

## August 9

**Scriptures:** Read Isaiah 27 & 28

**Key Verse:** "... Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation..." (Isaiah 28:16)

### Overview

In chapter 27, Isaiah is still prophesying about eschatological (end-time) events. In the day of final judgment, God will be victorious over Satan, symbolized by the fleeing serpent, Leviathan (27:1; 51:9; Rev. 20:2; Job 41; Ps. 74:13-14; 104:26). Then Isaiah joyfully tells of a blessed vineyard song, the counterpart to the vineyard lament of Isaiah 5, wherein that vineyard (natural Israel) produced bad fruit and had to be destroyed (5:5-6; Jer. 2:21; Ps. 80:8-13). In the end-times of severe persecution and divine judgment, only those Jews who are true believers in Jesus will remain. These will make up the new vineyard of spiritual Israel which will produce good fruit, since they will abide in the true vine, the Lord Jesus (John 15:1-6). God will carefully tend His vineyard and protect it from briars and thorns (enemies of God's people); yet if a thorn (a Gentile sinner) makes peace with God (which Isaiah foretells they will), the Lord will extend forgiveness and grace to him and transplant him into His vineyard where he also will produce good fruit (cf. Rom. 11:17-24). The fruit of this new vineyard, made up of believing Jews and Gentiles, will reach all over the world as the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the true vine, is preached.

Isaiah explains that the Lord has chastised, purged, and pruned Israel so that she might serve only Him and not idols. God even allowed the fortified city of Jerusalem to be destroyed and made desolate in order to turn the people back to Himself (27:10). Using the vineyard analogy once again, Isaiah proclaims that those boughs which were withered, without any spiritual life in Christ, will be broken off and no longer have the favour of the Lord upon them (27:11). However, the fruitful boughs that remain, the remnant rooted in Jesus, will be gathered by the Lord at the sound of the trumpet. In the Jewish culture, the trumpet has always been used to signal an important event (to call up the army or announce a great feast), and it will be used to announce the Lord Jesus' second coming (Matt. 24:31).

Chapters 28 to 33 are in a different setting, and the prophecies are more immediate regarding their fulfillment. Isaiah denounces the unbelievers of Israel (Ephraim/Northern Kingdom) to serve as a warning to the people of Judah (ch. 28). The Lord had appointed "a mighty and strong one" (king of Assyria, 28:2) to bring His judgment upon the proud city of Samaria (the capital) for their excessive living, drunkenness (cf. Amos 6:4-7), immorality, and idolatry. They disregarded God and His Laws and lived proudly and comfortably in sin, yet this was not to last for long. The fading flower of Samaria would soon be trampled by the Assyrians. Once again, Isaiah gives a glimpse of hope, for although God will destroy their crown of pride, He will save a remnant, and He will be for them "a crown of glory".

Isaiah declares that Judah (the Southern Kingdom) also has been guilty of carelessness toward the Law and drunkenness. Even the priests who were to be responsible to serve God in the Temple and the prophets who were to speak for Him were both guilty of this sin. They should

have been examples, but instead they led the nation astray (28:7; Lev. 19:9-11). These drunkards, including the nobles of Judah, responded to Isaiah's words with mockery and scorn. They dismissed his message from God, considering it simplistic, annoying, and repetitious ("line upon line", 28:9-10, 14, 22). Therefore, Isaiah responds that God's tone and methods would change. Since they were unbelievers who did not heed the prophetic words of Isaiah, God would speak to them in "another tongue", which would be a sign of both the Assyrian and the later Babylonian judgments upon them (28:11-13; cf. 1 Cor. 14:21-22).

Refusing to trust in God, the people of Judah under Ahaz decided to trust in the treaty (covenant) they had made with Assyria. They therefore believed they would be safe from death (which was self-deception. 28:15; 2 Kings 16:7), but Isaiah warns and foretells that the covenant will be annulled for the king of Assyria will come and trample them under foot (28:18-19, 21-22). The attempt to find rest by trusting in the Assyrians was as futile as trying to sleep on a bed that is too small (28:20), but in the Lord one finds true rest (28:12). The foundation of this rest and safety in God is in the Person and work of the Messiah Redeemer, who is the tried and precious cornerstone (28:16; Ps. 118:22-23; 1 Peter 2:4-8; Rom. 9:32-33; Eph. 2:20; Gen. 49:24). The building (the Church) upon this true foundation is made strong by justice and righteousness, just as a builder uses the proper materials to make a strong building (the "measuring line" and "plummet" for a strong, level and straight structure). But a building of inferior quality will be blown away by storm (28:17; Matt. 7:24-27; 21:42).

In a similar analogy, Isaiah pictures Israel as a farmer's field (28:24-29). God did not just plow or teach Israel for the sake of teaching, but He had a purpose in it. They were to bring forth a good crop of righteousness, yet God had to use the right tools. Just as a farmer employs various means to prepare his harvest, so God had to use various disciplinary judgments to prepare a righteous remnant that would bear fruit (cf. Matt. 21:42-44).

## **Prayer**

Grant, O Lord, that we may build our lives always in relationship with the chief cornerstone, the Lord Jesus. O builder of lives, build in us the character of Jesus.