

## Isaiah 33

### Overview

The chapter has two parts.

Vv. 1-12 are a rapid alternation of **judgment** (mostly on Assyria) and **deliverance** to Judah. (The colors are noted on the verse numbers). Only once (v. 3) is there any hint that the Lord might be the source of the judgment. Assyria as the source of the destruction that befalls both itself and Judah.

Vv. 13-24 merge these two strands.

- The Lord takes credit for the judgment (v. 13), and Judah, observing the Lord's might, trembles at the thought of her own sin.
- The deliverance promised in vv. 1-12 comes into full bloom.

### 1-12, Judgment on Assyria and Deliverance for Judah

Grammatical person varies throughout this section. Commentators seek explanations (for example, invoking enclitic *mem* in v. 2), but it may be deliberate, giving the oracle a staccato, snapshot quality.

**33:1 Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee [him]!**--Assyria is characterized by two sins. He is a spoiler (one who robs other nations) and a treacherous nation (one who betrays agreements).

- Vv. 1-6 focus on the first sin, with repeated references to spoil, wealth, and treasure.
- Vv. 7-12 focus on the second. We'll see that Assyria agreed to leave Judea in exchange for tribute, but then went back on its promise.

**when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.**--The judgment is a reflection of a fundamental principle throughout Scripture. Assyria will be treated as it has treated others.

This is a fundamental principle of the Mosaic law:

Deu 19:21 And thine eye shall not pity; *but* life *shall go* for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

And in fact the principle was recognized even by pagans. It is prominent in the law of Hammurabi, 400 years older than Moses,

196 If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out.  
197 If he break another man's bone, his bone shall be broken.

David observed that this happens even apart from the intervention of the courts (Psa 7:15-16):

He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch *which* he made. 16 His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.

After the captivity and return, even among the Jews who remained in dispersion,

Est 7:10 they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.

Paul states the general principle (Gal 6:7):

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Here, Isaiah invokes this principle toward Assyria. There is no reference to the hand of the Lord. Assyria falls subject to a general moral law of the universe, and the author of that law remains in the background, as throughout the judgment sections of vv. 1-12.

## **2-6, Judgment on the Spoiling Nation**

**2 O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou **their** arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.**--Isaiah here exemplifies the godly response to such an oppressor: not to seek revenge, or (as Judah did) to run to Egypt, but to turn to the Lord.

**3 At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of **thysself** the nations were scattered.**--Two contrasts between v. 3 and v. 4 deserve attention.

1. v. 3 is past tense, while v. 4 is future.
2. v. 3 is addressed to a single individual (masculine singular “thysself,” the Lord), contrasted to masculine plural “your,” Assyria, in v. 4.

So v. 3 is looking back to the Lord's past deliverance, as encouragement in the present crisis. Does Isaiah perhaps have in mind Psa 46:6?<sup>1</sup>

The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

Still, when the judgment falls (v. 4), it is from the hand of men:

**4 And your **spoil** shall be gathered *like* the gathering of the caterpillar: as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them [it, sc. the spoil].**--Now Assyria will be consumed as thoroughly as crops in the face of a swarm of locusts.

The Assyrians did not abandon Jerusalem with an orderly retreat. The Angel of the Lord destroyed 185,000 of them (37:36), which must have left their camp virtually abandoned around Jerusalem. Though neither Isaiah nor Kings mentions any spoil, we know that earlier, when the Lord routed the Syrian army from Samaria, the people gathered great spoil (2 Kings 7:16). It is hard to imagine that the people of Jerusalem did not gather up the camp of Assyria, left desolate after the Lord's judgment.

The spoiling of the Assyrians may explain what is otherwise paradoxical in ch. 39. Judah had sent treasure to hire Egypt's support (30:6), and later Hezekiah sent all of his silver in a vain attempt to buy off Assyria (2 Ki 18:14-16). Yet when the ambassadors from Babylon come (39:2), Hezekiah

shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures:

How did he replenish his treasury after the expenses of his failed diplomacy? Probably from the spoil

---

<sup>1</sup> Hengstenberg and Perowne in fact assign Ps 46 to the defeat of Sennacherib.

recovered from the Assyrian camp after the Lord slew them.

5 The LORD is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.-- The motifs of the Lord's exaltation in Zion and the proliferation of judgment and righteousness show that Isaiah is here referring to the day of the Lord, the Messianic age:

Isa 24:23 Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

Isa 32:1 Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.

**6 And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure.**--Better,

Wealth of salvation, wisdom and knowledge shall be<sup>2</sup> the stability of thy times; the fear of the Lord, that is his [the messianic King's] treasure.

The first half of the verse focuses on the people (“the stability of thy times”), while the second half considers the reigning Lord from v. 5 (“his treasure”). Let's look more closely at each of these.

Consider the first half of the verse. “Strength” means “wealth,” that which is protected by strength, cf. Jer 20:5; Ezek 22:25; Pr 15:6; 27:24. The verse is thus enumerating the kinds of wealth that will enrich the capital when the Lord rules there. Israel will spoil the Assyrians (v. 4), but that is not what will ultimately bring them “stability of thy times.” His treasury will be filled, not with the silver and gold captured from the Assyrians, but with salvation, wisdom, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord.

So today, national stability will never come from a strong currency or high bank reserves or a growing stock market. If our land would enjoy “stability of times,” we need, not bank bailouts and government-guaranteed loans, but salvation, wisdom, and knowledge.

It's worthwhile meditating on these three golden coins in our treasure chest.

Salvation (whether in the face of a temporal threat like Assyria, or in the broader spiritual sense) is recognizing our lost condition, and turning to the Lord. If we don't have salvation, nothing else matters.

What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge?

Sometimes the two are used almost as synonyms for skill and cunning, as in the first place where they appear together:

Exo 31:1-5 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: 3 And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in **wisdom**, and in understanding, and in **knowledge**, and in all manner of workmanship, 4 To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, 5 And in cutting of stones, to set *them*, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.

Certainly “wisdom” in this sense of practical understanding, skill in life, is a great treasure. It's not as great as salvation, but it is what we want next after we are saved.

Wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord (Pro 9:10), when we turn to him in salvation. But we are not

---

2 The chiasmic pattern that this parsing yields, ABBA (A = reference to wealth, B = virtues), shows that the AV is correct in making these characteristics, and not the Lord himself, the subject of the initial יהיה.

wise at that point. We are “babes in Christ” (1 Cor 3:1), who are “unskillful in the Word of Righteousness” (Heb 5:13). As a result, we “walk as men” (1 Cor 3:3), which is to say, stumbling into sin at every turn, manifesting “envying, and strife, and divisions.” But the NT holds out to us the prospect of becoming “spiritual,” “perfect,” “mature,” as the Holy Spirit takes control of more and more of our lives. The result of this process is moral uprightness, practical Christlikeness:

1Co 2:15 he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

Eph 4:13-15 Till we all come ... unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

So our wealth begins with salvation, and continues with wisdom, skill in godly living. The third coin in our treasure chest is knowledge. Two verses in Proverbs suggest an important distinction between wisdom and knowledge. We have seen that Isaiah frequently refers to Proverbs, and he may have these verses in mind:

Pro 9:10 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of **wisdom**: and the **knowledge** of the holy *is* understanding.

Pro 30:3 (Agur:) I neither learned **wisdom**, nor have the **knowledge** of the holy.

In these verses, wisdom is our understanding of the world around us, but the object of knowledge is specifically the Lord himself.<sup>3</sup> In 9:10, “knowledge of the holy” is parallel to “fear of the Lord,” which is even more explicit in Pro 2:5,

Then shalt thou understand the **fear of the LORD**, and find the **knowledge of God**.

We also see this pairing in 11:2, the Messianic endowment of

the spirit of **knowledge** and of the **fear** of the LORD

where both knowledge and fear have the Lord as their object.<sup>4</sup> In other words, wisdom is horizontal, while knowledge is vertical. Wisdom enables us to live skilfully in the world, in keeping with the law of the Lord, but knowledge brings us into intimate fellowship with the Law-giver himself. Paul himself did not consider that he had reached this objective, even toward the end of his ministry when he was under house arrest in Rome at the end of Acts. In Phil 3:8-11, written at that time, he shared his deep desire for the knowledge of the Lord.

8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of **the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord**: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 **That I may know him**, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

3 קדשים, plural of majesty.

4 So both Delitzsch and Alexander.

The NT tell us where we may fill our pockets with these true riches. We gain them from

Col 2:2-3 Christ; 3 In whom are hid all the treasures of **wisdom** and **knowledge**.

And in fact this is the point of the second half of v. 6, “the fear of the Lord, that is his [the messianic King's] treasure.” The first half focused on our experience under the rule of the Lord in v. 5 (“stability of thy times”), but the second half returns our attention to the Lord himself.

Note first of all the dual nature of the one who rules. v. 5 calls him “the LORD,” יהוה. Yet v. 6 says that he treasures “the fear of the Lord.” Throughout vv. 5-6 we hear echoes of Isa 11:1-4,

1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: 2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of **wisdom** and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of **knowledge** and of the **fear** of the LORD; 3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not **judge** after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: 4 But with **righteousness** shall he **judge** the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

The rod out of the stem of Jesse, anointed with “the spirit of wisdom ... and knowledge,” is “Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:2-3). He rules with the wisdom and understanding that come from the fear of the Lord, and the outcome of his rule is judgment and righteousness throughout the earth.

## **7-12, Judgment on the Treacherous Nation**

Now we turn from Assyria the spoiler to Assyria the treacherous one (v. 1). This prophecy refers to the events of 2Ki 18:13-17.

13 Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.

The natural route followed by a large army would be along the coast and through the foothills. Sennacherib's annals record that he took 46 cities from Hezekiah, and Micah 1:10-16 lists a number of cities in the Shephelah that suffered under the Assyrian advance.

14 And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.

Hezekiah asked Assyria to withdraw in exchange for tribute, and Assyria agreed. So Hezekiah sent the tribute:

15 And Hezekiah gave *him* all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house. 16 At that time did Hezekiah cut off *the gold from* the doors of the temple of the LORD, and *from* the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

Yet Assyria did not honor its agreement, but proceeded to besiege Jerusalem anyway:

17 And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris and Rabshakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah with a great host against Jerusalem.

Most of the judgments in vv. 1-12 fall upon Assyria. This one falls on Jerusalem, from Assyria's hand.

**7 Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without:**--The noun is unknown elsewhere, but cognate to “warrior” in 2 Sam 23:20. It is usually understood to be parallel to (Jerusalem's) ambassadors in the next clause, which agrees with the common usage of the verb צעק for crying for help, but the mp suffix suggests Assyria, and the scene would then fit Rabshakeh in 36:13.

**the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.**--The messengers of Judah who carried the offer of 2 Kings 18:14ff.

The next two verses are a chiasm: in the center is Sennacherib's treacherous action.

**he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man.**

On either side are the consequences as the army marches up from the Shephelah into the hill country to besiege Jerusalem.

**8 The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth:**--No one dares set foot outside because the enemy is everywhere.

**9 The earth mourneth and languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down: Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits.**--The crops cannot be tended, and the invaders eat whatever appears. The land is desolated by Sennacherib's army as it passes through.<sup>5</sup>

**10 Now will I rise, saith the LORD;**--Isaiah quotes the expression from Psa 12:5,

For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, **now will I arise, saith the LORD;** I will set *him* in safety *from him that* puffeth at him.

**now will I be exalted;**--The same verb as in v. 3, recalling the Lord's earlier intervention for Israel.

**now will I lift up myself.**--Parallel to קום in Ps 7:7 (ET 6), 94:2.

**11 Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you.**--The masculine plural pronouns refer to Assyria. The outcome of its glorious campaign will be waste to be burned, kindled by its own breath. The principle of an eye for an eye returns.

**12 And the people[s] shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.**--“People” is plural. The destruction of Assyria anticipates the coming judgment on all nations.

The image of destruction by burning is one of Isaiah's favorites, but the agent differs. Here, as in 9:18, and consistent with the emphasis of vv. 1-12, the sinner kindles the fire:

9:18 For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up *like* the lifting up of smoke.

---

<sup>5</sup> Delitzsch suggests the intriguing idea that the reference is to the autumn season, when the leaves turn color and fall, so that the world itself is seen as blushing at the Assyrian's treachery and Israel's shame. But the time reference is too tenuous to confirm this. The desolate earth is a common motif in Isaiah for the coming day of the Lord, e.g., 24:1-6, when it reflects the Lord's judgment, and

But the resulting conflagration is the Lord's sacrifice:

30:33 For Tophet *is* ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made *it* deep *and* large: the pile thereof *is* fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

In the next section, the emphasis shifts back to the Lord as agent.

## 13-24, Judgment and Blessing Merged

vv. 13-24 merge these strands of judgment and blessing. Now the burning of v. 12 is seen to be from the hand of the Lord. Israel as well as Assyria is under judgment, but is then delivered and blessed.

**13 Hear, ye *that are far off*, what I have done; and, ye *that are near*, acknowledge my might.**--The Lord takes credit for the judgments on the Gentiles of vv. 1-12, but also calls on “ye that are near,” the Jews, to heed his power.

The balance of the section forms a chiasm: A BCB D BCBC A

A. Correction of sinners	14-15	23-24
B. A secure dwelling	16, 17b	20, 21b
C. The king	17a	21a, 22
D. The vanished threat	18-19	

The focus (vv. 18-19) is on the destruction of Assyria, which is the overall point of the Woe.

## 14-15, Correction of Sinners

**14 The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?**--God's judgment on the ungodly stimulates the believers to fear.

Isaiah draws his answer from David, who asked a similar question in Pss. 15 and 24,

Psa 15:1 LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

Psa 24:3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?

The answers overlap considerably. 24:4 is a summary of purity in action, thought, and speech:

Psa 24:4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

Ps 15 aligns with the details, and Isaiah probably has it in mind.

33:15	Psa 15:2-5	Comment
He that walketh righteously,	2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,	Conduct according to the Word of God: Ps 24:4, “clean hands”

## Isaiah 33

and speaketh uprightly;	2b and speaketh the truth in his heart. 3 <i>He that</i> backbiteth not with his tongue, 4c <i>He that</i> sweareth to <i>his own</i> hurt, and changeth not.	Ps 24:4 “nor sworn deceitfully.” Ps 15 gives three refinements, reminding us of the importance of uprightness in speech: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• truthfulness, speech that corresponds with reality</li> <li>• kindness: backbiting רגל means “slander, spy,” and refers to digging out and spreading secret information about people in order to discredit them</li> <li>• trustworthiness</li> </ul>
he that despiseth the gain of oppressions,	4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned but he honoureth them that fear the LORD.	Ps 24:4 “a pure heart ...,” sympathy with righteousness and opposition to injustice
that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes,	5 <i>He that</i> putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent.	“clean hands ... nor sworn deceitfully,” will not be bought
that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood,	3c nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.	This amplifies the “backbiteth not” of 15:3. Does not participate in slander, gossip, or rumor-mongering.
and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; <sup>6</sup>	3b nor doeth evil to his neighbour,	Ps 15 forbids doing evil; Isaiah strengthens this to even looking on it and being fascinated with it. This principle would put an end to much of the modern movie industry.

It is sobering to contemplate such stringent requirements for access to God's presence. How thankful we should be that we are accepted, not in our own merits, but “in the beloved” (Eph 1:6).

### **16-17, The King and his Capital**

**16 He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions [strongholds] of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.**--The righteous is in a rocky fortress where no one can attack him, with an abundant supply of food and water so that no siege can succeed against him. One thinks of Elijah by the brook Cherith, 1 Kings 17, protected from Ahab. Cherith is described as a נחל, a torrent-valley, and the context makes it likely that it is one of the steep valleys in the highlands of Gilead to the east of Jordan, thus fitting the description of “rocky strongholds.” God sent him his food by raven, and the brook furnished water.

**17 Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty:**--From the secure capital, we turn our attention to the king who is enthroned there, cf. 24:23,

the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

This is the first of three references in this section to the king. In 24:23, his relation to the people was unclear. Each of these three references emphasizes us. Here, we will see him in his exalted beauty.

**they shall behold the land that is very far off.**--or “that stretches afar.” Israel is no longer constrained, but its boundaries extend, as promised, “from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river

<sup>6</sup> The last three lines recall the three monkeys, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three\\_wise\\_monkeys](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_wise_monkeys), depicted on the stable of the Toshō-Gu shrine in Nikko, Japan (“hear no evil, speak no evil, see no evil”). The earliest date for the oriental saying (which also included the hands, “do no evil”) is AD 800 in China, so Isaiah may in fact be the origin for this saying, which may have come in with Christian missionaries, who were in China before the 7<sup>th</sup> century (as shown by the Nestorian Stele), or Jews, who were there even earlier.



Euphrates” (Gen 15:18).

### **18-19, Center: The Vanished Enemy**

Reinforcing the theme of the overall Woe, these two central verses reflect the two characteristics of the Assyrian from v. 1, the spoiler (v. 18) and the traitor (v. 19).

**18 Thine heart shall meditate terror.**--That is, recall the oppression of the Assyrians. The terror of the occupation will exist only in their memory, as something from a bad dream<sup>7</sup> (cf. 29:4, 10, and notes). The meditation itself is summarized in the following clauses, describing the bureaucracy that extorted tribute from subjugated nations.

**Where is the scribe?** --or “counter,” the one who counted money.

**where is the receiver?**--or “weigher,” for goods (like bulk metals or grain) that could not be counted.

**where is he that counted the towers?**--to determine a city's size and thus the tribute it owed.

Paul appears to allude to these questions in 1 Cor 1:20. The world's wise men will pass away before the Lord as completely as did the Assyrian.

**19 Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, that thou canst not understand.**--Once more we are reminded of the judgment indicated by the speech of the invaders (28:11). The reference to language brings us to the theme of treachery and betrayal of agreement, rounding out the reference to v. 1.

### **20-22, The King and his Capital**

Isaiah alternates between the vision of the secure city and its glorious king.

**20 Look [thou] upon Zion, the city of our solemnities [appointed feasts]:**--Once more the city will be devoted to the true worship of God. As in Zech 14, the nations will come to worship there.

**thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation,**--fulfilling the promise of 32:18,

my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places

**a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.**--Though unmoveable, Jerusalem is still a tabernacle, the dwelling of a pilgrim people. Revelation distinguishes the millennium (ch. 20) from the following new heaven and new earth (ch 21), when Jerusalem is a city with rock foundations, not a tent. Most of Isaiah concerns the millennium, the “day of the Lord,” long but not eternal. Not until the end of his prophecy does he introduce the new heaven and new earth (65:17; 66:22).

**21 But there the glorious LORD will be unto us[;]**--“We will have the glorious Lord.” In v. 17 he is “beautiful,” here he is “glorious, majestic.” There, we saw him. Here, he is our possession.

**a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant**

---

<sup>7</sup> I'm grateful to Josh Durand for noting this alignment.

**ship pass thereby.**--Abundance of water is the ultimate security against famine in the ancient world. Jerusalem will have broad rivers, and yet be safe from any craft that might approach.

**22 For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.**--This is the third reference to the Lord, after vv. 17, 21, and the most intimate. Now we not only behold his beauty (17) and possess his majesty (21), but enjoy the deliverance that comes from having him in control. We noted at the end of ch. 12 that the pinnacle of our joy comes when “the holy one of Israel” is “in the midst of thee.” The promise of Isaiah's great vision is not just that the Lord will come and establish his rule, but that **we** will see him (v. 17), he will be **ours** (v. 21), he will save **us** (22).

It is striking, though perhaps coincidental, that these three titles reflect the three parts of our own government: judiciary, legislature, and executive. Our founders carefully separated these to achieve a balance of powers. That division was founded in a deep-rooted skepticism about human nature, and the desire for checks and balances. It also makes our government somewhat clunky, schizophrenic, and slow to respond. In the coming age, one perfect, sinless God-Man will hold all of these offices.

Within Israel's historical context, these are not different divisions of the government, but different forms in which the whole government was exercised at different periods.

Title	Historical Example	Characteristic	Failing
Judge	Judges (Gideon, Samson)	Deliverance from enemies	Self-serving
Lawgiver	Moses	Consistency of rule	Relied on own strength, could not finish
King	David, Solomon	Organized government, international extension	Fell into idolatry and turned away from the Lord

Now the Lord will realize the promise of all these modes of government: the consistency of Moses' law, the strength and deliverance of the judges, the organization and international influence of the kings. But he will have none of their tragic failures. The outcome of all this is that he will save us.

### **23-24, Correction of Sinners**

**23 Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail.**--The reference is to Jerusalem, not Assyria (Delitzsch): Assyria is always depicted as masculine (10:5-7; 14:25; 30:31), while the suffix here is 2f, as in 1:26. No ship will attack them by way of their rivers, but they should not be proud of their security, as though they were an independent galleon. Their fleshly strength is depicted as an abandoned ship. They could not well sail it anyway.

**then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey.**--Jerusalem's victory is not due to her strength. She is lame, yet victorious.

**24 And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.**--As in 14-15, the focus returns to the reformation of Jerusalem. The sin and sickness depicted in ch. 1 is gone, and they live safe and prosperous under their divine king.