



Highlights From the Book of Isaiah

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Outline of the Book of Isaiah

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2. God Will Accomplish All His Purposes (24-27)

C. True Deliverance Is Found, Not in Egypt, But in the Lord (28-35)

1. Problems in the Nation Due to Foolish Drunken Leaders (28-29)

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The Cornerstone (Isaiah 28:14-22)

28:14 *Therefore, listen to the LORD's message, you who mock, you rulers of these people who reside in Jerusalem.* ¹⁵ *For you say, "We have made a treaty with death, with Sheol we have made an agreement. When the overwhelming judgment sweeps by it will not reach us. For we have made a lie our refuge, we have hidden ourselves in a deceitful word."* ¹⁶ *Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD, says: "Look, I am laying a stone in Zion, an approved stone, set in place as a precious cornerstone for the foundation. The one who maintains his faith will not panic.* ¹⁷ *I will make justice the measuring line, fairness the plumb line; hail will sweep away the unreliable refuge, the floodwaters will overwhelm the hiding place.*

The Cornerstone (Isaiah 28:14-22)

28:18 Your treaty with death will be dissolved; your agreement with Sheol will not last. When the overwhelming judgment sweeps by, you will be overrun by it. ¹⁹ Whenever it sweeps by, it will overtake you; indeed, every morning it will sweep by, it will come through during the day and the night.” When this announcement is understood, it will cause nothing but terror. ²⁰ For the bed is too short to stretch out on, and the blanket is too narrow to wrap around oneself. ²¹ For the LORD will rise up, as he did at Mount Perazim; he will rouse himself, as he did in the Valley of Gibeon, to accomplish his work, his peculiar work, to perform his task, his strange task. ²² So now, do not mock, or your chains will become heavier! For I have heard a message about decreed destruction, from the Sovereign LORD of Heaven’s Armies against the entire land.

28:14 *Therefore, listen to the LORD's message, you who mock, you rulers of these people who reside in Jerusalem.*

- The focus now shifts from the leaders of Samaria to the leaders in Jerusalem.
- With the opening “*therefore*” Isaiah is urging them to *pay attention* to what has been said to the leaders of the northern kingdom and *learn something* from what has happened to them.
- Judgment has either already taken place in the north, and if they persist in their present behavior, they will receive a similar judgment.
- Isaiah refers to these leaders as “*you who mock*”.
- Someone who “*mocks*” the “*LORD's message*” is someone who not only *rejects* the truth but also *makes light* of it.

28:15 For you say, “We have made a **treaty with death**, with **Sheol** we have made **an agreement**. When the **overwhelming judgment** sweeps by it will not reach us. For we have made a lie our refuge, we have hidden ourselves in a deceitful word.”

- This “**treaty with death**” or “**agreement... with Sheol**” is probably a sarcastic caricature of the foolish decisions being made by these leaders.
- They have entered into an alliance with Egypt, an alliance that they **think** will spare them.
- But in **actuality** it will prove to be a “**treaty with death**” – one that will ultimately bring the devastating power of Assyria down on their heads.
- They **think** that their pact will **save** them from the “**overwhelming judgment**”, but in reality they will be overwhelmed and swept away.

28:16 **Therefore**, this is what the **Sovereign LORD**, says: “Look, I am laying a stone in Zion, an approved stone, set in place as a precious cornerstone for the foundation. The one who maintains his faith will not panic.

- Against the background of the nation’s vain and misplaced confidence in its false security, Isaiah utters one of the grandest Messianic prophecies in his entire work. ¹
- “**Therefore**” because of the rulers’ boast that they have **secured** themselves against impending disaster, the word of the “**Sovereign LORD**” of the universe comes to them. ²
- The message here is a double-edged one: God is establishing a structure in Zion which will be a source of **comfort and encouragement** to those who will trust him but a source of **judgment** for those who refuse to do so. ²

¹ Young, Edward J. – *The Book of Isaiah – Volume 2*; Eerdmans; p. 284

² Oswalt, John N. – *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39 (The NIC the OT)* (pp. 517-519)

28:16 *Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD, says: “**Look, I am laying a stone in Zion, an approved stone, set in place as a precious cornerstone for the foundation.** The one who maintains his faith will not panic.*

- Isaiah’s imagery is obviously drawn from the construction of a building.
- At that time a “*cornerstone*” played a *vital role* in the construction of a building.
- It was a stone of larger than normal size that had been carefully prepared and was used to determine the line of two adjacent walls and to knit them together.
- At the base of the walls it would also act as a “*foundation*”.
- It was “*precious*”, i.e. a costly piece of material which added to the strength and value of the building.
- And it would, in this case, be “*laid*” by the divine builder.

A Precious Cornerstone for the Foundation



28:16 *Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD, says: “Look, I am laying a stone in Zion, an approved stone, set in place as a precious cornerstone for the foundation. The one who maintains his faith will not panic.*

- What *is* this foundation stone of which the prophet speaks?
- In earlier revelation the LORD *himself* had been described as “*the stone of Israel*” (Gen 49:24).
- And, as we saw when we studied Isaiah 8:14, the LORD is identified as both a “*stone*” and a “*rock*”.
- The New Testament makes *abundantly* clear that the prophecy in our present passage is *Messianic* (cf. Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:6).
- In other words, this “*stone*” that the “*LORD*” is laying in “*Zion*” (the heavenly Jerusalem) is Christ himself.

28:16 *Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD, says: “Look, I am laying a stone in Zion, an approved stone, set in place as **a precious cornerstone** for the **foundation**. The one who maintains his faith will not panic.*

- The coming Messiah, this “*precious cornerstone*” is an immovable and unchangeable firm “*foundation*” – in contrast with the shaky refuge of lies in which the leaders of Jerusalem have placed their trust and confidence.
- What a striking contrast!
- Judah relied on lies and falsehood, while God is laying in Zion a “*precious cornerstone*” which, if they would only trust in it, would give them **true** refuge from the coming disaster.

28:16 *Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD, says: “Look, I am laying a stone in Zion, an approved stone, set in place as a precious cornerstone for the foundation. **The one who maintains his faith will not panic.***

- Because of what the LORD has committed to do for his people, there is a call here for “*faith*”.¹
- Those who remain firm in their trust in the LORD’s promise “*will not panic*” and be tempted to buy into worldly short term solutions as they face their present crisis.¹
- In the NT the Apostle Paul renders this verse: “*the one who believes in him will not be put to shame*”²
- This comment speaks *volumes* about the chaotic, meaningless way of life that characterizes men outside of Christ.²
- In Christ we *not only* have salvation, but a calmness and peace that are *essential* for a truly well-ordered life.²

¹ Mackay, John L. – *A Study Commentary on Isaiah Volume I: Chapters 1-39* – pp. 561-562

² Young, Edward J. – *The Book of Isaiah – Volume 2*; Eerdmans; p. 284

28:17 I will make **justice** the **measuring line**, **fairness** the **plumb line**; **hail** will sweep away the unreliable **refuge**, the floodwaters will overwhelm the **hiding place**.

- This verse gives us the standards the LORD uses in constructing his building.
- In language reminiscent of Amos 7:7, the LORD will use “**justice**” as “**the measuring line**”, i.e. the **horizontal** standard.
- And he will use “**fairness**” as the “**plumb line**”, i.e. the **vertical** standard.
- In other words, the community that the LORD is building on the cornerstone will be perfect in **all** dimensions, **unlike** the structure that Jerusalem’s politicians are erecting on a false foundation.
- **Their** structure will be swept away by “**hail**” and will no longer function as a “**refuge**” and “**hiding place**”.

^{28:18} *Your treaty with death will be dissolved; **your agreement** with Sheol **will not last**. When the **overwhelming judgment** sweeps by, **you will be overrun** by it. ¹⁹ Whenever it sweeps by, it will overtake you; indeed, **every morning** it will sweep by, it will come through **during the day and the night**. When this announcement is understood, it will cause nothing but terror.*

- The agreements these leaders have made will not save them.
- When the “*overwhelming judgment*” comes, they will be swept away like a hut in a windstorm.
- Furthermore, the flood will not come just **once** but **again and again** (“*every morning... during the day and the night*”).
- This is an accurate description of the Assyrian tactics, as they would come back to an area again and again until it was completely destroyed.

28:20 *For the bed is too short to stretch out on, and the blanket is too narrow to wrap around oneself.*

- This verse uses a popular **proverb** in Isaiah's day which to show the **inadequacy** of the alliances they had made.
- Their alliances cannot do what the leaders **claim** they will do:
- The "**bed**" is not big enough to contain them, nor the "**blanket**" wide enough to cover them.

^{28:21} For the LORD will rise up, as he did at **Mount Perazim**; he will rouse himself, as he did in the **Valley of Gibeon**, to accomplish his work, his peculiar work, to perform his task, his **strange task**.

- Just as the LORD struck down the Philistines with a flood at “*Mount Perazim*” (cf. 2 Sam. 5:20) and scattered the Canaanites with hail in the “*Valley of Gibeon*” (cf. Josh. 10:11), so now he will treat his own people like those enemies.
- Because of that, it will be a “*strange task*”.
- But it will be a **necessary** one if there is to be any hope of redemption for the people.

28:22 *So now, do not mock, or your chains will become heavier! For I have heard a message about decreed destruction, from **the Sovereign LORD of Heaven's Armies** against the entire land.*

- Isaiah concludes here with a final warning:
- The scoffers had better stop their mocking of the word of God and had better start listening to what “*the Sovereign LORD of Heaven's Armies*” has to say to them.

New Testament
Usage of
Isaiah 28:16

Isaiah 28:16 *Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: ‘Whoever believes will not be in haste.’” (ESV)*

Isaiah 8:14 *And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel... (ESV)*

Rom 9:33 *As it is written, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” (ESV)*

- The Apostle Paul cites **Isaiah 28:16** in combination with **Isaiah 8:14** in **Rom 9:33** which is in a section of Romans where he sets out to explain why, in large part, the Jews in Paul’s day were *rejecting* Christ, while the Gentiles were being *saved*.
- In this section, Paul shows that the *immediate* cause of Israel’s rejection and the Gentile’s salvation was the different manner in which they responded to the Gospel.

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- In the previous two verses, (Romans 9:31-32) Paul points out the Jews were trying to save themselves through their own works, and, as a result were *failing*.
- In verse 33 Paul’s inclusion of Isaiah 8:14 shows that the Jews were “*stumbling*” over *Christ*, the “*rock of stumbling*”, as Isaiah had predicted they would.
- Paul’s inclusion of Isaiah 28:16 shows that, on the other hand, those who, like the Gentiles, put their faith in Christ as the “*precious cornerstone*” will “*not be put to shame*” (in the Day of judgment).

Isaiah 28:16 *Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.'" (ESV)*

1Pet 2:6 *For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." (ESV)*

- The Apostle Peter cites **Isaiah 28:16** in **1 Peter 2:6** to encourage his readers as they face suffering and persecution from the unbelieving world around them.
- Just prior to this citation, Peter tells his readers that *"you come to [Christ], a living stone **rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious**, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."* (1 Pet 2:4-5)

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- Peter's statement is reminiscent of a **similar** statement made by the Apostle Paul:
- *So then you [Gentiles] are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone**, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph 2:19-22 ESV)*

Next Time

I plan to look at **Isaiah 29:9-16** which describes the spiritual insensitivity of God's people.

Class Discussion Time



Class Discussion Time

- The temptation in Isaiah's day was to reject God's provisions and to seek worldly solutions to the problems they faced in their day.
- In our day, we are not facing an invasion by Assyria (though there are some menacing nations on the world scene), but we face pressure from our own government and even corporations to go against the Word of God.
- For example, more and more Christians are being pressured by their place of employment to **agree with** and celebrate sexual deviancy.
- In light of that, can you see where a passage like this would have relevance in our day?

Class Discussion Time

- Peter's application of this passage was to point out that we should not be surprised when the world rejects us since we are "stones" in God's building that is built on Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone – a stone which the world "stumbles" over.
- Jesus put it like this: ¹⁸ *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. ²¹ But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me."* (John 15:18-21 ESV)