

C. FUTURE THAT IS FRUITFUL, CHAPTERS 32-33

1. SOVEREIGN

TEXT: 32:1-8

- 1 Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in justice.
- 2 And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as streams of water in a dry place, as the shade of a great rock in a weary land.
- 3 And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken.
- 4 And the heart of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.
- 5 The fool shall be no more called noble, nor the churl said to be bountiful.
- 6 For the fool will speak folly, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise profaneness, and to utter error against Jehovah, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and to cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.
- 7 And the instruments of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the meek with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right.
- 8 But the noble deviseth noble things; and in noble things shall he continue.

QUERIES

- a. Who is the "king"?
- b. What is a "churl"?

PARAPHRASE

Behold, a king who will reign righteously. His entire kingdom will be characterized by the administration of righteousness

and justice. The man on the throne will be a refuge from danger, a source of life and a resting place. When He comes things will be as they actually should be—people will see as they should see and hear as they should hear; confused men will understand clearly and men will speak the things of God clearly and boldly. In His reign a man will be acknowledged for what he actually is and not for what he appears to be—a fool will not be called a great leader nor will a deceitful man be called noble. The fool will be shown to be what he really is, dedicated to opposing God's will and doing harm to man. And the crafty man, despite all his cunning, is evil because he is dedicated to the exploitation of his fellow man. The truly noble man is one that advises true and pure ways and lives that way also.

COMMENTS

v. 1-2 RULER: Who is the king predicted? Our view is that it can only refer to the Messiah. He will rule in righteousness. The Messiah is the only one who truly reigns in righteousness. We do not think Isaiah is talking about a relatively righteous rule—rather he is predicting a rule that is completely righteous. Furthermore, this king (or perhaps citizens of his kingdom) will become a refuge, a source of life and a rest. Certainly no human king is intended here. What Isaiah is predicting is that sometime in the future (Isaiah does not say exactly when), as a result of God's judgment upon Judah and her consequent repentance, Jehovah is going to send a king to rule in righteousness and be a spiritual benefactor. This king's kingdom will consist of citizens fully converted. The "princes" might be a reference to the apostles whom Jesus said would sit on twelve thrones and judge Israel (Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:30) which meant the apostles would preach the gospel to the Jews and in so doing give Israel the divine criteria by which God will judge all men. "Princes" might, on the other hand, be merely an adaptation to the mentality of people

used to a monarchy and not intended to refer to any particular person or office in the messianic kingdom.

V. 3-8 RULED: Isaiah wants it understood that when the king reigning in righteousness comes things will be as God wishes them to be. The contrast between this new kingdom and the kingdom of Isaiah's day will be as different as daylight and darkness. Men will see as they should and hear and obey (which is what "hearken" means) as they should. The Hebrew word *mohar* is translated *rash* in verse 4 and could also be translated *hasty* or *impetuous* with the connotation of the confusion resulting from impetuosity and impropriety. In this new kingdom men will not act rashly or out of confusion as the people of Isaiah's day were acting in turning to pagan gods and pagan kings for help. They will not have their minds stupefied by drunkenness so they stammer as they were doing in Isaiah's day (cf. Isa. 28:7-8; 29:9). The Hebrew word *nokal* in verse 5 is translated *churl* in the ASV and *knave* in the RSV. It means someone who is *miserly, deceitful, crafty* or *fraudulent*. In the messianic reign a man will be known for *what* he is, not *who* he is as was the case in Isaiah's day. In the messianic reign God's covenant people, Christians, are the true realists! They not only see men as they are but as they may potentially be should the power of God's gospel be permitted to make them new creations. Christians "regard no one from a human point of view" (II Cor. 5:6-21) but as they are looked at from God's perspective! The value judgments of the worldly-minded man may cause him to call a man "smart," and "good" when God calls such a man a "fool" (cf. Lk. 12:13-21). Or the worldly-minded man may call the godfearing, Bible-believing person a "fool." But with God's revelation to guide him, the Christian has a set of values that tells him who is the fool and who is the noble man.

But Isaiah reveals in verses 6 and 7 what these people really are who were held in such esteem in his day. The man who profanes God by rebelling against God's law and teaches error against God's word in order to exploit others for his own ends, this man is a fool. There will be none of those in

God's new kingdom. The man who knows the plight of the needy and plots and deceives in order to exploit such a situation is a churl, a knave, and there will be no such people in God's new kingdom. Those who are to be ruled by the king who reigns in righteousness will be noble people. The word used for *noble* in verse 8 is *nediyviym* which connotes *willingness* as opposed to stubbornness, or *liberality* as opposed to obstinancy. It means *noble-mindedness*. This characterizes the attitude and the actions of the citizen of God's new kingdom which is to come.

QUIZ

1. Why is the "king" undoubtedly the Messiah?
2. What is to be the nature of those ruled over by the "king"?
3. Why will the citizens of this "king's" kingdom be realistic?
4. What does "noble" mean in verse 8?

2. SECURITY

TEXT: 32:9-20

- 9 Rise up, ye women that are at ease, and hear my voice; ye careless daughters, give ear unto my speech.
- 10 For days beyond a year shall ye be troubled, ye careless women; for the vintage shall fail, the ingathering shall not come.
- 11 Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones; strip you, and make you bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins.
- 12 They shall smite upon the breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine.
- 13 Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city:

- 14 for the palace shall be forsaken; the populous city shall be deserted; the hill and the watch-tower shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks;
- 15 until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be esteemed as a forest.
- 16 Then justice shall dwell in the wilderness; and righteousness shall abide in the fruitful field.
- 17 And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence for ever.
- 18 And my people shall abide in a peaceable habitation, and in safe dwellings, and in quiet resting-places.
- 19 But it shall hail in the downfall of the forest; and the city shall be utterly laid low.
- 20 Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth the feet of the ox and the ass.

QUERIES

- a. Why appeal to the women?
- b. When will the Spirit be poured?
- c. What "city" shall be laid low?

PARAPHRASE

Get up from your lounging around in luxury, you women who have the "I could not care less" attitude, and pay attention to what I have to say to you. In just a little more than a year you are going to change your attitude to that of caring immensely because the vintage which gives you the wine from which you get so much pleasure will fail—there will be no harvest of grapes. You should be trembling now instead of lying around in luxurious ease. You had better strip off all the luxuriant clothes and frivolous dress and put on sackcloth and repent now than wait until you are driven to smite upon

your breasts in mourning for the desolation of judgment that will surely come. When this judgment comes it will turn the land of my people into fields of thorns and briers. Thorns and briers will engulf the whole land, grow up over the houses, and over the palaces, for they will all be deserted. The cities will be empty and wild asses and goats will roam through the ruins of walls and watchtowers, sleeping in them and pasturing in the city gardens. This desolation of His people shall continue until the Spirit is poured down on us from heaven. Then desolation will be turned into abundant blessing. Justice and righteousness shall be sown among His people. Peace and rest and security will be harvested from the sowing of righteousness. My people will have a safe and restful place to dwell. But for my enemies I will rain down a hail-storm of judgment that will sweep them away. But whatever my people do will be prospered with all abundance.

COMMENTS

v. 9-14 WARNING PRONOUNCED: Once again the prophet appeals to the women to repent (cf. Isa. 3:16—4:1). Womanhood is the adhesive fibre of any society. They are the earliest teachers of each succeeding generation; they are the motivators of men; they are keepers of the home which is the essential element of all other social structures. When womanhood becomes decadent or deserts its God-ordained calling the last stronghold of societal cohesion is gone. Isaiah challenges the women of his day, lying around in luxury and self-indulgence, to “rise up” and listen to his warning. The women of Isaiah’s country were probably much like the women of Israel in Amos’ day, revelers, drunkards, greedy and careless (cf. Amos 4:1-2; 6:4-6). The word *careless* in v. 9-10 is from the Hebrew, *betahk*, which means *safe, secure*. Thus, they were “at ease in Zion” with the *false* sense of security brought on by the deceitfulness of sin. The prophet is trying to startle them from their luxurious, indulgent lethargy. Isaiah predicts that in just a little

over a year they will be brought up short because the ingathering of the vintage (the annual grape harvest) will not come as usual and their supply of wine and other luxuries will be unavailable. When the Assyrians swept down through Israel (722 B.C.) and on through Judah (cir. 704-700 B.C.) they practiced the "scorched earth" policy of warfare. Most ancient armies burned and destroyed all fortifications, cities and farmlands as they went so their enemies could not use them. Isaiah is probably writing here about a year before the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib (cf. Isa. 36-39). At that time Assyria had conquered and plundered most of Judah with the exception of Jerusalem, and Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were "caged like a bird" by the Assyrian army. All those so safe and secure would tremble then!

Now is the time to tremble, says Isaiah. Repentance now will save you from the judgment of God that will surely come, and its beginning will be in little more than a year. The prophet predicts that unless they have a change of mind and heart about their rebellion and sin, and tremble, the Lord is going to make their once fruitful land a desolate "ghost town." Thorns and briars will grow up and over houses; the palace of the king will be forsaken and Judah's teeming cities will be deserted. Why? Because the people will all be taken captive. Judah was not taken captive for another 100 years after Isaiah's prophecy here, but the judgment of Judah began with Assyria and continued through Babylon until its restoration in 536 under the Persians. During that period Judah was continually plundered and exploited by pagan empires and her people were being taken into captivity until the final captivity and destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. Judah was restored to her land beginning in 536 B.C. (70 years after Nebuchadnezzar's first assault upon Jerusalem in 606 B.C.). She enjoyed a relatively peaceful existence for 200 years until Alexander the Great came conquering the world (cir. 332 B.C.) and his successors, the Seleucids, occupied Palestine. Then from about 165 B.C. until 64 B.C. Judah was free of foreign occupation for another 100 years

during the times of the Maccabeans. But Pompey occupied Palestine (64 B.C.) for the Romans. Then in 70 A.D. the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and scattered the Jews to the ends of the earth. When Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one (cf. Dan. 9:24-27) came, the Jews were offered their final overture from God to receive the blessings promised through the prophets. The blessings of the prophets all focus on the first coming of the Messiah. He is the only way left for anyone to repent toward God. There will be no other way (cf. Heb. 6:1-8; 10:1-31). A reinstated Judaism with a reinstated Hebrew priesthood and a rebuilt Jewish temple is not promised anywhere in the N.T. or the O.T. for that matter. For people to return to Judaism, in the light of the finality of the sacrifice of Christ, is apostasy, and it is impossible to renew anyone to repentance through law, Jewish law, or any other law. This leads us to our next section.

V. 15-20 WEALTH PROMISED: This desolation of Judah, which at its very core was spiritual, would continue (cf. Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi to see the spiritual destitution of this people even after their restoration to their land) until the Spirit was poured out from on high. This evidently has reference to the accomplishments of the Messiah (cf. Dan. 9:24-27) in redemption and establishment of the church (Acts 2:38). The agricultural setting of this prophecy should not confuse the careful student of the New Testament since there are some specific keys in the N.T. which provide clues to proper interpretation of such passages. Consider the following passages:

Isaiah 61:1-4 compare with Luke 4:16-30

Isaiah 55:1-5 compare with Acts 13:26-41

Amos 9:11-12 compare with Acts 15:12-21

See also our list of "key" New Testament passages in *Minor Prophets*, by Paul T. Butler, College Press, pages 25-27.

The essential nature of the future fruitfulness which Isaiah is predicting is to be "justice" (true relationship between man and man) and "righteousness" (true relationship between man and God). These proper relationships are accomplished only through the agency of the Spirit of God, at first incarnate

in the Son, then dwelling in believers through faith and the agency of the Word. When these relationships are accomplished, peace, rest and safety are the results. This is exactly what the Messiah brought to the world and gave to all who will receive it by faith (cf. Mt. 11:25-30; Jn. 14:27; 15:11; Eph. 1:14; 2:11-22). For the true Jew in the eyes of God is one who is one inwardly (Rom. 2:28-29); indeed the promises made to Abraham's progeny was intended to be found by anyone who would become one of his children by faith in the one "seed," Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:6-9; 3:15-18); and all who are new creatures by faith in Christ are the Israel of God (Gal. 6:14-16). One thing is certain; the promises of Isaiah here in verses 16-18 have not found fulfillment in the Jews or in Palestine to this point in history. And to hold out a special dispensation for the Jews in some future age seems to us to disparage the finality and completeness of the New Testament, to say the least.

Verse 19 seems to indicate a prediction of the defeat of all that opposes this future Messianic purpose of God. Enemies of God are likened unto forests in Isa. 10:18-19; Jer. 46:23; unto images and beasts in Daniel 2-8; unto dragons and beasts in Revelation 12-13. God will overcome all opposition as He completes His work of redemption and establishing a place of peace, rest and safety on earth. What God will do on earth will last forever (v. 17). The kingdom of God established on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) is an eternal kingdom.

Those who by faith become citizens of this kingdom will enjoy God's blessings in abundance (Jn. 10:10; I Cor. 3:21-23; Eph. 1:3; Rom. 8:17-18; Rom. 8:32; II Cor. 4:16-18). Whatever they do, wherever they sow, wherever they work, it will prosper.

QUIZ

1. What kind of women were prevalent in Isaiah's day?
2. How would the vintage fail?

3. How long did the spiritual destitution of the Jews last?
4. What is the pouring out of the Spirit to bring with it?
5. Name some N.T. scriptures where we may find the fulfillment of these promised blessings.
6. Who are the true people of God?
7. When did God defeat the ultimate opposition of the forces of evil?

3. SUBJUGATION

TEXT: 33:1-12

- 1 Woe to thee that destroyest, and thou wast not destroyed; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! When thou hast ceased to destroy, thou shalt be destroyed; and when thou hast made an end of dealing treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.
- 2 O Jehovah, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou our arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.
- 3 At the noise of the tumult the peoples are fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations are scattered.
- 4 And your spoil shall be gathered as the caterpillar gathereth: as locusts leap shall men leap upon it.
- 5 Jehovah is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with justice and righteousness.
- 6 And there shall be stability in thy times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge: the fear of Jehovah is thy treasure.
- 7 Behold, their valiant ones cry without; the ambassadors of peace weep bitterly.
- 8 The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: the enemy hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth not man.
- 9 The land mourneth and languisheth; Lebanon is confounded