



*"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME"*  
ISAIAH 61:1

## THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

### CHAPTER 28

AND HIS NAME  
WILL BE CALLED  
WONDERFUL COUNSELOR,  
MIGHTY GOD,  
EVERLASTING FATHER,  
PRINCE OF  
PEACE.  
ISAIAH 9:6

Isaiah is called "The Book of Salvation." The name *Isaiah* means "the salvation of the Lord" or "the Lord is salvation." Isaiah is the first book containing the writings of the prophets of the Bible. And the author, Isaiah, who is called the Prince of Prophets, shines above all the other writers and prophets of Scripture. His mastery of the language, his rich and vast vocabulary, and his poetic skill have earned him the title, "Shakespeare of the Bible." He was educated, distinguished, and privileged, yet remained a deeply spiritual man. He was committed to obedience over the long haul of his 55-60 year ministry as a prophet of God. He was a true patriot who loved his country and his people. Strong tradition suggests that he died a martyr's death under the reign of King Manasseh by being placed within the hollow of a tree trunk and sawed in two.

Isaiah's calling as a prophet was primarily to the nation of Judah (the southern kingdom) and to Jerusalem, urging the people to repent from their sins and return to God. He also foretold the coming of the Messiah and the salvation of the Lord. Many of his prophecies predicted events that occurred in Isaiah's near future, yet at the same time they foretold the events of the distant future (such as the coming of the Messiah), and even some events still to come in the last days (such as the second coming of Christ).

In summary, the message of Isaiah is that salvation comes from God—not man. God alone is Savior, Ruler and King.

Commentary on the book of Isaiah is by noted theologian Rev. William G. Most (1914-1999). His contributions to theology have been recognized all over the world. He published 12 books and a host of articles on topics ranging from biblical studies to Mariology and Latin grammar.

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## **Book of Isaiah**

### **Summary of Chapter 28**

Egypt, Assyria and Zion. Summary and Comments. Chapters 28-33

A) Judah and Samaria: one in sin, one in judgment. Chapter 28

Except for the first 6 verses, on Samaria, the prophecies of chapters 28-33 are likely to date from the period 705-701, just before the invasion of Sennacherib, in which, because of the piety of Hezekiah, God saved Jerusalem from being taken.

The first six verses foretell the destruction of Samaria, so they must belong to a period before the siege of 722-21. These lines may belong before 730 BC, and if so are the earliest prophecies of Isaiah we possess.

The imagery in this section is among the finest given us by Isaiah.

Samaria is called a wreath, and a flower with splendid color, which will soon fade. For it was a beautiful city crowning a hill that rose high above the valley beneath. But corruption was eating at its roots, the moral looseness and debauchery of its nobles. We are reminded of chapter 4 of Amos.

The Lord has prepared Assyria against them, which will come like a destructive wind and hailstorm. And just as any passerby is apt to pick an early fig (one that ripens early, in June) and eat it on the spot, so Assyria will gobble up Samaria.

Even then, the Lord will be a glorious crown and wreath for the remnant of Samaria, those that are faithful to Him.

B) Against Judah:28:7-13:

It seems that here the scene shifts from Samaria and its fall to Judah. Its leaders also stagger from wine, priests and prophets and others. It sounds like a drinking bout, according to some commentators held in the forecourt of the temple.

It is a foul scene: the tables are covered with vomit. Yet the drunks think they are seeing visions.

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These same drunks object to the objection of Isaiah: "Who does he think he is trying to teach? Is it to children just weaned? He says: Do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule, a little here, a little there, ". The sense seems to be that Isaiah is berating them as one would children. So they imitate what his words sound like. In Hebrew the words have a strange sound: <sav lasav, sav lasav, kav lakav, kav lakav>.

The reply Isaiah makes picks up on their sad words. He tells them that God is saying: "I will speak to this people with foreign lips and a strange tongue". He means they will hear Assyrian spoken, which they will not understand. God had offered them rest and refuge. But they would not listen. Interestingly, St. Paul uses these words to object to the foolish attachment the Corinthians had to the gift of tongues (1 Cor 14:21:) "I will speak to this people by men of strange tongues. . . and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." St Paul seemed to mean: "You Corinthians think tongues are a sign of God's favor - it may be quite the opposite, the way Isaiah used these words to warn that the Assyrians were coming.

So the prophet continues: You scoffers who rule the people are boasting that you have made a covenant with death. The words are strange indeed. They seem to mean that the leaders have made a secret agreement with the Assyrians, so that even if an invasion comes, they themselves will be secure.

Isaiah replies in the name of God: Your pact with death will not stand up when the terrible scourge of Assyria comes.

Instead what they should notice is this: God says he has placed a tested corner stone in Zion as a secure foundation. God says: "I will make justice (<mishpat>) his measuring line, and righteousness (<sedaqah>) his plumb line."

There is a double meaning here, a kind of multiple fulfillment: 1) They really ought to trust in having the kingship that descends from David, instead of foreign alliances (a pact with death); 2) the real cornerstone, the righteous king is to come, the Messiah, which is Christ: Cf. Romans 9; 33 and 1 Peter 21:6ff. Jesus will be the cornerstone, on which some will rise, by placing their faith in Him, ; others, who should have been the builders, the leaders of the people, will reject this cornerstone, and so they themselves will stumble and fall: Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14, and Luke 2:34.

So, returning to the imagery of the pact with death from above: Hail (the Assyrian storm) will sweep away the refuge you thought you had made for yourself. Your pact with death will be annulled. It will sweep you away.

For the sake of something somewhat parallel: in 490 B. C. in the Peloponnesian War, Themistocles the Greek engaged in duplicity or double dealing with the Persian invaders. First, he told them to attack the Athenian fleet, which they gladly did- but it helped the Greeks, who otherwise might have fled and lost the best opportunity to defeat the Persian fleet. In 479 after Xerxes, King of Persia was beaten and on the way home, Themistocles wanted the Greeks to pursue. They refused. So he wrote to the king and said he stopped them from pursuing. Eventually it paid off for him when Athens later rejected him. A new Persian king, Artaxerxes, made him governor of Magnesia and gave him a fine pension.

They then will be like those who seek rest on a proverbial bed that is too short for them or warmth with only half a blanket. It seems Isaiah is here using a proverb known to his hearers.

God Himself will turn out to be not their protector, for they rejected Him, but their enemy. At Mount Perazim (the word means "breaking forth" and in the Valley of Gibeon (2 Sam 5:18-25 and 1 Chron 14:10-16) David defeated the Philistines when the Lord roused Himself. Now the Lord will rouse Himself against His own people, for they have deserted Him.

The multiple fulfillment of this prophecy came when Babylon, successor of Assyria, destroyed Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar, and again when the Romans in 70 AD destroyed Jerusalem again, for the leaders' rejection of the true Messiah, the true cornerstone.

Now Isaiah turns to speaking like a Wisdom teacher. Just as the farmer does not plow continually, nor thresh constantly, nor does he use a sledge on small things like Caraway or Cummin, so God will act - even though it will take time. The threatened fall of Samaria came in 722-21; the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar came more than a century later in two waves in 596 and 586 B. C. To God a century is as a day.

Also, the image showing that the farmer does not plant or thresh indefinitely long - all would be destroyed - so too God will leave a remnant after the destruction. We think of St. Paul in Romans 9:29: "If the Lord of Hosts had not left us a seed [a remnant] we would be like Sodom and like Gomorrah."

## Chapter 28