

# Notes on Isaiah 28-30

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We leave now the section of oracles related to the nations, chapter 13-27. Those oracles had as their climax not the destruction of the Gentile world, but its ultimate salvation, (27:12-13). Even Assyrians and Egyptians will come to the Lord (19:23-25). But that was a look far into a future that would come after Christ and the atonement he would make. In Isaiah 28-37, more attention is devoted to the current issues of Isaiah's generation. There will be some prophecies fulfilled in their generation. When they see this they should be convinced and trust God the Lord for all He had to say about everything else. In Isaiah 28 & 29 Assyria and Egypt are not named. In chapters 30 & 31 it is explicit that Isaiah speaks against trusting in Egypt. That information helps us understand chapters 28 & 29.

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## 28:1-6 The Fall of Israel

**28:1** Ephraim was Israel's dominant tribe; Samaria, the capital, was located in Ephraim. The 'wreath' was Samaria at the head of a valley, the crown of pride. In pride they dared ignore the Lord in such complacency that they would indulge in wine with no sense of danger. Their beautiful and glorious city would be captured.

**28:2-4** The Lord (the word 'Lord' here infers sovereignty), had someone who would do that. God would use Assyria to throw down Ephraim's wreath to the ground. Samaria would fall by the hand of the Lord and be trampled underfoot. It would fall as easily as picking a fig – gulp – it is swallowed and gone from sight.

**28:5,6** As Isaiah loves to do, the message is quickly reversed. For Israel there is hope; justice will be found among them again, when the Lord will be the beautiful wreath valued by his people. his true people are the remnant. The covenant people were all called to have the Lord as their God, but many rejected him, yet God preserved his elect remnant (Romans 11:5). In contrast to Isaiah's day of great injustice, the Spirit of the Lord will affect the ruler or rulers to come. (Compare Isaiah 11:1-3). This brief section is all there is in chapter 28 about Samaria and Israel; the rest is related to Jerusalem.

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**28:7, 8** The words "these also" show the text has switched from Samaria to the other capital, the scoffers who rule in Jerusalem (v.14). The drunken scene relates to more than intoxication. The physical stumbling is matched by unsteady decisions the leaders make (v.7). Priests and false

prophets are part of this gross picture where vomit covers the tables.

**28:9, 10** They are mocking Isaiah as if saying, "What is this simpleton trying to teach us?" They claimed he spoke to them as if they were children. This mocking shows that the pride of the capital of Israel is matched by the lack of humility in the capital of Judah. Any rejection of any word of God is a matter of a man thinking his wisdom is better than God's, and that is manifestly very proud. His message, of not trusting in Egypt but in the Lord as the refuge against Assyria, was understandable to a child.

Isaiah could write an intricate book with masterful command of his language. He could write and speak effectively as a very educated man, yet he made the issue of repentance and faith very clear and very simple. There is no value in speaking over people's heads. Yet God has chosen to give us Isaiah's writings as one of the most intellectually challenging books in the entire Bible.

**28:11** The message was rejected. Their ridicule of a message from God as childish language is turned around on them. Someday they will hear in their land strange languages from invaders. In this way God will 'speak' in judgment against them. They will struggle like children to learn the language of those who would enslave them. They would not hear what God had said plainly through Isaiah, so they would suffer defeat from a foreign power and be forced to hear the strange new words of a foreign language.

**28:14-19** They are called 'scoffers', a word used in Proverbs for those who ridicule the

wisdom of God. Proverbs 1:22-27 fits this part of Isaiah very well. Scoffers or mockers in their godless ‘wisdom’ do not trust God’s promises. The rulers in Jerusalem had another trust; an alliance with Egypt (30:1-7; 31:1-3). This alliance is called a *covenant*, one in violation of the covenant with God. They would covenant with Egypt to protect them from Assyria.

Isaiah expressed his point as if they were really admitting they had made a covenant with death. In this way he ridiculed their alliance with Egypt as the falsehood it was. Instead of the resting place God offered (v.12), they have their different refuge and hiding place to shelter them in the storm to come, the Assyrian invasion. Who needs the Lord when one can have Egypt? Assyria is again presented as a flood by use of ‘overwhelming’ (v.15), as in 8:6-8.

In this setting of a false hope in a heathen nation that would let them down terribly, God gives one of the famous gems of his word about Christ. To understand it well, we must see this as a call for a genuine trust in reaction to a false trust. In Zion, God would establish a sure foundation, the very opposite of an unstable alliance. He will set in Zion a stone – in Zion, the very place that is threatened. Note these features:

- In saying “Sovereign Lord”, God emphasizes his authority. The nations have their plans, but so does God, and his is the only one that will happen.
- “I lay...” This is a way to say that his activity in the world is personal and direct. Psalm 2:6 uses the same verb for the same message, “*I have installed my king on Zion, my holy hill.*” Such language stresses God’s activity. The zeal of the Lord will accomplish it (9:7).
- This promised stone is in Zion, the center of God’s rule on earth.
- The stone is tested. To a builder that would mean it fits. But in salvation, this is a way of telling us that this is the right stone to do what is needed. The policy makers in Jerusalem had what they thought was a clever strategy. But their idea did not fit the plan of God, nor meet

the need for safety from the Assyrian threat.

- The stone is precious to God. For those not sure what this stone is, this is an odd thing to hear. God does not mean the stone is pure jade. The value of the stone lies in who the stone is.
- It is a cornerstone in the foundation, and the others must fit to it and be built on it.
- Isaiah does not say explicitly, “trust the stone”, but the stone is connected in some way to faith. In this text God does not say who the stone is, but Zion was the city of God, the residence of the line of David which God had covenanted to maintain. In 33:6 it says the Lord is “the sure foundation”.
- Those who trust will not be dismayed. “Dismayed” always has the sense of hurrying.

**Who is the Stone?** In Romans 9:33 Paul quotes Isaiah 8:14 & 28:16 in a conflated quotation. He says, “the one who trusts in him.” Thus the apostle tells us the Stone is a person we should trust in and repeats this in Romans 10:11. Then he says that that “no one can lay any other foundation than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ,” a reference to Isaiah 28:16. In Ephesians 2:20, 21, Christ is the chief cornerstone in the foundation of the church. Then Peter in 1 Peter 2:4-8 quotes three OT texts about Christ as the Stone, over whom men stumble in unbelief (Isaiah 8:14): the precious Stone of Isaiah 28:16, and the capstone of Psalm 118:22. So we know the Holy Spirit was speaking in this verse of Christ, the One in whom we are to trust. Jesus was not born in Zion, nor did he live there. But as the Son of David, He is the One who would rule in the capital city. He rules now in the heavenly city. Christ is the foundation on whom a living building composed of all believers is being built, a holy temple, the church.

**28:17-19** The text speaks of justice and righteousness because the building will be built by such principles. It is on a sure foundation, but the alliance with Egypt is tenuous. Their ‘building’, like the one on sand in Matthew 7:24-27, will be swept away in the coming flood.

Their covenant with Egypt will be worthless. The invasion is coming; there will be no stopping it. They ridiculed the simple message (of God's protection) in v.9; when finally they come to understand this current message (of judgment), they will be terrified.

**28:20-22** They rejected a good place for repose (v.12). Now in v.20 they find a different bed, one that gives no rest – too short to stretch out on, with a blanket too narrow to give cover. Thus does the prophet show what a frustrating inadequate arrangement they had chosen rather than the protection of God Almighty. With the Lord they could sleep well while he watched over Israel (Psalm 121).

In the past God rose up to struck down the Philistines at Perazim and Gibeon to preserve the throne of David. (See 2 Samuel 5:17-25.) He would do the same in Isaiah's day, but they did not believe him. This work of death is God's alien and strange task, not his preferred work. God in justice punishes sin and kills the wicked, because he must to be true to himself. God saves sinners with grace and compassion because he delights to do so. He has no joy in the death of the wicked. While the prophet speaks, the message of God through him continues to be mocked. They should stop or their punishment would be greater. The Lord had told Isaiah what was coming; it was a settled decision.

### **28:23-29 Illustrations from Farming**

When farmers plow the ground, they do not keep doing that one thing. There is a time when plowing is no longer needed and it is time to plant. They learned that from God. The God who teaches man how to farm must know how to do it himself! He will not keep plowing in judgment; he will turn to planting. His judgments are not just so he can judge his people. Like a farmer, he has a purpose beyond that. Likewise, just as different grains and seeds are harvested with different techniques, the Lord knows what He is doing. A heavy-handed grinding would destroy certain seeds, so he will not do a similar thing. God is wonderful in counsel (same Hebrew words as in 9:6 of Christ!) and in wisdom; he will accomplish his purpose. Just as a good result

comes from all the plowing and threshing, these illustrations hint that that kind of wonderful result is coming, and it is in chapter 29.

## **Isaiah 29**

**29:1-4 Ariel the Altar Hearth** Ariel is Jerusalem; this is clear when it says "Mount Zion" in v.8. The "city of David" in Luke 2 is Bethlehem, but in the OT, it was a section of Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:6-9) where David settled. God's judgment ("I will besiege Ariel") is likened to the fire in the altar, a fire necessary for consuming the sacrifice. At that altar the wrath of God was directed against the sacrifice offered for sinners. Thus calling Jerusalem 'Ariel', a word that sounds like "altar hearth", connects well with the message of Jerusalem under the wrath of God for its sin. The historical setting is the attack on Jerusalem in 701 BC by Sennacherib, but the ultimate hand against Jerusalem was the Lord. Three times we read "I" for the Lord who besieges, encamps and encircles Ariel. Earlier they mock Isaiah loudly and reject the message from the Lord; now they are humbled, speaking only in a whisper.

**29:5-8** The change is so sudden we might fail to see that the situation has radically changed. Jerusalem was under God's judgment but, in his mercy, still alive. In v.5 it is their enemies who are brought to the dust of death to be blown away like chaff. Three times we read of the Assyrian hordes.

Assyria is not named. Sometimes a historical situation not identified, and an enemy not named, *helps us apply* words like 'the hordes' of God's enemies to other situations. Most psalms are deliberately not specific as to their historical setting. This helps us take the words of such psalms and apply them to similar settings more readily.

The thunder, earthquake, and noise are not literal; they describe the suddenness of God's action. God reserves very carefully his sovereign right to act when and how he chooses. Likewise, the Second Coming of Christ will be a sudden unannounced event to the world, the shock of all shocks. The suddenness here refers to the attackers of Jerusalem who think they have the

city in their grasp, and then in one night find themselves in a very different reality. The man having a dream finds it is just a dream the instant he wakes up; so it will be with the Assyrians. The dreams in this text are of eating and drinking. Their enemies may dream they will consume the city of God; they will not. The same Lord punishing his people saves his people when they call on him.

**29:9-14** In Isaiah 6:9, 10 Isaiah was commissioned to go with a message that would blind those who heard it. Willful blindness brings on judicial blindness. God blinds people in their chosen falsehood when they are eager not to believe his truth. See the case of Ahab in 1 Kings 22. In 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12, speaking in the context of Anti-Christ, those who refuse to love the truth shall not have it. God will send a spirit of delusion so that they will believe the lie. This is similar to those devoted to sexual impurity; they will find that God abandons them to it (Romans 1:21-32), when the Lord gives them such depraved minds they will pronounce themselves normal. Thus the Lord brings on people a deep sleep, the punishment of being hardened by God (Romans 11:7, 8, 25).

Isaiah gives two scenarios of those who fail to get the message. One can read but won't; the other cannot read. No one can be saved apart from accepting the Word of the Lord. They must receive God's truth as truth in order to believe its message. With blind seers and prophets leading the blind (Matthew 15:14, a passage that quotes 29:13), the spiritual plight is horrible. Only a divine intervention can save them; even having the Word of God in hand will not do it. The problem God overcomes is a heart that will not believe. In the very presence of Christ himself, most who heard him did not believe even though they saw his mighty works (Matthew 11:20-24; John 6:36). Therefore he praised his Father, "... you have hidden these things from the wise and learned" (Matthew 11:25). Hiding truth from wicked men is a form of justice.

**29:13** is another famous statement. (See Mark 7 & Matthew 15.) To God's dismay, the outward activity of worship continued without a

worshipping heart (1:10-17). This text raises another issue in worship: May we design our own worship service? The historic Reformed position is that we may not "worship him in any other manner than he has commanded in his Word" (Heidelberg Catechism Q & A 96). Thus we must not create our own rules or principles for how we will approach God. We must deduce the elements and principles of worship from Scripture. If something is not there, we may not add it. We must never forget that the most basic principle of worship is that sinners may approach God only by our Mediator. This means we come by way of the blood of Jesus shed for our forgiveness and acceptance (Hebrews 10:19-22).

**29:14** is also a famous statement. The wisdom of the wise will perish. In 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, Paul dismisses the wisdom of the philosopher of this age and of this world. There is no salvation in it. Opposed to this, and deliberately contrasted to it, is the message of the cross. By his wisdom, man has not known God. By God's wisdom, Christ, the One "who has become for us wisdom from God" (1 Corinthians 1:30), we have everything: "our righteousness, holiness and redemption."

In the context of Isaiah 29 it is clear that the wisdom of trusting Egypt is folly. God destroyed their 'intelligent' counsel by the defeat of Egypt. The Assyrian horde, assembled within sight of the walls of Jerusalem, was one way God showed Jerusalem what he thought of their wisdom. Those trusting in Egypt were wrong. The Assyrians, trusting in themselves and mocking the true and living God of the Jews, were wrong, and Isaiah's gospel message to trust the Lord was right. It is part of Christian ministry to *"demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God"* (2 Corinthians 10:1-6). It is the activity of the Lord who protects his glory and his truth to do the same.

A wonderful angle easy to miss in this famous verse is related to the words, "once more". It is also acceptable to translate them, "I will add to act." This could hint that a new fresh act is in view, namely the destruction of false wisdom, a prelude to the establishment of truth in the minds

of those he will save. Salvation is the theme of the next few verses. The destruction of error is a blessing because it opens the door to truth, thus it is part of God's saving work.

**29:15, 16** V.15 opens with those who hide from the Lord (Romans 9:16-18), and the section ends with those who acknowledge the Lord (v.23). Woe to those whose attitudes exclude God from their thinking. They deny his oversight, which is about as atheistic a spirit as one will find in the OT – close to the fool who said in his heart, “There is no God” (Psalm 14:1). Their answer to “Who will see us?” was “No one!” They must go to great depths because being an atheist is hard work. Every wonder of creation must be denied as the work of an intelligent Lord. Every ethical principle, however essential to life, must be denied as a reflection that we are created in God's image. The need to keep up a wall against pervasive truth is relentless and exhausting.

They get everything backwards. “As if the potter were like the clay” is another way to say, “As if God were like man.” God is transcendent and is not like us; we have been made to be like him. Isaiah shows that men may deny God's **distinctiveness** (now a major problem among evangelicals in the views of Open Theism). Modern man also denies God's **sovereignty** and **role as creator** when he says, “He did not make me”. This is one of the chief confessions of falsehood to which the intelligentsia of our day is ardently devoted. No one is welcome in their club apart from affirming evolution. They also deny his **wisdom** (“He knows nothing”). We do not understand our own time in history unless we see that man struts across the earth asserting “I am the potter and God is the clay.” The denial of God in these two verses is vivid, but it is the setup for the wonderful salvation this section moves to.

**29:17-21 The Great Turnaround** These verses cover nature, spiritual deadness, classes of society, civil stability, and a righteous legal system. Earlier the words on the scroll were inaccessible; now the Word will be heard and the blind will see. When the humble and needy are part of rejoicing in the Lord, then the ones at the bottom of a society are not left out. It is the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, they will worship. The streets will be safe from violent persons and justice will be done in the courts. This has only one explanation in light of the blindness and hardening seen in the earlier verses. God has moved to overthrow the wisdom of the world, and to change the hearts of men so they will believe. All of this asserts the benefits of the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34), a topic Isaiah has not yet opened up fully. The changes mentioned in this segment are not possible apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. V.23 will claim that this great change is the work of God's hands.

**29:22-24** The transformation continues from another angle. Both Abraham and Jacob learned to fear the Lord and live consistently in sincere respect for God. If they could see their children in the generations that followed, it would be a tremendous shame to them. By saving their children, God turns the hearts of the fathers approvingly to them (Malachi 4:6).

Salvation in terms of spiritual life is complete: in describing it as keeping God's name holy; in acknowledging the holiness of the Holy One of Jacob, and in standing in awe of the God of Israel. The Lord of Jacob did much to change Jacob's heart throughout his lifetime. Now God says he will do it for Jacob's children. The wayward will be obedient, not going their own way (53:6), and teachable, because they will all be taught by the Lord (54:13).

## Isaiah 30

The prophecies of Isaiah 28 & 29 are closely related to this section, but Egypt and Assyria were not named in those chapters; now they are. Isaiah continues with the spiritual issues, but in chapters 30 & 31, he applies them in specific historical situations. He also looks to the future when God's purposes will be completely and beautifully fulfilled. These chapters should be studied together.

**30:1-5** Jerusalem had turned to Egypt for protection. They sent delegates there so they could have Egypt's help to resist the Assyrian threat. God's children were obstinate because they did this contrary to warnings from the Lord. God says their plans were not His, not of his Spirit, not helpful and not profitable. "Alliance" is better translated "protective covering", the same word for the "blanket" in 28:20 that could not protect or cover. Earlier the Lord said whoever trusts in the Stone He would set in Zion would not be dismayed or "put to shame" (Romans 10:13). Those who look to Egypt will be disgraced. ("Looking to" is a synonym for faith; see also 31:1). The people preferred the protective shade of Egypt rather than the Lord who is the real refuge, shelter, and shade of 25:4. It is a double disgrace: unbelief in their reliable Lord, and disappointment that will come from trusting in unfaithful Egypt.

**30:6, 7 An Oracle re the Negev** Jerusalem's emissaries were already in Egypt. They had to travel through the Negev, the desert region to the south of Jerusalem. They carried gifts to win Egyptian favor, and endured the danger and hardship of that journey, another example of sinners exhausting themselves for nothing (Jeremiah 51:58). That kind of journey was in the opposite direction of the Exodus from Egypt. In their unbelief they were returning to the oppressor from which the Lord had delivered his people some 700 years earlier. The entire enterprise was a slap in the face of God. For all their effort they gain nothing. 'Rahab', which means 'arrogant', refers to Egypt (Psalm 87:4, Isaiah 51:9).

**30:8** It is wonderful that God has committed so much to writing. Some people will not sign what they say, so their word on another day cannot be compared with their previous promise. Isaiah was to write down his message, (perhaps the oracle of vv.6 & 7), as a witness that he had said what he did. It is vital in a book like Isaiah that we connect the time of a prophecy to an event fulfilled later. The Lord shows his deity by his ability to say in advance what will happen. God's predictions are a witness that God is God (43:9, 10). Isaiah's written word was to be "an everlasting witness". 2700 years later we are still going over every word recorded in his book. God's people are doing this all over the earth!

**30:9-14** Isaiah's ministry of the Word was rejected, as in 28:9, 10. In vv.10, 11 Isaiah puts their attitudes into words, just as in 28:15. The people were willing to hear something as long as they could control what was being said. The message they preferred would be morally unchallenging, devoid of the holiness of God, new in the sense of not being the old message of his previous revelation. They wanted the message to be pleasant to them. By asking for illusions, they wanted to have error; they chose to be deceived. (See Zechariah 1:2-6.) Isaiah said they were unwilling to listen.

There is a big difference between the one who is blind with no exposure to the Word of God, and the person who is *willfully* blind, by consciously choosing illusions in rejection of the truth of the Word of God. (Later in Isaiah 42:18-22, God will declare that Israel is blind.)

**Rejecting the Message** Isaiah says of those seeking to be free of God's path that they rely on oppression, an indication that rebels get the opposite of what they seek. They want freedom and get bondage. The penalty is given in vv.12-14 in illustrations of a wall collapsing and pottery being smashed. Again as in 29:5, where judgment is as sudden as an earthquake, the wall will collapse "suddenly, in an instant". Often God gives no further warning to those already warned (Proverbs 29:1; Matthew 24:36-39).his warnings may be an irritation to those whose hearts are hard, but such warnings are mercy ignored.

The rejection was not only of a message and the messenger Isaiah; it was a rejection of the Lord, described twice in vv.11, 12 as "the Holy One of Israel". The mind of human flesh is hostile to God (Romans 8:7). Salvation

cannot occur without hearing the Word, but for the Word to be accepted there must be a change of heart. We must be born of God (John 1:13), born by the cleansing Spirit (John 3:5), in a birth that is from above" (John 3:3). (The Greek word *anōthen*, ἀνωθεν, translated 'again', may also be translated 'from above' as it is in John 3:31.) The opposite of the intransigence of 30:9-14 & 16 is found in v.21, "your ears will hear". Such hearing shows salvation has actually begun.

**30:15-17** In this paragraph we are given the message Isaiah gave, which they rejected. Notice they would have none of it. Our sinful condition apart from God's grace is frightful. They despised salvation and strength. In their delusion they hoped for salvation from Assyria through reliance on Egypt; they hoped for strength from military strength. That was to be frustrated. Isaiah called them to salvation by repentance, which means they should turn back to the Lord and his Word. He expressed faith as "rest", a wonderful way to present it. (See Hebrews 3:16-4:11). It was not **rest** to send envoys to Egypt for their help. The trip through the Negev and its dangers, carrying gifts to win the favor of liars was not rest. It was a strenuous and worthless **effort** to secure safety. Quietness is the absence of frenzy and anxiety. Such quietness is trust in Israel's Almighty God.

Their faith was in fast horses, but the enemies' horses would be faster. God promised them in Leviticus 26:6-8 peace in their land without fear. This is what quietness is like. He promised to remove wild beasts (Leviticus 26:6), but Jerusalem chose to travel in the presence of lions and snakes (30:6). He promised the sword would not pass through their land, but their rebellion meant foreign armies would roam through it (1:7; 5:26). He promised five would chase a hundred (Leviticus 26:8), and now Isaiah says five of them will make the Jews run in fear. Their weakness is described as a thousand fleeing at the threat of one (v.17). They would end up as deprived of people as a left behind flag on a hill after all the soldiers were gone.

**30:18-26 Good News** This paragraph is one of the most encouraging in the Bible. Vv.18-26 show that human sin cannot stop God from being gracious to his people. The section holds out both blessings and abundance. In verses 1-17 there is rejection of the Word, but vv.18-26 show the opposite: a receptive spirit to God's Word, and an obedience that rejects idols.

**30:18 Compassion and Justice** Human sin will be treated in God's justice; He cannot overlook sin and be Himself. The cross of Christ is the great evidence that God does not excuse sin. He may pardon it, but He never fails to punish it. When the penalty for sin is lifted from us, it is only because it was laid on Christ (53:6).

V.16 had a double "therefore" as does v. 18 (though the NIV unfortunately does not show it in v.18). This is a link between the verses. In v.16 the "therefore's" are related to judgment, in v.18, to compassion. The judgment had to come first since the grace of God does not circumvent the justice of God. Grace works by justice being satisfied, not by justice avoided. V.18 could be translated "*He will wait in order to be gracious.*" Here God stresses devotion to his purpose using the language of longing. When we read that one 'rises', as in getting up early while desiring more sleep, it shows motivation and strong desire (Jeremiah 7:25).

**30:19** By stating Jerusalem and Zion, it commits God to the specific place under threat. This is not a promise to some unidentified place. Knowing this, the people could live in quietness and trust (v.15).

**30:20, 21** First their bread was adversity; later there will be plentiful food (v.23). The contrast is between the bread of adversity (i.e., suffering) and the presence of their teacher. Everyone who sins

suffers the adversity that comes from sinning. That will change in this new day when instead of sinning, the Lord their Teacher will be present to give constant instruction. (Teachers could be singular or plural here.) The Lord will no longer hide his face from them (8:17; 45:15). They will see Him, because they have close contact. He will watch over them so carefully that He will keep them from sinning. If they stray to the right or the left, they will have immediate correction.

*“So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left. Walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you... so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess”.*

This is the commandment in Deuteronomy 5:32, 33, a command tied to teachers in Deuteronomy 17:11, and to other gods in 28:12-14. But here in Isaiah 30 we have a situation where one can no longer stray. Isaiah speaks of the glorified state where his people are held to holiness by their divine Teacher and are finally in full conformity to Christ (Romans 8:29). An immediacy in answered prayer, instruction, and of God’s presence among them, describes the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21, 22).

**30:22** At one time Israel was devoted to the worship of the gods of their neighbors. This will change to a revulsion toward those idols, in spite of the work put into making them and the value of the gold and silver on them. In 2:20 men throw away their idols because the idols disappointed them, but in 30:22 they will reject idols out of love for God.

**30:23, 24** This is the result of redemption of the earth itself from the curse on it in Genesis 3:17-19. God will give rain (i.e., proper conditions), and the earth will give in abundance. (See Amos 9:13-15.) Even the animals will eat well. In broad meadows they will be undisturbed. Suffering from Adam’s sin will be over for man, animal, and all creation (Romans 8:18-25).

**30:25, 26** A great slaughter is in the future but not for God’s people, thus this reference to falling towers (see 2:12-18). For them there will be no more tears, the water of affliction of v.20. God’s blessing is stated with hyperbole, as if water actually flowed on the top of mountains, and the sun and moon would give greatly magnified light. The truth being revealed is that there will be an awesome change. It is the picture of a creation that no longer holds back its benefits of water and light; both are released in their full power. This is in conjunction with the Lord healing his people. Once He inflicted them for their sin; now having redeemed them, He heals them. Full redemption includes the inanimate creation and the sinful creature. (Only fallen angels have no redemption at all.)

**30:27-33 Back to Assyria** This section begins with the name of the Lord and ends with the breath of the Lord (v.33).his Name is the summary of his revealed character. The wrath of the Lord is against those who harmed his people, with a special focus on punishing Assyria in v.31.

**30:27, 28** All three stanzas of this section have consuming fire or burning in some form, with a climax in the prepared fire, Topheth. This is like *the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels* (Matthew 25:41). While this is a figure of speech, fire is the metaphor most used for the wrath of God on sinners. The notion now being promoted that hell is only the consequences of man’s choices, is a half-truth which devalues the Biblical emphasis that eternal judgment is the direct punishment of God. Here the burning anger is presented as from his lips, his tongue, his breath. He is the one who sifts the nations. Shaking or sifting is another metaphor of God’s judgment. (Note how Hebrews 12:25-29 repeats this description of judgment from Haggai 2:6, 7, 21 & 22.)



God shakes the nations is a sieve of destruction. As in Matthew 13:47-50, this passage may also be teaching that there is a sifting in the Day of Judgment to separate the wicked from the righteous. In Matthew 13 angels separate the evil from the righteous. In this Isaiah text, it is God shaking the sieve.

**30:29, 30 Celebrating Judgment** This stanza contains singing and musical instruments (also found in v.32). In Revelation 19:1-4 there is cheering and praise to the Lord over the destruction of Babylon. Here they rejoice in his judgment. This is not the same as gloating, but when evil men finally face justice, it is always a matter of rejoicing, even if sorrow accompanies it. In this stanza, the arm of the Lord is God acting directly.

As Isaiah progresses there are more and more references to the Lord's arm. Eventually it is the Lord's Arm, because in 53:1 this is a term for Christ. When the arm is revealed (52:10), it is Christ. (See also 51:5, 9; 59:1, 16.)

**30:31-33** The music and judgment continue without any apology for God's enthusiasm in dealing with Assyria so severely. Assyria may march confidently to Jerusalem, but it is God who has prepared the funeral pyre for the Assyrian king. Assyria was God's punishing rod against others, including Judah (10:5). Now for his sin he and his army will face the consuming fire, "the Light of Israel". Thus the divine flame (10:17) will incinerate the ample supply of wood when God sets the whole pile ablaze in his anger. The word Topheth may be a combination of the words for fire-place and shame. (See 2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 7:31, 32).