

**Is. 29:1** Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city *where* David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices.

Ariel is a symbolic name for Jerusalem and comes from a root word that means "lion of God," which of course makes me think of lion of Judah. To ensure that there is no misunderstanding as to who is being addressed, Isaiah identifies Ariel as the city where David lived. In Ezekiel 43:15 the same basic word is used in reference to the altar of the millennial temple. This would tie in with the last half of this verse since it is talking about the continual sacrifices that take place in the city year after year. The people continue in their routines of sacrifice and delude themselves into thinking that all is well between them and God.

**Is. 29:2** Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel.

Isaiah is saying that God is going to bring trouble (distress, oppression) to Jerusalem and the people will mourn with sorrow. God is going to treat Jerusalem as an altar, a place where blood is spilled.

**Is. 29:3** And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee.

**Is. 29:4** And thou shalt be brought down, *and* shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.

God is speaking through Isaiah. "I" am going to be the source for your coming distress. Obviously, God is going to use human instruments to accomplish His purpose, but they wouldn't be allowed to touch Jerusalem/Judah without His prompting or permission. Verse 4 seems to reference the voices of those who will be killed calling out from the other side of death through the trickery of sorcerers and wizards (from the word for "familiar spirits," necromancers); those they had begun to consult for guidance and direction instead of God.

**Is. 29:5** Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones *shall be* as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly.

The word *strangers* references foreigners and the poetic repetition of the thought in the second phrase connects these strangers with "terrible ones," which is a reference to tyrannical oppressors, men who cause fear, enemies. There will be so many in the invading army that Isaiah compares them to dust and chaff. He also indicates that the destruction they would cause would be quick and sudden.

**Is. 29:6** Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.

The time being referenced in the prophecy seems to jump to the future at this point—which prophecy often does. The prime example is presented when Jesus reads from the Isaiah scroll in the temple and stops in the middle of Isaiah 61:2 (Luke 4). We know that the Babylonians captured Judah, and they left great destruction in their wake. That judgment was according to God's will.

The next few verses speak of God intervening on behalf of Jerusalem with thunder, an earthquake, great noise, and a devouring fire. These judgments are very similar to the impact of the 7<sup>th</sup> seal, the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet and the 7<sup>th</sup> vial judgments in Revelation.

*Revelation 8:1&5* And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour....And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

*Revelation 11:15&19* And the seventh angel sounded....And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

*Revelation 16:17-18* And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

**Is. 29:7** And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision.

**Is. 29:8** It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion.

The first phrase of verse 7 references “the multitude of all the nations,” not just Babylon; this scenario seems to be making reference to the battle of Armageddon in particular (or it could be the attack of Gog's coalition described in Ezekiel 38). The enemies of Israel that will gather around Jerusalem will not be successful. Isaiah paints a picture comparing the enemies of Jerusalem to hungry men who dream of eating, but wake up still hungry--to thirsty men who dream of having their thirst satisfied, but wake up still thirsty. They will surround Jerusalem in expectation of victory, but will be defeated by the consuming fire of the Lord. It seems significant to me that the reference is no longer to Ariel at the end of verse 8; it is to “mount Zion,” known as the “city of God.”

*Psalm 87:2* The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.

**Is. 29:9 Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink.**

**Is. 29:10 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.**

“stay” = question, hesitate, to be reluctant; from root that means to question what, why, how, when

“wonder” = consternation, terror combined with amazement

“cry” = look about in dismay, stare

The prophet references the prophets (those who speak from inspiration), the rulers (denoting the spiritual leaders, the priests), and the seers (those who prophesy as a result of visions). These three groups would represent the spiritual leadership of the people. Isaiah seems to be describing a time when the people are looking at their spiritual leaders wondering in fear and amazement what is causing them to act the way they are. They are not providing proper leadership to the people, and they are not behaving according to their privileged position. Why? Because the Lord has given them a spirit of sleep and blindness; He has basically given them over to their pride and fleshly desires. God is no longer providing them with spiritual inspiration, wisdom, or visions.

That is a very sobering thought. Scripture has many examples of people who pass the point so to speak of ever being able to turn to God in faith and repentance or to turn back to God in repentance. My thoughts go to Pharaoh (Exodus), Korah (Numbers 16), Saul (1 Samuel 28), Judas (Matthew 27), Ananias & Sapphira (Acts 5), etc. There is a point in life when God gives you over to your sin or determines that judgment requires death, and we have no way of knowing when that point is.

David Guzik made an insightful application to the church today: “This *is not* seen as a ‘blessing from the Spirit of the LORD.’ This is a *curse*, both self induced and sent from the LORD. This speaks powerfully to those today who promote the idea of God ‘blessing’ His people with being ‘drunk in the Spirit.’”

**Is. 29:11 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:**

**Is. 29:12 And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.**

As a result of their spiritual blindness and their lack of spiritual discernment, the spiritual leaders make pitiful excuses for their ineptitude in communicating God’s message to the people.

Why is it that human nature is to look for excuses and throw blame elsewhere? Pride and the lust of the flesh are so strong. I am making an effort to assess my wrong actions and inactions and call them what they are—sin. It’s ugly and it

hurts, but it is also freeing and motivating when I present myself to God in humility and repentance. I am so amazed at His abundant mercy and forgiveness!

**Is. 29:13** Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

Again, Isaiah emphasizes that this message is from the Lord. You can't fool God; He knows our thoughts, what is in our hearts.

*Psalm 94:11&21* The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man....Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.

Even though the people of Judah/Jerusalem continued to go through their religious routines before God, it was only lip service; there was no true worship of God from their heart. Their religious leaders had so corrupted God's law, that they were actually following the law according to man and not the law according to God. They feared/reverenced God according to the example and teaching of their "spiritual leaders," and had no foundation in the awe and wonder of who God is and His love and provision for them.

I think there is a great comparison to be made in the "church" of today, at least in America. Many go to church out of duty and because it makes them feel like they are doing the right thing. They go through the routine of the service without getting personally involved in true praise and worship of God or making personal application of the teaching of the word of God. In fact, our "church" leaders are becoming more and more like the religious leaders of Judah in Isaiah's day. They teach their version of what they think God means instead of teaching the truth of God's word. They claim that human error in the translation of the scripture through the years has corrupted God's original meaning, so they are free to interpret according to God's love and mercy while ignoring the hard truths and the fact that He is a righteous God that will judge sin. They preach so as to please the masses.

**Is. 29:14** Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, *even* a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise *men* shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent *men* shall be hid.

"marvelous work" & "wonder" = great, difficult, wonderful, hard, miracles

In my mind this verse carries the same thought as 28:21. God is going to act in a way toward His people that is not normal or indicative of their position as His chosen people. Just as judgment is His strange work, so not providing spiritual wisdom and understanding to the spiritual leaders is a hard/difficult thing. God's desire is to fellowship with His people and to provide them with every good thing, but He is now going to withdraw His hand of blessing for a time. This is in direct contrast to God's blessing that covers the obedient man of faith as declared by the Psalmist.

*Psalm 84:11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

**Is. 29:15 Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?**

This verse reiterates the truth that we can hide nothing from God (as referenced in verse 13 above). Still, people seem to think they can hide their works and thoughts from God just as they can deceive other people.

David expressed the truth that we cannot hide from God so beautifully.

*Psalms 139:7–12 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.*

**Is. 29:16 Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?**

The people's perspective of God and their relationship to Him had completely changed from that of obedience and worship to one of pride in themselves. God is definitely the Potter, the Creator. Paul mirrored the thoughts of Isaiah in his letter to the Romans.

*Romans 9:20–21 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?*

The last half of this verse reminds me of the teachings of today. Evolution teaches that there is no Creator; things just exploded into existence. Scientists claim to have understanding superior to that which God has revealed to us in His word or as revealed in the miraculous design of the world around us. What they teach doesn't change the truth that God is the Creator and acts according to knowledge and understanding far above our abilities to comprehend.

*Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

*Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

**Is. 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?*

**Is. 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.*

**Is. 29:19** *The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.*

Lebanon was known for its cedar trees and was designated by God as part of the land given to Israel, but it was never conquered.

*Deuteronomy 11:24* *Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be.*

The change in reference from Ariel to mount Zion to Lebanon in the context of this message from God through Isaiah seems to be for specific reasons. The use of *Lebanon* seems to be referencing the time when Israel will occupy all the land that was promised to Israel by God.

As usual God's perspective on time is quite different from ours. He speaks of this time as coming in a "very little while." When your perspective is that of equating 1000 years to a day, that makes more sense.

*Psalms 90:4* *For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.*

Isaiah is speaking of a time when the land will be fruitful and abundant with good things. I think the reference to the deaf hearing and the blind seeing has a double application, both physical and spiritual. In context, we have been talking about spiritual deafness and blindness. This will be a time of hearing God's word with understanding. It will be a time of spiritual insight and perception in response to the revelation of God. The word *meek* references those who are humble and poor but who love God. This will be a time of great joy in the Lord for these people. It's hard to experience great joy when all around you seems evil and you don't understand why God is acting in patience and mercy instead of judgment—when the evil seem to prosper while those who are following God in faith suffer.

I think we can agree that this time is yet future.

**Is. 29:20** *For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off:*

**Is. 29:21** *That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.*

The Lord's destruction of Israel's enemies will be complete. There will be none left who are looking to do evil. No longer will a person have to fear unfair judgment because of false accusers and deceitful methods. The Righteous Judge will be on the throne and justice will prevail.

O that it were today! It seems that in America at least, the court system is set up so that the person with the cleverest lawyer and/or the means to pay for the testimony he needs is the one who prevails. The lawyers are concerned about winning the case; they are not concerned with justice. The judges are so powerful that they can get away with interpreting the law as they see it rather than in the context of the intent of its guidelines when it was written. The courts of our land are far from operating under the biblical guidelines from which they were first framed.

**Is. 29:22 Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale.**

**Is. 29:23 But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel.**

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

Again, emphasis is given that though Isaiah is speaking, he is speaking the words of the Lord. The Lord delivered Abraham from among the peoples on planet earth and separated out the descendants of his grandson, Jacob/Israel, for a special relationship and a special work to teach the people of planet earth about God.

One of the first things that struck me was that Jacob, though dead, is in a position to experience shame due to the actions of his descendants.

*Luke 20:37-38 Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.*

Though Jacob has seen much to shame him and cause him great heartache, there is coming a time when he will experience the joy of seeing his descendants respect the name of God as holy and live their lives in obedience to and respect for the God of Israel. Although they once were spiritually blind, they will once again see and understand with spiritual eyes. No longer will they rebel at the teaching of God's truth; they will put forth the effort to learn and apply what they learn to their lives.

“the work of mine hands” – I think this is more than just a reference to God as the Creator. The fact that Israel will return to a place of blessing and obedience to their God will not come about because of the efforts of the people themselves. It will be a result of God's diligence in chastening and judgment as well as nurturing and encouragement as needed until they are brought to the position of desiring and welcoming the Lord as their God. It will be the result of a consistent application of tough love. If only we as parents were wise enough to do the same. Too many parents today are more concerned about being their child's friend than being their parent; they are more concerned about

appearances before others than they are about what is best for a child; they make decisions that are inconsistent and send confusing messages to the child.