that is camped against you on all sides. I will surround you with towers in order to attack you. I will build my ramps all around you and set up my ladders. 4 You will be brought down to the grave. You will speak from deep down inside the ground. Your words will be barely heard out of the dust. Your voice will sound like the voice of a ghost coming from under the ground. Your words will sound like a whisper out of the dust." 5 Jerusalem, all of your enemies will become like fine dust. Their terrifying armies will become like straw that the wind blows away. All of a sudden, in an instant, 6 the LORD who rules over all will come. He will come with thunder, earthquakes and a lot of noise. He'll bring windstorms and rainstorms with him. He'll send a blazing fire that will burn everything up. 7 Armies from all of the nations will fight against Ariel. They will attack it and its fort. They'll surround it completely. But suddenly those armies will disappear like a dream. They will vanish like a vision in the night. 8 They will be like a hungry person who dreams he is eating. But when he wakes up, he's still hungry. They will be like a thirsty person who dreams he is drinking. But when he wakes up, he is weak. His thirst hasn't been satisfied. In the same way, the armies from all of the nations that fight against Mount Zion will disappear. 9 People of Jerusalem, be shocked and amazed. Make yourselves blind so you can't see anything. Get drunk, but not from wine. Be unsteady on your feet, but not because of beer.

10 The LORD has made you fall into a deep sleep. He has closed the eyes of your prophets. He has covered the heads of your seers so they can't see. 11 For you, this whole vision is like words that are sealed up in a scroll. Suppose you give it to someone who can read. And suppose you say to him, "Please read this for us." Then he'll answer, "I can't. It's sealed up." 12 Or suppose you give the scroll to someone who can't read. And suppose you say, "Please read this for us." Then he'll answer, "I don't know how to read." 13 The Lord says, "These people worship me only with their words. They honor me by what they say. But their hearts are far away from me. Their worship doesn't mean anything to me. They teach nothing but human rules. 14 So once more I will shock these people with many wonderful acts. I will destroy the wisdom of those who think they are so wise. I will do away with the cleverness of those who think they are so smart." 15 How terrible it will be for people who do everything they can to hide their plans from the LORD! They do their work in darkness. They think, "Who sees us? Who will know?" 16 They turn everything upside down. How silly they are to think that potters are like the clay they work with! Can what is made say to the one who made it, "You didn't make me"? Can the pot say to the potter, "You don't know anything"? 17 In a very short time, Lebanon will be turned into rich farm lands. The rich farm lands will seem like a forest. 18 At that time those who can't hear will hear what is read from the scroll. Those who are blind will come out of gloom and darkness. They will be able to see. 19 Those who aren't proud will once again find their joy in the Lord. And those who are in need will find their joy in the Holy One of Israel. 20 Those who don't show any pity will vanish. Those who make fun of others will disappear. All those who look for ways to do what is evil will be cut off. 21 Without any proof, they claim that a man is guilty. In court they try to trap the one who speaks up for others. By using dishonest witnesses they keep those who aren't guilty from being treated fairly. 22 Long ago the LORD saved Abraham from trouble. Now he says to Jacob's people, "You will not be ashamed anymore. Your faces will no longer grow pale with fear. 23 You will see your children living among you. I myself will give you those children. Then you will honor my name. You will recognize how holy I am. I am the Holy One of Jacob. You will have great respect for me. I am the God of Israel. 24 I will give understanding to you who find yourselves going down the wrong path. You who are always speaking against others will accept what I teach you."

ISAIAH 29:1

Ariel is a special name for Jerusalem, David's city. It may mean "Lion of God" (Jerusalem is strong as a lion) or "altar hearth" (Jerusalem is the place of the altar in the Temple; see 29:2; Ezekiel 43:15, 16).

ISAIAH 29:13, 14

The people claimed to be close to God, but they were disobedient and merely went through the motions; therefore, God would bring judgment upon them. Religion had become routine instead of real. Jesus quoted Isaiah's condemnation of Israel's hypocrisy when he spoke to the Pharisees, the religious leaders of his day (Matthew 15:7-9; Mark 7:6, 7). We are all capable of hypocrisy. Often we slip into routine patterns when we worship, and we neglect to give God our love and devotion. If we want to be called God's people, we must be obedient and worship him honestly and sincerely.

ISAIAH 29:15

Thinking God couldn't see them and didn't know what was happening, the people of Jerusalem tried to hide their plans from him. How strange that so many people think they can hide from God. In Psalm 139 we learn that God has examined us and knows everything about us. Would you be embarrassed if your best friends knew your personal thoughts? Remember that God knows all of them.

ISAIAH 29:17-24

The world described here, under Christ's rule, will be far different from the one we live in today. There will be no more violence or gloom. This new world will be characterized by joy, understanding, justice, and praise to God.