

Lesson 16 Isaiah 31-35 The Stability of Your Times

Introduction

I am going to push us ahead in this lesson through the five chapters that contain our last two woes. We have overarching themes: Turn to God in unstable times. He is the Lord of History. He is your wisdom for this life. He is your hope for the future. He will lead the redeemed into a perfect Kingdom led by a perfect King.

God is trustworthy. Just as His promise of salvation from Assyria came true, so also His other promises for the future will come true. That future salvation will be experienced, in part, as history marches forward. But complete salvation requires a new kind of kingdom led by a new kind of king. That salvation will be completed only with the renewal of Heaven and Earth. Failure of human leadership over human kingdoms will continue to be a very real part of our present reality.

We will consider the last two of our six woes in this lesson. The first three woes established theological principles. The second three woes show those principles at work in the concrete historical situation of threat from Assyria and alliance with Egypt. The 1st woe pairs with the 4th, the 2nd with the 5th, and the 3rd with the 6th.

We can see the pairing of the woes in the details of the text. For example, the 1st woe and 4th woes are the only two places in Isaiah that God's wrath comes as a storm of hail; both woes include a scornful rejection of God's word; these are the only two woes that use the phrase, "taking refuge"; and in both cases that phrase points to false refuge in a foreign power. For the 2nd and 5th woes, God's altar hearth appears in the 2nd; fire and furnace appear in the 5th; reference to Mount Zion is only in these two woes; the imagery of hunger and thirst is common to both; and the unseeing eye in the 2nd is matched by the seeing eye in the 5th. For the 3rd and 6th woes, Lebanon is mentioned in both; as are the blind and the deaf; joy in the Lord; redemption; holiness; and spiritual transformation.

Now, these textual details that suggest the pairing motivate us to look closer at the themes in each pair of woes. And while certain themes overlap through all six, Motyer shows a principle supported by application in each pair. That pairing of themes is one way to summarize the many themes that weave together in this whole section.

We get these two summaries from the 1st and 4th woes. First, the principle in the 1st woe, "When God's people reject his Word and Covenant, destruction follows, according to God's divine purposes (28:1-29)." And then the application in the 4th woe, "Refuge is sought in Egypt, rejecting the Lord's word, even so, God's immediate and ultimate purposes are accomplished (30:1-33)."

Then we get these two summaries from the 2nd and 5th woes. First, the principle in the 2nd woe, "There is disaster and deliverance in God's divine purposes, but historical deliverance does not change people spiritually. Spiritual deliverance needs a further divine action, which is already planned by God (29:1-14)." And then the application in the 4th woe, "Divine deliverance scorns both Egypt's help and Assyria's enmity. Beyond lies the perfect kingdom with the true king and a transformed people. The pattern of history will be repeated: overthrow and transformation (31-32)."

Finally, we get these two summaries from the 3rd and 6th woes. First, the principle in the 3rd woe, "People may think to run the world without God, but He is the sovereign, and His transforming purposes will work out spiritually, morally and socially, fulfilling what began in Abraham and ending with the establishment of a truly renewed people (29:15-24)." And then the application in the 6th woe, "Treacherous people may seem to rule but divine sovereignty remains. The perfect kingdom, morally and socially and spiritually, will come. The enemy will finally be destroyed, and the redeemed will gather in Zion (33-35)".¹

¹ J. A. Motyer. *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996) 228.

Let's consider now the text to see how Isaiah calls us to trust in God as our rock for the present and our sure hope for the future.

5th Woe (31-32)

The 5th woe starts off with a prologue of disaster and deliverance and ends with a corresponding epilogue of humiliation and blessing. In between, Isaiah issues a first call to return to God, followed by a description of a society led by the ideal king. Then Isaiah issues a second call to return to God, followed by a description of a society transformed by the Spirit.²

A¹ - Prologue: disaster and deliverance (31:1-5)

We start with God's deliverance followed by disaster. These verses place us in the historic context of the Assyrian threat and failed Egyptian alliance. Isaiah 31:1-5.

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| <p>¹ Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help And trust in chariots because they are many But they do not look to the Holy One of Israel,</p> <p>² Yet He also is wise and will bring disaster But will arise against the house of evildoers</p> <p>³ Now the Egyptians are men and not God, So the LORD will stretch out His hand,</p> | <p><i>And</i> rely on horses, And in horsemen because they are very strong, nor seek the LORD!</p> <p>And does not retract His words, And against the help of the workers of iniquity.</p> <p>And their horses are flesh and not spirit; And he who helps will stumble and he who is helped will fall,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">And all of them will come to an end together.</p> |
| <p>⁴ For thus says the LORD to me, "As the lion growls over the young lion over his prey, <i>And</i> he will not be terrified at their voice So will the LORD of hosts come down</p> <p>⁵ Like flying birds</p> | <p>Against which a band of shepherds is called out, nor disturbed at their noise, to wage war on Mount Zion and on its hill." so the LORD of hosts will protect Jerusalem.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">He will protect and deliver <i>it</i>; pass over and rescue <i>it</i>.</p> |

This woe starts very similarly to the 4th woe. There it was, "Woe to those who make an alliance but not of my Spirit." Here it is, "Woe to those who trust in chariots but do not look to the Holy One of Israel." Ground your decisions in the will of God. Seek Him first. The false security of Egypt will be quickly revealed, "He who helps will stumble," that's Egypt. "And he who is helped will fall," that's Judah.

Though Judah experiences severe consequences in the Assyrian invasion, God has decided to rescue them, but only after the false security of Egypt is removed. Isaiah imaged for us here a mixed metaphor of lions and birds of prey. Coming down to wage war on Mount Zion, God is like a lion standing over His prey. Assyria, marching up to Jerusalem, is like a band of shepherds trying to scare the lion off. God is not "disturbed at their noise." They are just noise to Him. The image is scary both for Assyria and for Jerusalem. The Assyrians are shepherds facing a lion. Jerusalem is the prey over which the lion stands. That's a powerful image of protectiveness. Try to pull a lamb shank out of a lion's mouth! It's also disconcerting if you are the lamb.

Verse 5 switches to the image of birds of prey hovering over the city. Isaiah follows the image with a quick succession of verbs, "The Lord of hosts will protect Jerusalem, protect, deliver, pass over, rescue." I am reminded again of Deuteronomy 32:11 where God is pictured as an eagle protectively hovering over baby birds in a nest.

B¹ - A Call to return based on future deliverance (6-9)

In the next section, disaster and deliverance is followed by a call to repentance. Isaiah 31:6-9.

- ⁶ Return to Him from whom you have deeply defected, O sons of Israel. ⁷ For in that day every man will cast away his silver idols and his gold idols, which your sinful hands have made for you as a sin.

² Motyer, 254.

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| <p>⁸ And the Assyrian will fall by a sword not of man, So he will not escape the sword, ⁹ "His rock will pass away because of panic, Declares the LORD, whose fire is in Zion</p> | <p>And a sword not of man will devour him. And his young men will become forced laborers. And his princes will be terrified at the standard," and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.</p> |
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You notice that reference to standard. This is that image of God as the King on the battlefield. The sons of Israel here is not a reference to Israel, the Northern Kingdom. That Kingdom has already been destroyed and exiled. The people of Israel from the days of old carry on in Judah. The Judeans are the "sons of Israel." Isaiah is calling these men to return. He charges them with deep defection from God. "In that day," is a phrase that often refers to the end times. I do not see that here. Assyria surrounding Jerusalem and God defeating Assyria. That is "the day."

Back in 2:20, Isaiah wrote, "In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats their idols of silver and their idols of gold." They cast away their idols in time of war to protect the precious metals of the statues. That's what the idols are reduced to. They are only objects. They cannot protect, or save, or bless, or fulfill. Here the casting off of idols could have the same idea of protecting silver and gold from invaders. But back in the last woe, in 30:21-22, walking with God required a turning from false gods, a destruction of graven images. I think here, Isaiah predicts the throwing off of idols as an act of repentance that happens just before God saves Judah - that is the moment that Hezekiah is going to believe - or in response to God having saved. You know, then they will cast off their idols because they will see the truth of who God is.

Isaiah predicts that salvation from Assyria will be a God thing, "A sword not of man will devour him." His rock, his princes fail. Whatever the Assyria soldier hopes in, whether it is his king, or his god, or the might of his army, that rock will fail. We see here the pairing of the 2nd and 5th woes with the theme of Ariel or altar hearth picked up again through the language of fire and furnace. This theme is not limited to the pairing of the 2nd and 5th woes. God's consuming or burning anger against Assyria occurs in each of the last three woes.

God's deliverance is not based on the goodness of Judah, but on his own decision to set apart Jerusalem as holy and to punish the Assyrian army for its wickedness. He is the Lord "whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem." Assyria will be sacrificed on the altar of God.

C¹ - The King and the new society (32:1-8)

Isaiah follows this call to return to God with the description of a righteous king ruling over a new society. Isaiah 32:1-8.

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| <p>¹ Behold, a king will reign righteously ² Each will be like a refuge from the wind Like streams of water in a dry country, ³ Then the eyes of those who see will not be blinded, ⁴ The mind of the hasty will discern the truth,</p> | <p>And princes will rule justly. And a shelter from the storm, Like the shade of a huge rock in a parched land. And the ears of those who hear will listen. And the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak clearly.</p> |
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That's a reversal of the spiritual blindness and deafness that exists in society of Judah, in Isaiah's day. Judeans in the future will have been transformed, "the hasty mind will discern truth, the stammerer will speak clearly."

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| <p>⁵ No longer will the fool be called noble, ⁶ For a fool speaks nonsense, To practice ungodliness To keep the hungry person unsatisfied ⁷ As for a rogue, his weapons are evil; To destroy <i>the</i> afflicted with slander, ⁸ But the noble man devises noble plans;</p> | <p>Or the rogue be spoken of <i>as</i> generous. And his heart inclines toward wickedness: and to speak error against the LORD, And to withhold drink from the thirsty. He devises wicked schemes Even though <i>the</i> needy one speaks what is right. And by noble plans he stands.</p> |
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Judah's men of prestige are fools and rogues. That is not a hard image to picture. We think of so many men and women in business or politics, the words do often apply. The people of this new society will see through the nonsense and wicked schemes of such men. Imagine a place where the rogue and fool are never allowed to lead, but instead discerning members of society follow the noble man and are attracted to him by the nobility of his plan.

B² - Call to hear in the light of future destruction (9–14)

In the next section, Isaiah again challenges the people of Judah to return to God. This time he addresses the women, calling them, "complacent daughters." The effect of addressing both men and women is to include the whole of wayward society, not just men, not just women: everyone. This is Isaiah 32:9-14.

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| <p>⁹ Rise up, you women who are at ease, You complacent daughters,</p> <p>¹⁰ Within a year and <i>a few days</i> For the vintage is ended,</p> <p>¹¹ Tremble, you <i>women</i> who are at ease; Strip, undress</p> <p>¹² Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields,</p> <p>¹³ For the land of my people Yea, for all the joyful houses</p> <p>¹⁴ Because the palace has been abandoned, Hill and watch-tower A delight for wild donkeys,</p> | <p><i>And</i> hear my voice; Give ear to my word. You will be troubled, O complacent <i>daughters</i>; <i>And</i> the <i>fruit</i> gathering will not come. Be troubled, you complacent <i>daughters</i>; and put <i>sackcloth</i> on <i>your</i> waist, for the fruitful vine, <i>in which</i> thorns <i>and</i> briars shall come up; <i>and for</i> the jubilant city. the populated city forsaken. have become caves forever, a pasture for flocks;</p> |
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The call to hear contrasts the new society described in the earlier verses. The men and women of present-day Judah have not given ear to God's Word. They do not listen. They do not obey. The destruction described here initially refers to the Assyrian invasion. The complacent daughters of Judah will put sackcloth around their waists and beat their breasts in memory of fields full of harvest and vines full of fruit. They are all destroyed. This will happen in a year and few days, it says. Since Sennacherib invades in 701 BC, the dating of this prophecy is a year and few days earlier: sometime in 702 BC. And yet, even with that concrete identification, the devastation seems on a wider scale than the invasion by Assyria, which was eventually pushed back. They didn't take Jerusalem. The palace was not abandoned. Here, thorns and briars come up in the fields. The palace and city are forsaken to become a delight of wild donkeys and pastured flocks. And that could be exaggerated imagery about the invasion of Assyria. Or Isaiah has turned his vision ahead, to end time events, seeing the invasion of Assyria as foreshadowing the more complete future downfall of the city of man.

C² - The Spirit and the new society (15–18)

Desolation sits on the city until a new society is formed. That new society is briefly described in our next section. Just as the earlier call for repentance was followed by the description of a new society led by a new King, this second call to repentance is followed by a new society inaugurated through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Let me go back to verse 14, because verse 15 makes sense when you read the two together.

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| <p>¹⁴ Because the palace has been abandoned, Hill and watch-tower A delight for wild donkeys,</p> <p>¹⁵ Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high,</p> <p>¹⁶ Then justice will dwell in the wilderness</p> <p>¹⁷ And the work of righteousness will be peace,</p> <p>¹⁸ Then my people will live in a peaceful habitation,</p> | <p>the populated city forsaken. have become caves forever, a pasture for flocks; And the wilderness becomes a fertile field, And the fertile field is considered as a forest. And righteousness will abide in the fertile field. And the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever. And in secure dwellings and in undisturbed resting places;</p> |
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A² - Epilogue: humiliation and blessedness (19–20)

Our 5th woe ends with a two-verse epilogue that points again to the dual theme of disaster and deliverance, briefly.

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| 19 | And it will hail when the forest comes down, | And the city will be utterly laid low. |
| 20 | How blessed will you be, you who sow beside all waters, | Who let out freely the ox and the donkey. |

That is recapping. There was humiliation, followed by blessing for the faithful.

6th Woe (33-35)

Now, the final woe. This one is the longest, covering three chapters. The chapters are short, though. The total length of all three is only 51 verses. Simply put, the woe has an A, B, A, B, A pattern moving from deliverance to judgment, to deliverance to judgment, to deliverance. The first deliverance-judgment pair concerns Judah and is rooted historically in the present Assyrian threat. The second deliverance-judgment pair looks ahead to end times and takes on a universal scope. And then, the final section of deliverance pictures a pilgrimage to Zion.³

A1 - The Salvation of Zion 33:1-6

We begin with the salvation of Zion. Unlike the first five woes, this one is not directed towards Israel or Judah, but towards their adversary. I'll start with just the first verse 33:1.

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| 1 | Woe to you, O destroyer, while you were not destroyed; | And he who is treacherous, while <i>others</i> did not deal treacherously with him. |
| | As soon as you finish destroying, you will be destroyed; | As soon as you cease to deal treacherously, <i>others</i> did deal treacherously with you. |

That is basically saying, "What you have done it wasn't done to you, but you've done it now and so it's going to come back on your head. You wanted to be a destroyer? You are going to be destroyed." I am assuming the destroyer is Assyria, and this is the deliverance of Jerusalem from Assyria, though the lack of direct reference foreshadows an ultimate deliverance. Verses 2-6 are a little hard to pin down. First, the speech is directed to God, and then it is about God. Also, in one verse, the speaker switches from first person plural to third person plural and back again to first person plural. See if you can pick that up.

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| 2 | O LORD, be gracious to us; we have waited for You. | Be their strength every morning, Our salvation also in the time of distress. |
| 3 | At the sound of the tumult peoples flee; | At the lifting up of Yourself nations disperse. |
| 4 | Your spoil is gathered <i>as</i> the caterpillar gathers; | As locusts rushing about men rush about on it. |
| 5 | The LORD is exalted, for He dwells on high; | He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness. |
| 6 | And He will be the stability of your times, | A wealth of salvation, wisdom and knowledge; The fear of the LORD is his treasure. |

We can make sense of the shifts in the text if we assume Isaiah is speaking in the presence of Judean believers. That would explain how he can speak both of "we" and of "them," including himself in one moment as one of the faithful, or in another moment focusing his remarks on those present other than himself. So, he can switch from "we" to "they." And by assuming his speech is a prayer, we can explain why he first speaks to God and then speaks about God. We kind of do both things when we pray. Try to get a picture in mind of Isaiah praying while I read the text again. Imagine a scene, maybe in the Temple, where he is gathered with a group of faithful believers, including the repentant Hezekiah. Imagine Isaiah praying this.

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| 2 | O LORD, be gracious to us; we have waited for You. | Be their strength every morning, Our salvation also in the time of distress. |
| 3 | At the sound of the tumult peoples flee; | At the lifting up of Yourself nations disperse. |

³ Motyer, 262.

God has called everyone, those who are far off and those who are near. They are to see what has happened in Jerusalem. “Sinners are terrified; trembling has seized the godless.” They are saying, “Who among us can live with the consuming fire?” They mean the consuming fire of God’s wrath. God’s answer? “The righteous can – those who speak with sincerity and reject unjust gain, who shut their eyes from looking at evil.”

The problem that none can actually be righteous in the eyes of God is not addressed here. What is necessary is righteousness. And those who are righteous are the ones who are going to live on the Hill of the Lord. God accepts those whose desire is to live according to the moral vision of His nature. How God handles the sin of the faithful will be addressed in the next major section of Isaiah, the Book of the Servant. For now, it is enough to know that the righteous will see the King in His beauty. The terror of the sinner is removed in verse 18. You will be able to meditate on terror and realize that there is no invading army to fear. You don’t have to be afraid. The Majestic One makes you secure in the Kingdom of Zion.

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| 18 Your heart will meditate on terror: | “Where is he who counts? Where is he who weighs? Where is he who counts the towers?” |
| 19 You will no longer see a fierce people, | A people of unintelligible speech which no one comprehends, Of a stammering tongue which no one understands. |
| 20 Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts; | Your eyes will see Jerusalem, an undisturbed habitation, a tent which will not be folded; Nor any of its cords be torn apart. |
| Its stakes will never be pulled up, | |
| 21 But there the majestic <i>One</i> , the LORD, will be for us | A place of rivers <i>and</i> wide canals |
| On which no boat with oars will go, | And on which no mighty ship will pass— |
| 22 For the LORD is our judge, The LORD is our lawgiver, | The LORD is our king; He will save us— |

God will save Judah from foreign invaders, both on land and on water, “On which no boat with oars will go, and on which no mighty ship will pass.” He is assuring us that the flowing rivers and wide canals of God’s fertile Kingdom will not be invaded by military vessels. Earth and sea are under His domain.

The word, “Lord,” in verse 22 is, “Yahweh,” the Covenant name of God. “Yahweh is our judge, Yahweh is our lawgiver, Yahweh is our king; He will save us.” As judge, He determines who has kept faith, who has loved God and who has loved his neighbor. As lawgiver, He communicates civil laws for ordering society and higher laws for living righteously. As king, He protects us and provides for our well-being. He will save us.

Oswalt considers this verse 22 to be the climax of chapters 28-33. He writes, “Throughout, the issue has been: can we trust God to save us? Here, however, the alternative is expressed for the people by the prophet: ‘Yes, he is our king, and he alone will save us.’”⁴

This proclamation of universal deliverance ends with the odd image of a crippled boat that cannot spread out its sail or move. The ship stalls in the water and so it becomes prey to any military vessel.

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| 23 Your tackle hangs slack; | It cannot hold the base of its mast firmly, Nor spread out the sail. |
| Then the prey of an abundant spoil will be divided; | The lame will take the plunder. |
| 24 And no resident will say, “I am sick”; | The people who dwell there will be forgiven <i>their</i> iniquity. |

There is a surprising turn in the verse. Surprisingly, the prey will take the spoil and the lame, the plunder. Isaiah is reminding his listeners, “It is not by your strength that you have gained treasure. You did not defeat Assyria. You were like a boat dead in the water. Your inheritance comes from the mighty arm of God.” That is true of this historic moment. That is true of your future salvation. You

⁴ J. N. Oswalt. *NICOT: The Book of Isaiah, Chs 1-39*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986) 604.

are an ineffective ship that limps along. You cannot save yourself. And yet, you are saved. The last verse points towards the deliverance that Judah needs. They did need salvation from the army of Assyria. But what then? What then? They still need a greater deliverance from sickness, and death, and their own sinful hearts. In the new Zion “no resident will say, ‘I am sick’; the people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity.” Again, Isaiah does not explain how they can be forgiven until the Book of the Servant. But this is the vision, that somehow, we will live in this new society as a forgiven people, as righteous.

B2 - The Second Universal Proclamation (34:1-17)

Paired with this universal proclamation of salvation, chapter 34 gives us a universal proclamation of judgment. I will read the whole chapter to let the weight of the proclamation sink in. This is the destruction of the city of man, the great battle at the end of the age. The universal proclamation announces to everyone the consequence of rebelling against God, our Creator and King. Isaiah 34:1-17.

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| <p>¹ Draw near, O nations, to hear; Let the earth and all it contains hear,</p> | <p>and listen, O peoples! and the world and all that springs from it.</p> |
| <p>² For the LORD’s indignation is against all the nations, He has utterly destroyed them, given them over to slaughter.</p> | <p>And His wrath against all their armies;</p> |
| <p>³ So their slain will be thrown out, And the mountains will be drenched with their blood.</p> | <p>And their corpses will give off their stench,</p> |
| <p>⁴ And all the host of heaven will wear away, All their hosts will also wither away</p> | <p>And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; As a leaf withers from the vine, Or as <i>one</i> withers from the fig tree.</p> |
| <p>⁵ For My sword is satiated in heaven, And upon the people whom I have devoted to destruction.</p> | <p>Behold it shall descend for judgment upon Edom</p> |
| <p>⁶ The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, with the blood of lambs and goats, For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah</p> | <p>It is sated with fat, With the fat of the kidneys of rams. And a great slaughter in the land of Edom.</p> |
| <p>⁷ Wild oxen will also fall with them Thus their land will be soaked with blood,</p> | <p>And young bulls with strong ones; And their dust become greasy with fat.</p> |
| <p>⁸ For the LORD has a day of vengeance, ⁹ Its streams will be turned into pitch,</p> | <p>A year of recompense for the cause of Zion. And its loose earth into brimstone, And its land will become burning pitch.</p> |
| <p>¹⁰ It will not be quenched night or day; From generation to generation it will be desolate;</p> | <p>Its smoke will go up forever. None will pass through it forever and ever.</p> |
| <p>¹¹ But pelican and hedgehog will possess it, And He will stretch over it the line of desolation and the plumb line of emptiness.</p> | <p>And owl and raven will dwell in it;</p> |
| <p>¹² Its nobles—there is no one there <i>whom</i> they may proclaim king—</p> | <p>And all its princes will be nothing.</p> |
| <p>¹³ Thorns will come up in its fortified towers, It will also be a haunt of jackals</p> | <p>Nettles and thistles in its fortified cities; And an abode of ostriches.</p> |
| <p>¹⁴ The desert creatures will meet with the wolves, Yes, the night monster will settle there</p> | <p>The hairy goat also will cry to its kind; And will find herself a resting place.</p> |
| <p>¹⁵ The tree snake will make its nest and lay <i>eggs</i> there, Yes, the hawks will be gathered there,</p> | <p>And it will hatch and gather <i>them</i> under its protection. Every one with its kind.</p> |
| <p>¹⁶ Seek from the book of the LORD, and read: For His mouth has commanded,</p> | <p>Not one of these will be missing; None will lack its mate. And His Spirit has gathered them.</p> |
| <p>¹⁷ He has cast the lot for them, They shall possess it forever;</p> | <p>And His hand has divided it to them by line. From generation to generation they will dwell in it.</p> |

This is the final battle, the result of the final battle. Humanity is gone. The wild animals possess the land. The judgment is on the land of all who take up arms against Zion. It will be laid waste, full of brimstone and burning pitch. It sounds like Mordor. And so, Isaiah draws again on this theme of the desolate city turned into wilderness. It is the apocalyptic vision of a Moscow, or Rome, or New York. Husks of buildings, trash littered streets, briars and thorns growing out of broken pavement, animals of the desert night prowling through the ruins.

The enemies of God are pictured as sacrifice on the altar. The sword of God is the priest's tool used for butchering animals. That is why it is sated with fat. And that is one of the symbols sacrifice communicates to us. The wages of sin is death. It's not the animal that needs to die. The animal dies to symbolize the curse a human being deserves for wicked rebellion against the goodness of God. That sacrifice is symbolic. Here it is not symbolic. Here, the enemies of Zion pay the price for their rebellion against God.

The ruin engulfs more than opposing kingdoms. "All the host of heaven will wear away and the sky be rolled up as a scroll." Sometimes "host of heaven" means "angels." Here, I think, it means the Moon and the stars of the night. The image is dark and terrifying. And yet, at the same time, it is also an end of sin, and injustice, and oppression, and death. It is the night before the new day. That's how Horatio Spafford understood it when he wrote the hymn, "It Is Well With My Soul."

And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
A song in the night, oh my soul!

A3 - *The pilgrimage of the redeemed to Zion through a renewed world (35:1-10)*

And so, Isaiah takes us from the night of universal judgment to a new day. The final section of this woe pictures the redeemed making pilgrimage through a renewed world to Zion. Isaiah 35:1-10.

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| 1 | The wilderness and the desert will be glad, | And the Arabah will rejoice and blossom; like the crocus |
| 2 | It will blossom profusely The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, They will see the glory of the LORD, | And rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy. The majesty of Carmel and Sharon. The majesty of our God. |
| 3 | Encourage the exhausted, | and strengthen the feeble. |
| 4 | Say to those with anxious heart, Behold, your God will come <i>with</i> vengeance; | "Take courage, fear not. The recompense of God will come, but He will save you." |
| 5 | Then the eyes of the blind will be opened | and the ears of the deaf be unstopped. |
| 6 | Then the lame will leap like a deer, For waters will break forth in the wilderness | And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. And streams in the Arabah. |

The eyes of the blind opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame leap, and the mute shout for joy - the people of God have been transformed. No longer spiritually blind, and deaf, and lame, and mute as the people of Judah have been described. God has made us to see. He has set our tongues loose to speak truth freely. We will encounter this language again later in the Servant songs. Here, the faithful walk on a highway of holiness as the desolate land is transformed.

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| 7 | The scorched land will become a pool In the haunt of jackals, its resting place, | And the thirsty ground springs of water; Grass <i>becomes</i> reeds and rushes. |
| 8 | A highway will be there, a roadway, The unclean will not travel on it, And fools will not wander <i>on it</i> . | And it will be called the Highway of Holiness. But it <i>will</i> be for him who walks <i>that way</i> , |
| 9 | No lion will be there, These will not be found there. | Nor will any vicious beast go up on it; But the redeemed will walk <i>there</i> , |

