

The Just shall live by Faith

Volume 1 - Study 15 **‘to hear and see, or not’**

C. Ronald Johnson, Christian Wilderness Press: In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people.

These are brief studies, not
"teachings" or "doctrines".

Volume 1, Study 15

God speaks through Isaiah to His people

'To whom [i.e. the people] he [i.e. God had] said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.'

In the last study we were considering the episode of Jesus and the woman at the well, and in that study was given some brief history of how Israel's tribal lands became what they were in Jesus' day. Now we will consider the point in Israel's history not long before the northern tribes will be taken off captive into exile. The greater part of them will not return. Indeed, the greater number of their children and children's children, etc. will not return. Yet, in regards to Jesus' Second Coming to claim his kingdom, God's Spirit will call them in from the nations, for God has kept track of them and is keeping track of them through the ages.

The major prophet at this time is Isaiah. It is his duty to prophesy for God to both the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. If you would like to take the time you could go to Isaiah 24 and read about the conclusion of God's Plan for the Ages. It includes how God will bring in the Israelites from around the world. Read through chapter 27:6. And then, briefly, in verses 7-11 is that which God will be doing to his people in the meantime. Then in verses 12,13 we see God bringing in all of his people back to the Promised Land.

In this study, we shall be working in chapter 28. By means of Isaiah, God is speaking specifically to the northern kingdom and then, starting in verse 14, to the southern kingdom.

28:1) Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!

This verse pertains to the king and to all the higher-ups of the northern kingdom (at the time referred to as 'Israel'). Included are all of the governmental heads connected to the king. The capital city is Samaria located in the tribal region of Manasseh, but the strongest tribe is Ephraim and the king and many of the higher-ups of the northern kingdom are of the tribe of Ephraim. Collectively they wear a prideful crown and in admiring their own self-worth they rejoice greatly in the fruits of their labor. Ah, but their glorious beauty, derived from God, is a fading flower. Shortly the Lord will deal with them.

28:2) Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth [the nations] with the hand.

God is bringing into Palestine a mighty man and his forces (i.e. Assyria) which shall pass through as a destroying storm of mighty overflowing waters.

28:3,4) The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet: And the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer; which when he [i.e. the Assyrian king] that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.

28:5,6) In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people, And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.

God will replace the prideful crown with Himself. He shall shepherd them, as they shall be a remnant taken unto Assyria and scattered into the nations. Note in the last study

that Jesus stated to the woman at the well, ‘**Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.**’ This, which happened in the final analysis for Israel after the Romans destroy Jerusalem entirely, affected God’s people Israel and all of God’s spreading and multiplying people in the world...that is, up until Christ Jesus shall arrive to claim his kingdom.

The verse in Isaiah applies to the northern tribes to be attacked by Assyria, but it is entirely similar to what Jesus would later say to the woman at the well regarding Israel and Jerusalem in his day which would be attacked and destroyed by the Romans. The woman at the well in Jesus’ day was a descendent of the people to whom Isaiah is speaking now.

Moreover in this passage, God’s *Spirit of proper and true judgment* will be upon the many and varied leaders of the scattered remnant. Also God’s *Spirit will become strength* to the human protectors of the scattered remnant people throughout the ages. In other words, God Himself will be looking after them.

28:7,8) But they [which] also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way [i.e. removed themselves]; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way [i.e. removed themselves] through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.

God continues to use the terminology of drunkenness. Here we see what God always does to the nation that he is going to judge; He arranges for the leaders to err in vision and stumble in judgment. All the governmental tables are full of such error in vision and stumbling in judgment such that there is no room left to help the nation with good vision and judgment. Therefore, the nation stumbles and falls in the coming flood.

28:9) Whom shall he [God] teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine [i.e. to comprehend God’s messages]? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts?

Perhaps the just weaned children of these foolish and wicked leaders are good and innocent enough to properly hear from God, and when grown and exiled they likely will be listening closely to God. However, now their fathers cannot hear even if they tried.

28:10) For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:

In these words God is sarcastic. He is mimicking a drunken king who is trying to teach his little child some important things. Knowing that the child can understand very little at a time, the king tries to give him precept upon precept, and precept upon precept; and one small line, upon one small line, here a little, and there are little. The king’s words to his child come out choppy, even as a drunkard’s words would come out choppy.

28:11) For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.

No longer is God going to speak to the king and the leaders and the people of the northern kingdom by means of the priests and the prophets. The ‘**he**’ in this verse is the conquering one which God is sending from Assyria and it is he that will be speaking and acting in judgment; thereby God will be speaking in actions of judgment to His people.

28:12) To whom [i.e. the people] he [i.e. God had] said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing; yet they would not hear.

For years God had been speaking through priests and prophets about what He wanted from the people in simple obedience to the law, so that in obedience they would find rest and refreshment...the kind not derived from over indulging in their blessings. Ah, but over the many years God speaking they would not hear...and so they could not see.

28:13) But the word of the LORD was [i.e. when God was angry at them] unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

This is like a father having spoken simple and repeated instructions to a rebellious

child, knowing before hand that the child would confuse and mix up all of it (as described in this verse). Hopefully, then, the rebellious child would learn from falling backward, being broken, and snared. The drunken king, who thought that he had to speak in very simple terms to his little child, is the one to whom God has been trying similarly to get through His message. Soon God will work His messages within actions of judgment.

In this chapter, this ends the words of God to the northern kingdom. The northern kingdom (called 'Israel' as compared to 'Judaea' being the southern kingdom) shall shortly be over-run by Assyria and shall never again be a kingdom. Yet, God Himself will take up the task of Shepherd for the people of these northern tribes as they become scattered among the nations.

In the last study, some of the descendents of these people had returned to their homeland. Some of them lived in the middle section of Israel west of the Jordan River and they were considered by the Jews (and were treated by the Jews) as unworthy, defiled strangers instead of as brothers. (Such was the continuing animosity that had developed early on when the northern tribes had split off from the southern tribes and from the holy city Jerusalem.)



At this point God's message through Isaiah turns to the southern kingdom which has its own problems with a jealous God. Many years of animosity have existed between the two kingdoms and there had been wars between them. The people of the southern kingdom work hard to sustain their religion of Yahweh (with the Mosaic Law and the priesthood and the temple and the holy city of Jerusalem), but they look down upon and even despise their brothers of the northern tribes. (As mentioned above, this was continuing even in the days of Jesus.)

Because of their pride (and scorn toward their brothers, much less toward Gentiles) the people of the southern kingdom consider themselves "a sacred island in the midst of a sinful and decadent world".

28:14,15) Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and [thus] with hell are we at [i.e. in] agreement; [so that] when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

They believe, in their superior spirituality and good works for God, that if they should die they would certainly go to heaven where great rewards await them. However, that would be such a great waste. And then who would take care of and nurture the great Law and temple and city of God? Therefore, they have made a compact (with God they think) with Death. "Surely, God cannot afford to do without us. We have heard from the prophets about coming judgments and we know that the judgments are not for us. Instead, God's judgments are for our despicable northern brothers and the rest of the world."

'...for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves' are not words that they have spoken out loud or unto themselves. God knows that these words are in their subconscious...hidden away in their hearts.

Dear reader, must I point out that today this description fits many of us sanctimonious Christians? I believe that the great majority of Christians in America and in the free world fit this description. Yes indeed, we work our good works for God; but does He need us? Do we really think that He needs us?

Not much more than 100 years later, God's judgment also would fall upon the southern kingdom by means of Babylon.

28:16) Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste [i.e. as in confusion to 'scurry about'].

God would bring back a remnant of the southern tribes from Babylon to populate the

southern kingdom and much of the Promised Land. The southern region would be called Judaea and in Jerusalem would be built another temple which would exist in the days of Jesus. For indeed, God would send Christ to be of the lineage of King David, of the tribe of Judah. The people of the southern kingdom who were hearing Isaiah's words knew that the Messiah would come of David...and this only heightened their egos. Moreover, even the promise that God would bring back a remnant of them from any judgment which might befall them also heightened their egos. "Indeed, how could God do without us?"

This '**foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation**' is the Messiah...to be called 'Jesus'. Ah, but the remnant that God shall bring back from Babylon shall itself again come under judgment not many years after Jesus' resurrection. Therefore, this message not only applies to *the exile into Babylon*, but it also applies to *the scattering of Jews and Christians when Rome destroys Jerusalem*. For indeed, the promise is '**he that believeth** [i.e. in *actively energized faith*] **shall not make haste** [i.e. as in *confusion to scurry about*]' whenever destruction (or decay) flows like a flood (or a rising tide) through the land. The promise is true whether destruction (or decay) be of an evil kingdom from without or from within), or be it of disease and plague, or be it of economic disintegration.

28:17) Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

In the day of judgment (i.e. of any of God's judgments) *the concepts of men regarding judgment and righteousness* also shall be judged. That is, God will pass judgment upon men's concepts of judgment and righteousness, which surely shall be found lacking (as they are today in America). God's judgment-storm shall sweep away every refuge of such false and lying concepts. America beware!

28:18) And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell [i.e. Hades *not to have to go there by Death*] shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye [also] shall be trodden down by it.

Even the keepers, the proud keepers, of Moses' Law (and the holy city and the temple and the priesthood and the sacrifices) were not immune to God's righteous judgments. Obviously God could do very well without them. I trust, dear reader, that you might sense that God can do very well without you and me. God's Plan of the Ages continues and nothing can stop it. Even of sinful Israel a remnant shall be brought in, and God's Plan shall be completed with Christ Jesus on the throne. Amen.

28:19,20) From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report. For the bed [of what I have in store for you] is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.

'**From the time that it goeth forth**' refers to the beginning of this chapter where God said, '**Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing**'. Assyria will carry off most of the Israelites of the northern kingdom into exile. However, Assyria also will cause great harm to all the nations in Palestine, including the southern kingdom...which is why this warning is given in the last part of the chapter to the southern kingdom. It will be so bad that even *the hearing of reports of what is going on in the nations around them* will become a vexation and great fear to these "keepers of the Law".

28:21) For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.

For the reference in this verse, see 2Samuel 5:17-25. It is about David working destruction upon the Philistines. God did this through David to the Philistines, and here God is saying that He will use the mighty one coming from Assyria to do the same to His peo-

ple Israel.

28:22-29) Now therefore be ye not mockers [against your brothers in the north and against my words to you], **lest your [own] bands be made strong[er]: for I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts a consumption** [i.e. a gobbling up], **even determined upon the whole earth** [i.e. the Bible lands].

[Now] **Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech.**

Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain [i.e. cleared of grass, weeds, rocks, etc.] **the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rie** [i.e. rye] **in their place** [i.e. respective fields]? **For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him** [the ways of sowing and reaping]. **For the [harvests of the] fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod.**

Bread corn [i.e. bread grains of wheat, barley, and rye] **is [but slightly] bruised; because he will not ever** [i.e. always] **be threshing it, nor** [i.e. and not] **break it with the wheel of his cart, nor** [i.e. and not] **bruise it with his horsemen.**

This [teaching of wisdom] **also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.**

Isaiah ends this prophetic chapter with a simple teaching about farming, of which everyone knew. Indeed, ‘**This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.**’ Even as God’s people took this kind of teaching directly from God, so they ought to take from God the teachings within the prophecies, for these also have to do with blessing instead of chastisement, even though chastisement is a very real part of the prophecies.

To summarize

God uses the word ‘**drunken**’ in the first part of the chapter and so we write off the leaders and many of the people of the northern kingdom as “evil, wicked, or bad”. However, they are described in the passage as ‘**whose glorious beauty...which are on the head of the fat valleys of them**’. These people have been greatly blessed and have been making the most of their blessings; in other words, *they have been enjoying the fruits of their labor within God's blessings*. The primary thing that is wrong is that when God speaks they do not hear because they are *deeply involved in the blessings* instead of *paying attention to the One who blesses*. God's prophecies to them are even greater blessings than the bread and the wine...if they would heed them.

Today many Christians are involved in making the most of the blessings that God has given them, working day and night, thinking that this pleases God. And in fact this would please God if when He has a word for them they would pause long enough ‘to hear with the ear so as to be able to see with the eye’. It is a matter of a person’s value system.

The last part of the chapter deals with the people of the southern kingdom. These are the folks taking advantage of what they consider to be God's blessing (which indeed it is) of being in charge of the Mosaic Law, of the temple, of the priesthood, of the very religion of Yahweh. But they also are too busy to pause to listen to the prophet that has God's word for them.

The people of both kingdoms have the same problem with their blessings and their attitudes. Those of the northern kingdom are too full of the blessings of the bread and the wine. Those of the southern kingdom are too full of the blessings of duty. Neither have time to listen. Does not God want us to enjoy economic blessing and the blessing of duty? Of course. Yet, *God and what God says at any given time* is far more important than *what He gives at any given time*.

Consider for a moment Jesus’ parable of the Prodigal Son. The younger son was anxious

to enjoy *the blessings of his inheritance*, which is *a form of appreciating the father*. Do we not as parents want our children *to enjoy the blessings that we have for them*? This son did so in a foolish manner and he suffered the consequences. Yet in humility he was willing to listen to the things inside of himself that he knew to be of his father. These things, and what they were saying to him, were greater blessings than his inheritance; therefore, he returned to the greatest blessing, which was his father.

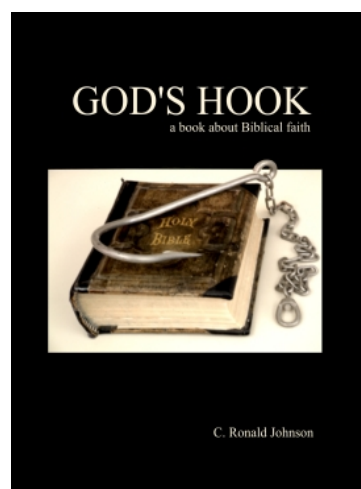
Now consider the elder brother who had received *the greater inheritance of duty*. All along he had been working day and night to maintain his inheritance (which was his duty). The younger son considered his blessing *to be of higher value than his relationship with the father*. Similarly, the elder brother considered his duty of the inheritance *to be of higher value than his relationship with the father*. In each brother it was his value system which determined his actions. In the end, the younger son highly valued his father. In the end, the elder brother did not highly value the father because he continued to value his duty of inheritance over the father.

Those good things within the younger son that spoke to him of the father, he listened to them and heeded them. The words of the father to the elder brother, he did not listen to them nor did he heed them. It is a matter of a person's value system.

What do we value more: the things given, or the One who gives? Dear reader, we do not even have to worry about this until such a time that the Giver is trying to get our attention so that we might at least listen to what he would have us to hear. I repeat: A person's value system is not the major problem. The major problem is being so tied up in the value system, and so entangled in it, that the person cannot hear God...so entangled that when God would have him see something, he cannot see. Such a person values his value system more than he values the One of Supreme Value.

These problems of ancient times are with us today and we are as entangled in them as were the folks of ancient times. The only solution to this mess is God, for He will always see to it that there is a remnant to continue within God's Plan of the Ages. In every age, then, each child of God has the same decision to make: 'to hear and see, or not'.

These are short Bible studies by C. Ronald Johnson at Christian Wilderness Press



a book
about
Biblical
Faith

the life of
Moses
and the
Exodus

