



ISAIAH 29

THE SIEGE OF DAVID’S CITY ~ INSENSITIVE TO GOD ~ OUR FUTURE HOPE

Chapters 28 thru 33 of Isaiah contain a set of five “woes.” This indictment of Jerusalem is the second of the five. As in the previous woe, justice is coming to Jerusalem and on Judah. The purpose is to get the nation to turn back to God.

There are a couple glaring faults in God’s people that are crying out for justice to fall upon them: Spiritual insensitivity, defective wisdom and blindness when it comes to the truth are all reasons why Yahweh must judge his people. God is preparing his people to reign. He is preparing them to walk with him in the Millennial Kingdom. As much as they despise discomfort, God’s discipline is always focused on not just deliverance, but restoration and wholeness. He is a redeeming God, not vindictive. He will carry his people into discipline, out into rebuilding, and finally into the goal of a millennial restoration. Heaven will come to earth!

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>Isaiah 29:1 Ah, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped! Add year to year; let the feasts run their round. ² Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be moaning and lamentation, and she shall be to me like an Ariel. ³ And I will encamp against you all around, and will besiege you with towers and I will raise siegeworks against you. ⁴ And you will be brought low; from the earth you shall speak, and from the dust your speech will be bowed down; your voice shall come from the ground like the voice of a ghost, and from the dust your speech shall whisper.</p> <p>⁵ But the multitude of your foreign foes shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the ruthless like passing chaff. And in an instant, suddenly, ⁶ you will be visited by the LORD of hosts with thunder and with earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire. ⁷ And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, all that fight against her and her stronghold and distress her, shall be like a dream, a vision of the night.</p>	<p>a 29:1 Ariel is a name for the altar in the temple (Ezek. 43). It is used as a metonymy for the entire city of Jerusalem. The meaning of Ariel is “lion of God” or “altar hearth.”</p> <p>b 29:1 Or “the town David besieged.”</p> <p>c 29:3 Or “Like David I will encamp against you” (LXX).</p> <p>d 29:4 Isaiah is using a series of metaphors to describe Israel’s defeated condition, as though Israel is speaking out of the dust of defeat.</p> <p>e 29:7 Or “Attack her and besiege her.</p>	<p>The Siege of David’s City</p> <p>Isaiah 29:1 Woe to Ariel a—Ariel, the town where David encamped! b Go ahead—keep your annual feasts, and year after year celebrate your annual festivals. ² I will bring distress to Ariel and there will be great mourning. Jerusalem will be to me like what the name Ariel means—a burning altar hearth. ³ I will lay siege to you on all sides, c encircling you with towers and raising up my siege works against you. ⁴ Brought low, you will speak from the dust of the earth. Your voice will be heard speaking from the ground, and like the voice of a ghost, you will whisper out of the dust. d</p> <p>⁵ Then suddenly, in an instant, your ruthless enemies will become nothing more than dust in the wind and your vile tyrants like wind-driven chaff! ⁶ She will be visited by the Lord Yahweh, Commander of Angel Armies, with thunder, earthquake, and deafening noise, with whirlwind, tempest, and the blaze of a consuming fire! ⁷ As quickly as a fading dream or as fleeting as a vision of the night, so will all the vast hordes of all the nations fade away and all who war against Ariel e and her fortress disappear.</p>

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<p>⁸ As when a hungry man dreams, and behold, he is eating, and awakes with his hunger not satisfied, or as when a thirsty man dreams, and behold, he is drinking, and awakes faint, with his thirst not quenched, so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against Mount Zion.</p> <p>⁹ Astonish yourselves and be astonished; blind yourselves and be blind! Be drunk, but not with wine; stagger, but not with strong drink! ¹⁰ For the LORD has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes (the prophets), and covered your heads (the seers).</p> <p>¹¹ I And the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed." ¹² And when they give the book to one who cannot read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot read." ¹³ And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, ¹⁴ therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden." ¹⁵ Ah, you who hide deep from the LORD your counsel, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, "Who sees us? Who knows us?" ¹⁶ You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, "He did not make me"; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?</p> <p>¹⁷ Is it not yet a very little while until Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be regarded as a forest? ¹⁸ In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see.,¹⁹ The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the LORD, and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel. ²⁰ For the ruthless shall come to nothing and the scoffer cease, and all who watch to do evil shall be cut off, ²¹ who by a word make a man out to be an offender, and lay a snare for him who reproves in the gate, and with an empty plea turn aside him who is in the right.</p>	<p>f 29:8 Or "Empty is his soul."</p> <p>g 29:8 Or "His soul is craving."</p> <p>h 29:10 See Rom. 11:8.</p> <p>i 29:10 Or "He has covered the heads of the seers."</p> <p>j 29:14 Or "The discernment of the discerning ones will be kept hidden." See 1 Cor. 1:18–31.</p> <p>k 29:16 Or "imagine". The root word of yêtsar is yâtsar and has the primary meaning of "to form, fashion, frame, make, especially as a potter." Before you can form or frame something, it has to be imagined. The first use of yâtsar in the Bible is Yahweh forming man from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7).</p> <p>l 29:17 Isaiah frequently used Lebanon as a metaphor for mighty ones and those with great influence (2:13; 10:34; 35:2). This phrase refers to a restoration of God's people who have experienced humiliation.</p> <p>m 29:18 That is, their hearts are now open and tender to God.</p>	<p>⁸ Just as a hungry man dreams that he is eating but wakes up still hungry, f or as a thirsty man dreams that he is drinking but wakes up weak and still longing for water, g so it will be for the vast hordes of all the nations that fight against Mount Zion.</p> <p>Insensitive to God</p> <p>⁹ Be totally shocked and amazed by what I am about to say to you: "Blind yourselves—and be totally blind! (They are drunk but not from wine. They stagger but not from hard liquor.) ¹⁰ For Yahweh has poured out over you the spirit of a deep, deep sleep —h putting the covers over your slumbering seers i and rocking all your prophets to sleep."</p> <p>¹¹ This entire prophetic revelation will become to you like the words of a sealed book. If it's given to one who can read it with the command "Read this," he responds, "I can't because it is sealed." ¹² Or if it's given to one who is illiterate with the "command "Read this," he responds, "I can't because I cannot read." ¹³ This is what the Lord says about these people: "They come near to me with hollow words and honor me superficially with their lips; all the while their hearts run far away from me! Their worship is nothing more than man-made rules.</p> <p>¹⁴ So therefore, I will again jolt this people awake with astonishing wonders upon wonders! And the wisdom of their wise ones will fail, and the intelligent know-it-alls will have no explanations. j ¹⁵ Woe to you who think you can hide your plan from the Lord Yahweh. Ha! Do you actually think your secret schemes are so hidden that you say, 'Who sees us doing this? No one knows what we're doing!' ¹⁶ Oh, how great is your perversion! Who is more intelligent—the potter or the clay? Should a created thing say to its creator, 'You didn't make k me'? Should a clay pot say to the potter, 'You don't understand'?"</p> <p>Our Future Hope</p> <p>¹⁷ Before you know it, Lebanon will be transformed into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field will seem like a forest. l ¹⁸ In that day the deaf will begin to hear the words that have been written, m and out of the darkness and gloom, the eyes of the blind will be opened to see. ¹⁹ The meek will overflow with fresh joy in the Lord Yahweh, and the poor will shout their praises to the Holy One of Israel!</p>

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<p>²² Therefore thus says the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: “Jacob shall no more be ashamed, no more shall his face grow pale. ²³ For when he sees his children, the work of my hands, in his midst, they will sanctify my name; they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and will stand in awe of the God of Israel. ²⁴ And those who go astray in spirit will come to understanding, and those who murmur will accept instruction.</p>	<p>n 29:20 See 2 Thess. 2:3–8.</p> <p>o 29:20 Or “all the watchers of wrong (those diligent to do evil).” This would include those who use their political power or influence to harm others.</p> <p>p 29:22 Or “Jacob,” a metonymy for God’s people, Israel.</p> <p>q 29:23 Or “They will sanctify my name.”</p>	<p>²⁰ For the terrible one n will be no more, the scornful jester will not be found, and all the lovers of evil o will be cut off. ²¹ Those who make the innocent appear guilty, those who ensnare others with deceitful tactics, and those who lie to keep the innocent from getting justice will likewise be destroyed.</p> <p>²² So now, listen to what Yahweh, the God of Israel, who redeemed Abraham, has to say to Jacob’s tribes: “My people p will no longer be disgraced, and your shame-face will disappear. ²³ For when they see the miracle of the many children that I give them, they will see me as holy and honor me. q Yes, they will honor the Holy One of Jacob and stand in awe of the God of Israel. ²⁴ Those who are in spiritual error will come to understanding, and those who are always complaining will be glad to accept instruction.</p>

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE COMMENTARY

JOHN A. MARTIN

WOE TO JERUSALEM (CHAP. 29)

- Judgment coming on Jerusalem (29:1-4)

- **29:1-4.** In this second of five “woes” in chapters 28-33 Isaiah continues with the theme of the last part of the first woe (28:14-29). Judgment was coming on Jerusalem and on Judah, and its purpose was to get the nation to return to God. Unlike the judgment that would sweep away the Northern Kingdom, this judgment on Jerusalem, though very severe, would be averted by the Lord. Jerusalem would not fall into the hands of the Assyrians. Ariel undoubtedly refers to Jerusalem as can be concluded by the parallel phrase the city where David settled (cf. 2 Sam. 5:7, 9, 13). Many interpreters say Ariel means “lion of God,” in which case the city is seen as a strong, lionlike city. Ariel may also be translated “altar hearth,” as in Isaiah 29:2; Ezekiel 43:15-16. Jerusalem is the place where the altar of burnt offering was located in the temple. Though Jerusalem is where festivals were celebrated before God (Isa. 29:1), the city would be besieged and fighting and bloodshed would turn it into a virtual altar hearth. Though the Assyrians under Sennacherib surrounded Jerusalem in 701 B.C. it was as if God had done so (l. ... l ... l ... My, vv. 2-3). Being humiliated (brought low), Jerusalem spoke softly rather than in loud tones. Though Jerusalem would be surrounded it would not be taken at this time. This assurance should have encouraged the people to trust God and to worship Him properly.

- Deliverance coming for Jerusalem (29:5-8)

- **29:5-8.** Jerusalem’s protection described in these verses refers to her [Vol. 1, p. 1079] deliverance from Assyria, recorded in chapter 37. It would have seemed impossible to hope that the Assyrians would not take the city. Only by God’s sovereign intervention was Jerusalem spared. Though 29:5-8 refers to the Assyrian soldiers becoming like ... dust and chaff when they were slaughtered, these verses also seem to have eschatological overtones. At the end of the Tribulation when nations (vv. 7-8) will attack Jerusalem (Zech. 14:1-3), the LORD Almighty will come and destroy each attacking nation. The threat of

those nations will vanish like a dream. When the Assyrian soldiers were destroyed in Isaiah's day, no doubt the people of Jerusalem were delirious with joy. But shortly the difficulty of that situation subsided in their thinking, and life returned to normal. Rather than turning back to God the nation got more deeply involved in sin. Jerusalem's understanding of God's revelation (29:9-24) In this section a contrast is drawn between the people's present spiritual insensitivity and their future spiritual understanding.

- **29:9-12.** The Jerusalemites' spiritual insensitivity was in itself a judgment from God. The people were told to blind themselves (v. 9) but the LORD also caused the blindness (v. 10). The fact that the prophets and the seers did not see and understand clearly was part of God's judgment. They did not understand God's revelation about His judgment on the Assyrians that Isaiah recorded on a scroll (vv. 11-12). No one, either people who could read or those who couldn't, could understand this truth.
- **29:13-14.** The people of Jerusalem, professing to know God, were formally involved in acts of worship but they did not worship God from their hearts. They were more concerned with man-made legalistic rules than with God's Law, which promotes mercy, justice, and equity. Because of that, God would judge them; their wisdom would vanish.
- **29:15-16.** God pronounced woe on those who thought He did not see their actions. They attempted to hide their plans from God by doing things at night. They were not thinking clearly, for God can hide things from man (vv. 10-12) but not vice versa. Such thinking twisted the facts and confused the potter with the clay. A jar, however, cannot deny that the potter made it, or say that the potter is ignorant (cf. 45:9; 64:8). Actually the people knew nothing of what was going on, but God always knows everything.
- **29:17-21.** However, things in the future will be different. The phrase in a very short time refers to the coming millennial kingdom. Some think it refers to the time when the Assyrian army was slaughtered (37:36), but the conditions described in 29:20-21 seem to nullify that interpretation. Lebanon, which was then occupied by Assyrian troops, will eventually be productive (fertile) again. The second occurrence of the words fertile field may refer to Mount Carmel. When the Millennium comes the deaf and the blind ... will hear and see (cf. 32:3; 35:5). This contrasts with 29:10-12, which referred to the nation's impaired sight. The needy will rejoice in the LORD because of what He will do for them, and conversely the ruthless who deprived the innocent of justice will be punished (vv. 20-21; cf. v. 5).
- **29:22-24.** The attitude of the people of Jerusalem and Judah will completely change. They will no longer ... be ashamed (v. 22) or brought low (v. 4) by foreign domination and their own sin (cf. 1:29). As their children grow up in safety they will realize that God has protected them and will worship (stand in awe of) Him. The Lord's delivering them from Sennacherib was a foretaste of the ultimate deliverance they will experience. People who are wayward and who complain will change and will accept instruction. No longer will blindness prevail; then they will know God's ways (cf. 29:18).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The city of Jerusalem is the focus of the second set of "woes." Assuming that some cities have greater influence than others, how would you describe the place the city of Jerusalem has in the heart of the Lord?

2. One thing the Lord's people are being judged for is their spiritual insensitivity. How would you define the term "spiritual insensitivity" and what do you think causes it to get a foothold in people's lives?

3. Being as specific as you can, in what ways do you believe the American church may insensitive to the will of God?

4. If you were going to personally "work on" becoming more spiritually sensitive, what practices or disciplines might help? How has your own spiritual insensitivity cost you in your relationship with Jesus and others?

5. Think of someone in your life you would consider to be spiritually sensitive. What do you see happening in their lives that testifies to their sensitivity? How might you integrate some of those same practices into your own life?