

Isaiah 31-32

Overview

Recall the overall setting: see the handout on ch. 13-35.

Chapters	Contents	Anomaly	Focus	Anomaly
13-23	Ten Burdens (13:1; 13:24; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1; 21:11; 21:13; 22:1; 23:1)	Woes in 17:12; 18:1	Primarily focused on the nations	17 addresses Damascus and 22 addresses Jerusalem
24-27	Apocalyptic Summary			
28-33	Six Woes (28:1; 29:1; 29:15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1)	Burdens in 30:6, 27	Primarily focused on Israel	33 addresses Assyria
34-35	Apocalyptic Summary			
36-39	The Assyrian Siege of Jerusalem		Shows the outcome	

This is the fifth of the six woes. We can trace a progression among them:

- 28:1, Fall of Samaria, with warning to Jerusalem that she is little better
- 29:1, Religious hypocrisy in Jerusalem, leading to the Lord's blinding their wise men
- 29:15, Woe to them that hide their own counsel from the Lord (general principle concerning the appeal to Egypt, but without reference to Egypt)
- 30:1, Woe to them that take counsel, but not of the Lord (makes the reference to Egypt explicitly; focus on Israel's sin and restoration)
- 31:1, Woe to them that go down to Egypt (acting on their godless plan; the Egyptian failure and the Lord's deliverance as a more general pattern)
- 33:1, The destruction of Assyria

This woe extends through ch. 32, since the next begins in 33:1. There are three pairs of paragraphs. In each pair, the first points out the people's sin and predicts the Lord's judgment on somebody, while the second looks forward to his blessing on his people. The first blessing is in the immediate future, but the second and third look forward to the coming of the Messiah and the New Covenant. These three contrasts point out false and true deliverers, false and true rulers, false and true peace and prosperity.

31:1-5, False and True Deliverers

1-3, Judgment on Egypt, the False Deliverer

31:1 Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help;--This is the climax of the last two woes. 29:15 condemned those who thought God couldn't see their plans. 30:1 focused on their refusal to ask his input. Now they act on their intentions.

and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because *they are* many; and in horsemen, because they

are very strong;--The issue now is not where they seek counsel, but where they place their trust. It's in the strength of the flesh.

but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel,--The verb means "to look for help." See discussion on 17:7, 8, where the fall of Samaria persuades the Jews to turn from their idols to the Lord. Judah has yet to come to that realization.

neither seek the LORD!--To "seek the Lord" is to inquire of him in time of trouble, from its very first use in Gen 25:22 on. The phrase is often translated "inquire of the Lord." Their behavior reflects that of Ahaziah in 2 Kings 1,

2Ki 1:2-4 And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that *was* in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease. 3 But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, *Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron?* 4 Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed.

Though Ahaziah did not send to consult the Lord, the Lord inserted a message to him anyway! Just so, Israel as God's covenant people may wish to ignore his counsel, but Isaiah brings it anyway.

2 Yet he also is wise,--There is a touch of irony in these words. "Why don't you turn to the Lord? He has wisdom, too, you know."

In the next few clauses, Isaiah moves from the past, through the present, into the future. One who is truly wise can manage the course of things through time (a point we'll see much after ch. 40).

First, he summarizes the Lord's decree in the past.

and will brings has brought evil, and will does has not called back his words:--We should translate the verbs in this verse as past tense. Isaiah is reporting the Lord's decree. "He is wise, too, and he has already destined what is to come to pass. Can your counselors do that?"

but will has arisen¹ against the house of the evildoers, and against the help of them that work iniquity.--Note the two categories:

- The evildoers, them that work iniquity, are the unbelieving Jews.
- "The help" is Egypt (v. 1).

Next, he describes the present state of affairs.

3 Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit.--This contrast is what makes the decision of v. 1 so foolish. Why choose men over God? Why choose flesh over Spirit? How can mortal men and horseflesh possibly stand against the decree of the all-wise God?

When the LORD shall stretch out his hand,--Now Isaiah moves into the future, to anticipate what happens when God's decree meets human opposition.

both he that helpeth shall fall כָּשַׁל [stumble],--That's the Egyptians.

¹ Without a preceding imperfect, we should read וַיָּקָם as ordinary *waw* plus perfect, not *waw* relative

and he that is holpen shall fall down נפל--That's Judah.

and they all shall fail together.--Both will be defeated before the Lord

The first two verbs echo the prophecy of 8:15 concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem,

Isa 8:15 And many among them shall stumble כשל, and fall נפל, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

and the purpose of the gift of tongues in 28:13,

Isa 28:13 that they might go, and fall backward כשל, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

The difference this time is that the disaster comes not just on disobedient Israel, but also on their Gentile partners. Throughout Scripture, those who associate with God's people often receive “overflow blessings,” for example, the stranger within the gate in Israel. But those in whom God's people place false confidence are at risk of being judged when God disciplines his people. We should be careful not to encourage our brethren to rely on us instead of on the Lord—not only for their sake, but for ours as well!

4-5, The Lord, the True Deliverer, Protects Jerusalem

But the Lord's decree goes further than just destroying the evildoers and their cardboard defenders. He will not forsake his people, and here he invokes two images to anticipate his deliverance of Jerusalem.

4 For thus hath the LORD spoken unto me,--*They* may not heed the Lord, but *Isaiah* is listening.

Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them:--

The first image is of a lion “roaring on his prey” that he has slain, jealously guarding it for himself. The shepherds try to scare him away from the slain lamb, but he stands firm and will not depart.

Does this image present the Lord as friendly toward Jerusalem, or as hostile? In chasing away others from the prey, he seems friendly, and the following verse clearly presents him as defending his people. But at the same time, it is his prey, that which he has slain, over which he stands roaring. The wording in the end of the verse is similarly ambiguous:

so shall the LORD of hosts come down to fight against/for mount Zion, and against/for the hill thereof.--The Hebrew expression rendered “fight for” is usually translated “fight against.”

As a result of these ambiguities, commentators go back and forth trying to figure out whether the image depicts the Lord's chastisement of Jerusalem, or his deliverance of it. But perhaps the tension is intentional. Consider the words of Hosea, Isaiah's contemporary:

Hos 6:1-2 Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. 2 After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

“Torn” is the verb from which the noun “prey” in v. 4 is derived. Hannah, Samuel's mother, knew that

1Sa 2:6 The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.

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Usually, we consider that he slays some and raises others. But those whom he makes alive, he first slays. He desires, not natural life, but the new life that emerges after death. So his grace toward us takes the form of first slaying us, then protecting us from others who would consume us, and miraculously raising us from the dead.

This is certainly the NT pattern. We believe that when God delivered up his Son to death, we died in him, and it is only from that death that we rise to newness of life (Rom 6). Paul's testimony about his own conversion was that he moved from his old life, not directly into the new, but through death:

Rom 7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

God deals in the same way on a national level with Israel. Because of their sin, they became his prey. The Assyrians and Babylonians scattered them throughout the ancient world. Only a small proportion returned under Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel, and the civilization that they rebuilt was again destroyed under Rome. One would think that such a culture would go the way of the Hittites, forgotten in the dustbin of history. But no, God stands guard over his prey, roaring to defend them from those who would take advantage of their weakness, and in his time raises them from the dead.

In one sense, this is the believer's continual experience. As we discover areas of our lives that are still rebellious against the Lord, we are to “mortify therefore [our] members which are upon the earth” (Col 3:5). Paul describes our lives as an ongoing process of death and resurrection in 2 Cor 4. The death in question comes here through persecution, but the result of trial is to purge us and increase our devotion to the Lord:

2Co 4:10-11 10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. 11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

5 As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem;--The second metaphor for the Lord's protection is a flock of birds hovering over the city, ready to attack anyone who might come near. Think of the effectiveness of air power in modern warfare. How terrible it must be to any enemy to have the Lord hovering over them! Isaiah describes the deliverance with four verbs, in two pairs.

defending also he will deliver it;--“Defend” is גגן G “to fence in”; “deliver” is נצל C “to snatch away, remove,” used in Amos 3:12 of a shepherd taking prey away from a lion! First we have a protective action, then removal from the threat. The same two actions are presented in the second couplet:

and passing over he will preserve it.--“Passing over” is the same verb that describes the Lord's relation to the angel of death in the tenth plague in Exod 12. A better translation is “hover over.” It describes, not the Lord's passive neglect in judging them, but his active protection.

Exo 12:13 when I see the blood, I will **pass over** you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy *you*, when I smite the land of Egypt.

Exo 12:23 For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will **pass over** the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite *you*.

“Preserve” is מלט C, a rare conjugation. The D is common in the sense “to save” or even “leave alone”

(2 Kings 23:18), but the C occurs elsewhere only at Isa 66:7, meaning “bear, give birth,” a meaning that Isaiah attests in the D at 34:15. The avian imagery (as in 34:15) suggests that the Lord is pictured as brooding over the nation and hatching it. His care here is that of a mother bird carefully guarding her eggs until they hatch. The image of taking refuge under the shadow of God's wings is common in the OT: Rut 2:12; Psa 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 63:7. One of the most explicit statements is:

Psa 91:4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust:

And our Savior picks it up in the NT:

Mat 23:37 how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!

God's people are as precious to him as the brood is to the mother bird, and he will defend them as fiercely as a lion guards its prey.

31:6-32:8, False and True Rulers

31:6-9, Judgment on Assyria, the False Ruler

6 Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted.--Compare 30:15, which promised salvation by “returning and rest,” repentance and faith.

They should turn to the Lord, because the others who ruled over them will be proven powerless. There are two: their own idols, and the Gentiles whom the Lord has used to chastise them.

7 For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin.--Contrast the imperative of the previous verse with the indicative here. You shall cast your idols away in frustration. But where will you turn? Let it be to the Lord, and not to yet another false hope.

The spiritual crisis in the modern world is that people have burned from false gods, not to the true God, but to atheism.

8 Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man; and the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him:--Assyria's end does not come through humans. When God chastises his people, it is usually through humans. Assyria is his “rod” (10:5), the instrument of correction (Prov 13:24; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15), to discipline Israel. But the destruction of Assyria, as of unbelievers in general (cf. the Flood) will be directly from God's hand. (Yet David deliberately chose the Lord's hand over human adversaries, exhibiting his trust in the Lord, 2 Sam 24:14.)

but he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited. 9 And he shall pass over to by his strong hold for fear, and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign,--In these four statements of his retreat (A, B, C,D), note the embroidery of three different features:

- the threat from which he flees (A, D). “Ensign” **נִסָּן** is distinctively Isaiah's: he uses 10 of the 21 instances in the OT. In every case but one or two (33:23; possibly 31:9) it is God's banner, and the exception describes the frustration of men who could not succeed to raise their banner.

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- the reference to the nation as a unit (“he,” A, C) vs. the description of his fine forces (B, D). These are young men, **בְּחֹרִים** “chosen ones,” princes, not common untrained peasants who might scatter at the first sign of conflict. Yet they are “discomfited” and “afraid.”
- his response, flight (A, C) and fear (B, C, D)

In the third clause, “strong hold” is literally “rocky craig” סלע, and may refer either to a literal mountain fortress or figuratively to a deity, as often in the psalms, starting with David, 2S 22:2/Ps 18:3 (ET 2); 31:4 (ET 3); 42:10 (ET 9); 71:3. Either way, Assyria is so terrified that he runs right past that in which he had trusted.

By mixing and matching these descriptions, he emphasizes the completeness of Assyria's fall.

saith the LORD,--The expression marks a summary oracle. This quatrain sums up what will happen to Assyria, to be detailed in the following Woe.

whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.--Better, “who has a fire [light] in Zion and a furnace in Jerusalem.” Isaiah reminds us of the images of Jerusalem as God's altar-hearth (Ariel, 29:1), where the nation would be burned, and the sacrifice of of Assyria on Tophet (30:33).

Heb 12:29 < Deut 4:24; 9:3, Our God is a consuming fire.

32:1-8, The Reign of the Divine King, the True Ruler

Now we learn who is to replace the idols and the Assyrians.

32:1 Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.--God's ideal is not democracy, but monarchy; not the rule of sinful people, but of a righteous king. The problem with totalitarian government is that no sinful can be trusted with such authority. The Bible's view of an ideal government is a king whose reign is righteous, and whose princes govern according to that standard. And Isaiah promises that such an administration will one day arise.

The prepositions might better be translated “for righteousness,” “for judgment.” These qualities describe not only the characteristics of the promised reign, but also its purpose. And these qualities are in focus: the verse starts with the reference to righteousness, “For righteousness shall a king reign.”

This reign will have three blessed characteristics: security, understanding, and an end of hypocrisy.

32:2, Security

The first blessing of the king's reign is security from both political and natural threats.

2 And a man.--Now he describes this coming king. He is first of all a man. God created man to have dominion over the earth:

Gen 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them **have dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27 So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,

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and **subdue it: and have dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Adam and his descendants badly failed in this charge, but God's original purpose will not be frustrated. David recognized that it is still God's purpose for man to rule over the earth:

Psa 8:4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? 5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. 6 Thou madest him to **have dominion** over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all *things* under his feet:

When the promised king comes, he will be a man. We recognize this promise as fulfilled in the Lord Jesus, the one who was God (John 1:1), and yet delighted to call himself “the son of man.”

This king will protect his people from two kinds of threat, represented by meteorological extremes in the middle east: the raging tempest, and the searing summer sun.

shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest;--Isaiah described the Assyrian invasion as a mighty storm:

Isa 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 with the hand.

This king will successfully defend the nation from any attacking foe.

as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.--These images describe, not occasional threats, but the constant condition of the desert parts of the land. Now, they are hostile and threatening. This king will make them fruitful and provide shelter from the beating sun.

We have heard these titles before:

4:6	25:4	32:2
And there shall be a tabernacle סכה for a shadow in the daytime from the heat , and for a place of refuge מחסה , and for a covert מסתר from storm and from rain.	For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge מחסה from the storm , a shadow from the heat , when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.	2 And a man shall be as an hiding place מחבא from the wind , and a covert סתר from the tempest ; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land

All three passages mention the same two threats: storm and heat. All three promise a refuge or hiding place. But what is this refuge?

- In our current passage, 32:2, it is explicitly a man.
- In 25:4 it is just as explicitly the Lord.
- In 4:6 it is not defined. It is simply promised as part of the Lord's provision for Jerusalem, but it is related to the “branch of the Lord” (4:2), the promised Messiah, the one who is both Son of Man and Son of God.

Thus 25:4 and 32:2 bring us back to the Branch of the Lord of 4:2, the Messiah, both God and man.

32:3-4, Understanding

The **second blessing** is clear and widespread understanding of the mind of God.

The heart of Isaiah's ministry was judicial blinding:

Isa 6:9-10 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. 10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

We have seen subsequent references to this judgment:

Isa 29:10-12 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. 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: 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.

But Isaiah also anticipates a day when this judgment will be reversed. He anticipates three steps.

3 And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken.--

The first step is that people will perceive God's revelation clearly. We saw this expectation earlier:

Isa 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.

In every age, true revival has been based on renewed access to God's word. The Reformation was sparked by printing, which made the Bible directly available to thousands. In our day, the internet and Bible software are powerful technologies that are enabling people to access the word of God with unprecedented ease.

4 The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge,--The second step is understanding. This is also an echo from ch. 29,

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

This blessing of understanding is the result of the new covenant.

Jer 31:33-34 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, **I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts;** and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for **they shall all know me**, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

And we enjoy the blessings of that covenant now:

1Jo 2:20ff But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and **ye know all things**. 21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because **ye know it**, and that no lie is of the

truth. ... 27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing **teacheth you of all things**, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.--The third step is proclaiming this truth clearly. The New Covenant promises of Jer 31 and 1 John 2 emphasize the independence of understanding that each believer will enjoy, but it is a blessing when we share with one another what God has given us. The best fellowship we can enjoy is when each of us receives insight from the Lord through his word, and then shares it with one another.

Isaiah mentions the end of stammering.² We read about “stammering lips and another tongue” in 28:11 (cf. 33:19), the verse that Paul quotes in 1 Cor 14:21 as prophetic of tongues. As we saw in Isa 28, the purpose of that miracle, like the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions, was to show Israel that authority had passed from the Jew to the Gentile. That in turn was an echo of the judgment of Babel (Gen 11), when the Lord confused the tongues of all nations. In the Day of the Lord, when the law goes out from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (2:3), tongues will cease (1 Cor 13:8), and even the cities of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan (19:18). In a time of judgment, God speaks through mixed and unknown languages, but the promise of the kingdom is,

Zep 3:9 For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.

We cannot emphasize too much that our God is characterized by language. He spoke the worlds into existence (Gen 1). He has magnified his word even above his own name (Ps 138:2), and when he sent his Son into the world, the exalted title that he gave him was, “The Word of God” (John 1; Rev 19). He delights to speak clearly to us, and wants us to speak clearly to him and to one another. Clarity of communication is at the heart of God's gracious revelation to us, and our fellowship with one another. In times of judgment he breaks that channel, but when the king comes to rule, we will perceive, understand, and speak with absolute clarity.

32:5-8, Honesty

Now we come to **the third blessing** of the king's reign. As a result of the knowledge of God's law conveyed in the second blessing, the deceptions that now characterize our political and social discourse will no longer be possible.

5 The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful.--It will help to consider briefly some of the words in this verse.

“Vile” is the Hebrew word נבל *nabal*. The word is most often translated “fool” or “foolish,” but it is not one of the standard terms used in Proverbs (see notes). Two contexts help us understand its meaning.

- This is the kind of person in Ps 14:1 who says that there is no God.
- This was also the name of the nobleman of the tribe of Caleb, the husband of Abigail, who refused to feed David and his men while they were fleeing Saul (1 Sam 25).

² The root עלג occurs only here, but is apparently a metathesized form of לעג, the form in 28:11 and 33:19.

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“Liberal” נָדִיב means “willing.” This noun and the related verb describe those who gave willingly at the building of the tabernacle, the temple, Hezekiah's restoration of the temple, and the rebuilding under Ezra and Nehemiah. The verb also describes those who volunteered under Deborah and Barak for the war against Jabin king of Hazor (Jud 5:2, 9). A related noun describes the “freewill offering.” Interestingly, out of 28 times that נָדִיב occurs, 15 are translated “prince,” and four more “nobles.” The biblical picture of a prince is someone who willingly serves the people, not one who is born to privilege. The English word is used in its classical sense of someone who is generous and kind, not in the modern sense of someone who is trying to do away with the old conventions.

“Churl” appears only here, with a related word only in v. 7. The context in v. 7 suggests, not just worthlessness, but deliberate perversion.

“Bountiful” appears elsewhere only in Job 34:19, where it is translated “the rich.” It describes the wealthy, noble, eminent people.

Israel had experienced the same reversal in moral values that we observe today. Consider two examples:

- It is virtuous if I see a needy person and give my goods to feed and clothe him. It is wicked if I take your goods to feed him. But today, if a nation taxes your substance to feed the poor, that's seen as righteous. This change is reflected in the very shift in the meaning of the word “liberal.” Originally it referred to personal generosity, in obedience to the principles of God's word. Now it refers to socialist values, in which the government takes over wealth and redistributes it. Modern liberalism results when one tries to exercise the virtue of old-fashioned liberalism in the strength of the flesh, apart from the guidance and constraints of the Word of God and his Spirit. It is the form of godliness, lacking its underlying power.
- Holding to God's standards of purity is no longer seen as righteous, but as intolerant and unloving, and those who encourage impurity are promoted as examples of open-mindedness.

When the promised king rules for righteousness, such perversion in judgment will no longer be tolerated. There will be no more confusion between the selfish and the generous, between the scoundrel and the eminent person, between the clean and the unclean. The character of each will be clear from the outset. Isaiah defines these three characters in highly parallel verses (Motyer):

- First, he names the person.
- Then in two disjunctive finite clauses he describes his purpose, emphasizing his **thoughts**.
- Finally, in the first two cases he describes the resulting **actions** in a series of infinitives.

Casus pendens	6 For the vile person,	7 And the churl,	8 And the liberal
Disjunctive descriptive clauses	He will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity,	His instruments <i>are</i> evil: he deviseth wicked devices	He deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand.
Infinitives	to practise hypocrisy [profanity, godlessness], and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.	to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right.	

6 For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity,-- “Villany” is the abstract noun corresponding to “vile.” “Iniquity” is און *awen*, which is associated with other words ranging from deception through wickedness to the trouble that results. Its relation with “hypocrisy” and “error” in the next two clauses suggests that the emphasis here is on deception.

to practise hypocrisy [profanity, godlessness], and to utter error against the LORD,--Ps 14:1 comes to mind: “the נבל has said in his heart, 'There is no God.’” The failing of his character starts with neglect of the Lord.

to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.--Because he does not fear the Lord, he does not care for those who are in want. We see this in Nabal, who pushed aside David's plea for help:

1 Sam 25:11 Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give *it* unto men, whom I know not whence they *be*?

The words may have a metaphorical thrust as well. His words of denial toward the Lord will discourage the poor and push them toward despair.

7 The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices—This class of scoundrel appears to be more deliberate. He is not just deceitful, but evil רע. He is not negligent of the Lord, but deliberately opposed to him.

to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right.--He not only withholds his good from the poor, but tries to deprive them of the little they have, by deceptive dealings. Isaiah has already pointed out this kind of injustice:

Isa 10:1-2 Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness *which* they have prescribed; 2 To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and *that* they may rob the fatherless!

8 But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand.--The attitude that the promised king will honor is a willing, generous heart of service toward the Lord and his people.

32:9-20, False and True Peace

The passage is a play on words for peace, rest, and calmness. 30:15 encouraged the people to trust in the Lord. But there is a false trust, and vv. 9-14 warn of it. The true confidence returns in 15-20.

9-14, Judgment on the Land

9 Rise up, ye women that are at ease, hear my voice;--As in ch. 3, he turns his attention to the women of Jerusalem. There, he condemned their haughty attitude.

Isa 3:16 Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing *as* they go, and making a tinkling with their feet:

Now he focuses on another characteristic: their lack of concern.

ye **careless daughters; give ear unto my speech.**--In this parallel clause, “careless” is from the verb בטח “to trust,” the “confidence” of 30:15.

Isa 30:15 For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength:

He repeats this term in vv. 10, 11.

10 Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women: for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come.--They do not know that an economic disaster is awaiting them.

11 Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones:--Though he continues to speak of the women, the first command is masculine plural, suggesting that he is broadening the scope to the whole population.

In 30:15, he condemned the rulers of Jerusalem for their failure to trust in the Lord, their hectic fleshly activities to secure the help of Egypt against Assyria. Now he highlights an opposite problem: people who are complacent in the face of coming judgment.

We have seen a hint of this problem before.

Isa 30:9-10 this *is* a rebellious people, lying children, children *that* will not hear the law of the LORD: 10 Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits:

People do not want to hear about their sin. They want prophets who will make them comfortable. As King Ahab of Israel said to Jehoshaphat of Judah concerning Micaiah ben Imlah,

1Ki 22:8 I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.

But it is the responsibility of the prophet to warn the people of God's coming judgment. Ezek 33:1-9 is the most eloquent expression of this responsibility.

strip you, and make you bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins.--This would be the condition of women led into captivity.

12 They shall lament—The verb is again masculine. The entire population is desolate.

for the teats, for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine.--They will be deprived of all the pleasures of life as they are led away captive.

13 Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city:--The city will be abandoned and become overgrown with weeds.

14 Because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left;--The hustle of the teeming capital will fall quiet.

the forts and towers [hill and watchtower] shall be for dens..., a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks;--The very last thing that a city would abandon would be its watchtower, placed on a high hill for better surveillance. Now wild animals roam through it.

... for ever ...--This is an interesting instance of the common Hebrew expression עד עולם, since it is followed in v. 15 by what appears to be a termination, “until the Spirit be poured upon us.” How then

can it be “forever?” Does this mean that “forever” only means “for a long time”?

Of all the things that are destroyed, only the fort and tower specifically are gone forever. In the reign of the king, when the Spirit comes upon the land, there will be no more need for fortifications. Compare the end of warfare in 2:4. The scope of the “until” in v. 15 is only the things that are said not to be “forever.”

15-20, Blessings of the New Covenant

Note throughout this section how some portions were fulfilled at Pentecost, while others await the return of the Lord.

15 Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high,--This is the distinctive mark of the new covenant. This aspect of the promised age has already occurred.

and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.--This physical restoration of the land has not yet occurred. Cf. 29:17.

Isa 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” is literally “orchard.” The grazing land will now be watered abundantly (30:25), so that it can support fruit trees, and what is now considered a fruitful orchard shall become like a forest.

16 Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.--“Wilderness” is literally “grazing land,” where the shepherds would live. Both the Cains and Abels of the land, the farmers and shepherds alike, will be marked by righteousness. Ezek 36:27 shows that this is a consequence of the gift of the Spirit in v. 15.

Note that this righteousness is part of the miracle of the coming age. It is not brought in by human effort, but as God's gift.

17 And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.--An extension of 30:15. Note related roots:

30:15	32:17
In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength:	And the work of righteousness shall be peace ; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever

To a people preoccupied with calling on Egypt, 30:15 urges trust in the Lord. But not all trust qualifies. The “careless women” are trusting, but have no ground for their trust. What is the difference?

The peace that God wants his people to enjoy stems from righteousness, the righteousness that he gives as part of his salvation. Put the two verses together, and we see three steps:

1. Repentance and faith (30:15a)
2. Righteousness (32:17, an aspect of the “saved” of 30:15a)
3. Peace and quietness (“peace” and the end of 32:17a, and the second half of both verses).

In terms of internal peace, we enjoy this aspect of the new covenant now.

18 And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places;--Here is the resolution of the challenge to the women. “Sure” here corresponds to “careless” there, and “quiet” to “at ease.” When God's people have received his salvation and exhibit the righteousness that he demands, then (and only then) will they enjoy peace, security, and true contentment. The quietness here extends beyond internal peace to their habitation and dwellings, a promise that still awaits the Millennium.

Two judgments, though, must fall before that time of peace can be realized.

19 When And it shall hail, when the forest comesing down on the forest;--First, Assyria must fall. Isaiah has used “the forest” as an idiom for Assyria:

Isa 10:33-34 Behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature *shall be* hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled. 34 And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.

And he has just described the Lord's judgment on Assyria in terms of a hailstorm:

Isa 30:30-31 And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of *his* anger, and *with* the flame of a devouring fire, *with* scattering, and tempest, and hailstones. 31 For through the voice of the LORD shall the Assyrian be beaten down, *which* smote with a rod.

and the city shall be is low in a low place.--Second, Jerusalem must be humbled.

20 Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.--In the prosperity that follows the judgment, water will be abundant, and the land will be so productive that there will be no need to fence off the animals. Let them roam through the fields and graze—there is more than enough for all.

Notes

איש and אדם

The KJV in 31:8 contrasts the two words, as in some other texts:

Psa 49:2 Both low בני אדם and high בני איש , rich and poor, together.

Psa 62:9 Surely men of low degree בני אדם *are* vanity, *and* men of high degree בני איש *are* a lie: to be laid in the balance, they *are* altogether *lighter* than vanity.

Isa 2:9 And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not.

Isa 5:15 And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled:

K&D favor this distinction (though Delitzsch, in his longer commentary, does not). Ps 42:9 is the strongest support for a distinction, since there are no other words to support the contrast between the two phrases. But in other cases, AV treats the pairing of איש and אדם as a simple poetic pair,

Isaiah 31-32

Job 38:26 To cause it to rain on the earth, *where* no man *is*; on the wilderness, wherein *there is* no man;

Pro 6:12 A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth.

Pro 12:14 A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of *his* mouth: and the recompence of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.

Pro 24:30 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;

Pro 30:2 Surely I *am* more brutish than *any* man, and have not the understanding of a man.

Isa 2:11=17 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

Isa 44:13 The carpenter stretcheth out *his* rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house.

Jer 2:6 Neither said they, Where *is* the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?

Jer 10:23 O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

A common poetic pairing is אִישׁ and בְּנֵי אָדָם : 2 Sam 7:14 (plural); Job 35:8 (singular); Ps 80:17 (s); Pr 8:4 (pl); Is 52:14 (s/pl); Jer 49:18 (s), 33 (s); 50:40 (s); 51:43 (s); Mic 5:7 (pl)

“Fool” in Proverbs

כִּסִּיל appears 49x

אִוִּיל appears 19x

נָבֵל appears 3x

Gerleman VT 24 (74) p. 153: “someone who, within a particular sphere of influence, counts for nothing, has nothing to offer, gives no help, commands no respect, is nothing.” But this is based on an etymological derivation from בָּל “nothingness.”

Marböck TDOT IX.171 “a breach or derangement of the bonds that unite human beings with each other or with God, whether expressed in status, attitude, word, or deed.”

Expressions with עוֹלָם

There are two major Hebrew expressions, עַד עוֹלָם and לְעוֹלָם , and two Greek expressions, εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα (only OT) and εἰς αἰῶνος. (All constructions other than εἰς occur with both singular and plural nouns, both articular and anarthrous.) Are these aligned? Let's count verses.

Isaiah 31-32

	עד עולם x83vv, 88 hits (¾ÁmlÁ[Á d[Á)	לעלם x 187vv, 190 hits (¾ÁmlÁ[IA)	Both	Neither
εις τον αιωνα x284vv, 302 hits (¾ejj Á1 aiwnÁ)	24	163	5 (1K 2:33; Ps 110:8; 124:1; 148:6; Ezk 37:25)	102
εως αιωνος x65vv, 69 hits (¾ewj Á1 aiwnÁ)	57	5 (1K 2:33, Jer 38:40, Dan 6:27, 1Ch 23:25; 28:7)	3 (1K 2:33; 1Ch 23:25; 28:7)	6
δι' αιωνος x5 (¾diÁ Á1 aiwnÁ)	Dt 12:28	Dt 5:29; Isa 60:21		Jer 20:11; Wis 4:19
Both	2S 7:16 ³ ; 1K 2:33 ⁴	1K 2:33		
Neither	1 Ch 17:24; Jer 17:4; Mic 1:15 (bad hit)	18		

Clearly, the NT expression εως αιωνος comes from עד עולם, the expression that we have in Isa 32:14. This is an interesting instance of the common Hebrew expression עד עולם, since it is followed in v. 15 by what appears to be a termination, “until the Spirit be poured upon us.” This expression is the Hebrew equivalent of the NT εως αιωνος, which is used to describe eternal punishment. The question naturally arises whether hell is indeed eternal. Possible interpretations:

- In many cases, עד עולם refers to the indefinite past or future (see lexica); etymologically, the term refers to that which is “hidden,” inaccessible. It is “eternal” in the sense of being beyond our ken. Is it eternal in the mathematical sense of infinitely long? I doubt the Hebrews thought that way, but even using their thought, one would be in error to assert anything about whether it ended or not.
- I prefer to observe that of all the things that are destroyed, only the fort and tower specifically are gone forever. In the reign of the king, when the Spirit comes upon the land, there will be no more need for fortifications. Compare the dead corpses in 66:24, an everlasting witness to the old world that is done away. The scope of the “until” in v. 15 is only the things that are said not to be “forever.”

3 2 instances of עד עולם, one translated by each Gk expression

4 εις = לעלם, εως = עד עולם