

Is. 33:1 Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou *wast* not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! 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.

After reading through this chapter in several translations, I get the sense that God is speaking through Isaiah to Judah and its enemy Assyria as well as to God's people and their enemies in future times.

Assyria is guilty of *spoiling* (ravage, oppress, rob, lay waste) without provocation and of dealing *treacherously* (deceitfully) without provocation. The message to Assyria is essentially that just as surely as you have treated others with wickedness, you are going to reap the same. The time will come when God will not allow you to continue as a conqueror, and you will become the conquered.

Assyria is a perfect picture of the enemies of God and His people today. They are so caught up in the now and the influence and power they exert now, that they don't think of the time that their reign of influence and power will end. Their pride (often bolstered through the deceit of the enemy, Satan) refuses to acknowledge that they will be brought to justice. They seem to think that if they just pretend God doesn't exist, they don't have to fear His retribution.

Is. 33:2 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 seems to break out in a prayer. He is asking for gracious/kind treatment from Almighty God for the people of Judah. He is recognizing that their strength and deliverance are dependent upon God alone.

"we have waited for thee" – I stopped to go back and read in 2Kings 17-20 which gives the account of Sennacherib's siege of Judah and Hezekiah's decision to humble himself and pray to God for deliverance. He then proceeded to wait for God's deliverance, and God did deliver.

It's a true test of faith when we can trust God by *waiting* when the enemy is right at the door and the situation looks hopeless. The scripture is full of exhortation to "wait on the Lord."

Psalm 27:14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

Psalm 37:7&34 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him....Wait on the LORD, and keep his way...

Proverbs 20:22 ... but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

Lamentations 3:25-26 The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.

Zephaniah 3:8 Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD...

The Hebrew for the word *waited* means to wait with patient expectation.

Is. 33:3 At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered.

Is. 33:4 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.

Verses 7-9 would seem to indicate that the Assyrian army is outside the gate. That would tend to make this a prophecy of the description of the fleeing of the Assyrian army after God answers Hezekiah's prayer by sending His angel to kill 185,000 soldiers in the Assyrian army during the night. Isaiah is voicing confidence in the fact that it will be God that puts the enemy on the run. When they left, the people of Judah would be able to benefit from the spoils they left behind which he compared to the work of the caterpillar. This would seem to indicate that they no longer feared attack; they would be able to work at a leisurely pace. God's attack on the enemy is compared to the quick devastation that locusts can bring about on crops and vegetation.

The main problem I have with applying the verses to the Assyrians is the use of the word *nations* (plural). The Hebrew is a reference to foreigners, Gentiles, or the heathen. Assyria is one nation, but as a conqueror of others maybe it was a reference to the nations that were part of the whole.

On the other hand, it can be an expression of Isaiah's confidence in God's actions on behalf of the enemies of His people at any time of His choosing.

Is. 33:5 The LORD is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.

As Isaiah thinks about God's deliverance he breaks into praise. He seems to be echoing the thoughts of the Psalmist.

Psalm 97:9 For thou, LORD, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.

Psalm 118:16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

Psalm 113:5 Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high...

Psalm 37:6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

Is. 33:6 And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure.

This verse seems to reference his thoughts in chapter eleven where the context of the passage is the millennial reign of the Messiah.

Isaiah 11:2 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....

These two verses are speaking of a time when Zion is filled with judgment, righteousness, wisdom, and knowledge. This will be a time of *stability* (security, moral fidelity, truth). "Strength of salvation" seems to be a reference to the wealth that will be theirs through the victory of Messiah. The word *treasure* is a reference to a depository, a place of safekeeping. The time of Messiah is sure because it is held in trust by the bank of YHWH.

I wonder what went through the prophet's mind when subsequent events didn't produce the conditions in Zion that are described in these two verses. It must have been hard to be inspired with these words of wonderful expectation and then remain faithful when God said not right now—but the time is coming. I think the key to Isaiah's ability to stay faithful is stated in the last phrase of verse 6, "the fear of the Lord is his treasure." Isaiah was a man of God; he was very familiar with the Torah. When I did a word search, God instructs the people of the importance of fearing Him repeatedly.

Deuteronomy 6:2, 13, 24 That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments....Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him....And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always...

Deuteronomy 10:12&20 And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.

Deuteronomy 13:4 Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him,

Deuteronomy 14:23 ...that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always.

Later on Isaiah expresses his knowledge that God's ways are far beyond his understanding; therefore, he would continue to "fear the Lord."

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. 33:7 Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without: the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.

Is. 33:8 The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man.

Is. 33:9 The earth mourneth *and* languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed *and* hewn down: Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off *their* fruits.

Sometimes it is really hard to follow the flow of the prophet's message. Isaiah goes from praising God for the victory to reflecting current conditions. The people of Jerusalem are distraught. Their attempts to make peace with the Assyrians have failed. The roads of the country have been destroyed; the people are afraid to travel because of the advance of the enemy—an enemy that has no regard for promises or human life. The broken covenant being referenced is described in 2Kings 18. Although Hezekiah met the financial demands of the king, he placed Jerusalem under siege anyway. The people were afraid. The Assyrian king had already conquered Lebanon and Israel.

Is. 33:10 Now will I rise, saith the LORD; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself.

At this point God's message to Isaiah is that He's had enough; the enemy of Judah (Assyria) will not be allowed to threaten His people any longer. God will be exalted; He will lift Himself up through His actions of deliverance on behalf of His people. Again, God is going to show His people that He is the only One worthy of their trust and praise.

Is. 33:11 Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, *as* fire, shall devour you.

Is. 33:12 And the people shall be *as* the burnings of lime: *as* thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.

The Assyrians have been bragging of their victories and their might. They have caused God's people to tremble in fear. All their bluster is now going to be proved without foundation. Isaiah compares them to *chaff* (dry grass, easily broken) and *stubble* (same as chaff; poetic repetition); their words are going to result in their own destruction through the fire of God.

Verse 12 seems to jump in time if you take it literally. It could be speaking of the complete defeat that the enemy will experience at the hand of God, but I tend to think there is a more literal application. We are now living in a day and age in which this type of utter destruction of the people by fire paints a vivid picture of nuclear destruction. Isaiah has already referenced a time when Zion will be filled with righteousness (which will only happen when Jesus comes to take His throne). I think Isaiah is receiving a message that has more than one application.

Is. 33:13 Hear, ye *that are* far off, what I have done; and, ye *that are* near, acknowledge my might.

This verse is a wake up call to those who witness or hear testimony of God's actions on behalf of His people. God is emphasizing that it is His mighty hand that has accomplished the deliverance of His people.

As I was reading through this section again, it occurred to me that “far off” could be a reference to time as well as distance. It could be a reference to us.

Is. 33:14 *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?*

The obvious fact is that the enemies of God’s people are sinners. Now Isaiah is referencing the fact that there are enemies in the camp so to speak. Instead of relief and joy at God’s deliverance, these sinners are terrified at the power of God. There are always those who profess God as Lord, but their lives don’t back up their profession; they are hypocrites. They find themselves as afraid as those who have openly rejected God. They realize that God is a consuming fire and their lives are at stake unless they repent.

Again, I can’t help but think of end times and the comparison to the mindset of those who have *professed* Jesus, but really don’t *possess* Jesus, when they witness the rapture of all true believers.

Is. 33:15 *He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;*

Is. 33:16 *He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.*

Isaiah now paints a word picture of those who can count on God’s protection and deliverance:

- Those who walk righteously (morally).
- Those who speak uprightly (honestly).
- Those who despise the thought of taking advantage of their fellow man to profit themselves.
- Those who refuse to accept bribes.
- Those who refuse to take part in plans of murder and bloodshed.
- Those who protect their eyes from evil/wicked things.

As I look over this list, I think that most “Christians” today consider themselves safe as to the first five points; but I wonder how many can honestly say that they protect their eyes from evil things. I’m not sure anyone with a TV truly can. No matter how quick on the trigger you are with a remote, even supposedly “good” programs have commercials that project lifestyles and morals that go against God’s truth. How many “Christians” excuse the movies they watch by the fact that it is “just depicting real life,” or “it has a real good message,” or “I don’t really notice those bad words,” or! I still struggle with where to draw the line.

I think as God was giving this message to Isaiah, He was speaking specifically to the lives of the people who were hearing the message; but He was just as surely speaking to us today.

Those who trust God as LORD will dwell on high. That is a description of safety and security in the knowledge that God is in control of what is allowed into your life. The word *munitions* speaks of a fort or a stronghold; so the second phrase is reinforcing the thought of safety and security. Bread and water speak of God's provision of what is necessary for our nourishment and sustainment. Our thoughts naturally go to physical sustenance and nourishment, but I think that it is spiritual sustenance and nourishment that is the primary thought.

Is. 33:17 *Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.*

"Thine" – the people of Judah; God's people

I think Isaiah's vision has to be referencing the coming of the Messiah. When God provides deliverance in the person of Jesus, the Messiah, as the conquering King, His people will see Him in all His *beauty*. Webster defines beauty as "An assemblage of graces or properties pleasing to the eye, the ear, the intellect, the æsthetic faculty, or the moral sense." In other words, everything about King Jesus will please us. Judah/Israel in particular will finally behold a homeland that fills the borders promised by the Lord. Instead of a great nation on a tiny sliver of land, they will be a great nation in a great land.

Genesis 15:18 *In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates...*

Joshua 1:2-4 *Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.*

Is. 33:18 *Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where is the scribe? where is the receiver? where is he that counted the towers?*

Is. 33:19 *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.*

After reading through several translations, I get the idea that these verses are speaking of the thoughts of God's people in retrospect as they begin to experience the blessings associated with the reign of Messiah. They will remember the terror their enemies caused them, but they will never again have to worry about the attack of an enemy who terrifies them, whose speech they can't even understand.

Is. 33:20 *Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, 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.

God knows our hearts. He knows what His people have suffered at the hands of their enemies—at the hand of the enemy (Satan). He will encourage the people to look at Zion, their holy city. It will be a quiet, peaceful place to live that will never again be destroyed or suffer at the hands of an enemy.

Is. 33:21 But there the glorious LORD *will be* unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.

Is. 33:22 For the LORD *is* our judge, the LORD *is* our lawgiver, the LORD *is* our king; he will save us.

Isaiah is stating that the LORD, YHWH, will be the protection of Zion; no enemy ships will be able to penetrate His protective covering. This is a time when God's people recognize Him as:

- Judge – the one who determines whether our actions are right or wrong; the one who makes righteous decisions
- Lawgiver – the one who declares what is right and wrong
- King – the ruler on the throne; THE AUTHORITY
- Savior – the source of deliverance, protection and security

Is. 33:23 Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey.

This verse is describing a ship whose sails/mast are not secured, so it cannot be directed; it's a ship in trouble. This seems to be referencing the ships of the enemy referenced in verse 21. When God destroys the enemies of His people, they will benefit from the spoils of victory. God's victory will be so complete that even the lame will be able to take part in the spoils. God's blessing extends to all of His people—not just the strong.

Is. 33:24 And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein *shall be forgiven their iniquity.*

The people of Zion will be healthy when Messiah reigns; sickness will be a thing of the past. It's interesting that healing from sickness is associated with forgiveness of sin. Again, this emphasizes the healing of the soul, but does not preclude the healing of the body. Jesus taught this very truth during His ministry on earth.

Mark 2:5-11 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it

easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.