
Observations from Isaiah

LESSON XXVII : THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY (33: 1-24)

General outline (from Young's *Isaiah*):

- I. The Crisis and the Messiah (1:1-12:6)
- II. The Theocracy and the Nations (13:1-39:8)
- III. True Deliverance is Found Not in Egypt but in the Lord (28:1-35:10)
 - A. The Lord's Purpose (28,29)
 - 1. Samaria Ripe for Judgement (28:1-29)
 - 2. The Iniquity of Jerusalem and the Announcement of Deliverance (29:1-24)
 - B. The Judean Alliance with Egypt (30,31)
 - 1. To Trust in Egypt is to be Deceived (30:1-33)
 - 2. Egypt is No Help, but the Lord will Protect Jerusalem (31:1-9)
 - C. The Certainty of the Coming Salvation (32,33)
 - 1. A Condition of True Blessedness Will Come (32:1-20)
 - 2. Oppression Will End and God's Kingdom Will Be Established (33:1-24)

We are about at the end of the section which began in chapter 28 (*The Folly of Trusting the Nations*). This was given as a general outlay of this section at that time:

Woe to the drunken rulers (chapters 28,29)

28:1-13 Ephraim

28:14-29:14 Jerusalem

29:15-24 those who hide counsel

Woe to those who trust Egypt (chapters 30,31)

30:1-18 woe to the rebellious children

30:19-33 Judah's blessing, Assyria's destruction

31:1-9 woe to those who reject God's help

Behold the King (chapters 32,33)

32:1-8 true leaders

32:9-20 deserted or faithful

33:1-24 the King redeems Zion

Trusting God or the Nations: the Results (chapters 34,35)

The structure of this section appears to be three-fold:

chaps 28, 29 paints the picture: foolish leaders, a multitude of enemies, false humanistic counsel that something must be done immediately because the Lord's forsaken us.

chaps 30, 31 depicts the proposed solution (trust in Egypt) and the folly of that choice

chaps 32, 33 gives the true solution: the true King is in our presence even now

The structure of this chapter is disputed but apparently v1-6 forms a sort of introduction to the rest of the chapter. In the summation of v1-6, the Lord is said to arise, destroy the destroyer and then transform Zion. The remaining part of the chapter is a lament along with an oracle in response (v7-16), and concludes with a description of God's kingly rule (v17-24).

Woe to the Destroyer (33:1-6)

<i>Woe to you, O destroyer, you who have not been destroyed! Woe to you, O traitor, you who have not been betrayed! When you stop destroying, you will be destroyed; when you stop betraying, you will be betrayed. O LORD, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress. At the thunder of your voice, the peoples flee; when you rise up, the nations scatter. Your plunder, O nations, is harvested as by young locusts; like a swarm of locusts men pounce on it. The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness. He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure. (NIV)</i>	<i>Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and thou dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee. O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble. At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered. And your spoil shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar: as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them. The LORD is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness. And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure. (KJV)</i>	<i>Wo, spoiler! and thou not spoiled, And treacherous! and they dealt not treacherously with thee, When thou dost finish, O spoiler, thou art spoiled, When thou dost finish dealing treacherously, They deal treacherously with thee. O Jehovah, favour us, for thee we have waited, Be their arm, in the mornings, Yea, our salvation in time of adversity. From the voice of a multitude fled have peoples, From thine exaltation scattered have been nations. And gathered hath been your spoil, A gathering of the caterpillar, As a running to and fro of locusts is he running on it. Set on high is Jehovah, for He is dwelling on high, He filled Zion [with] judgment and righteousness, And hath been the steadfastness of thy times, The strength of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge, Fear of Jehovah — it [is] His treasure. (YLT)</i>
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THE ‘DESTROYER’ — Isaiah continues where he left off in the previous chapter: whereas dependence upon Egypt must end in disaster, dependence upon the Lord gives victory. “G. A. Smith *finds the most logical historical context for this chapter as being between the time when*

the tribute was paid to Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:13-16) and when the final attack upon Jerusalem was begun. The leaders of Judah have tried every other avenue to extricate themselves from Assyria's grip, but each has been fruitless. Egypt has been defeated; Sennacherib has refused to be bought off; he has taken the tribute, but still remains, preparing for battle. In this moment, Smith suggests, Hezekiah leads his people to repentance and Isaiah gives God's response, which is recorded here. This explanation is very attractive and may be correct. However, the text does not make the historical setting explicit. [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] *"As the royal annals demonstrate, Assyria took great pride in her capacity to destroy anyone who had the temerity to stand against her. By the same token, she had no qualms about breaking agreements which were not to her advantage, all the while punishing with great severity any who broke agreements with her. It is not hard to imagine how the smaller peoples under Assyria's heel ground their teeth and longed for a day when she would get her own back."* [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

THE DAY OF REVERSAL — *when you have finished destroying reinforces one of the major themes of scripture: human power is never absolute. "However overwhelming an Assyria or Babylon or Rome or Germany or Russia or United States may be in its day, there will come another day when that power will wane."* [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] *"It looks as if the first half of this verse takes up the boasts of the Assyrians, who had been all-victorious for so many years. The second half declares they will be caught in their own trap. Such treatment should be particularly effective in bringing home a sense of guilt to the sinner."* [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

ISRAEL LEARNS TO WAIT UPON THE LORD — *"The people in the city had at last been brought to realize their total dependence on the Lord. These words are best understood as their prayer when the Assyrian army was at the gate. In 30:18-19, the prophet stated that their God would hear them in grace when they called out to him. Isaiah declared, 'How gracious he will be when you cry for help!' Here we see his words beginning to bear fruit. This must have been very encouraging after so many years of unresponsiveness to his preaching."* [Grogan, *Isaiah*] *"For you we wait expresses a dramatic turnabout from the attitudes expressed in chaps 29,30. There God pleaded with his people to put their trust in him, but they refused to do so (30:15; 31:6). Instead, they rushed off to Egypt, certain that if they did not act quickly in their own behalf, all hope was lost. God's word was that if they chose that avenue, their ultimate deliverance was only put off that much longer, for they must eventually turn to him (30:18,19; 32:14,15). Here that eventuality has come to pass."* [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] *'wait' combines the patience of waiting with the confidence of hope.*

CONFIDENCE IN THE SOVEREIGN LORD — *v3 at the thunder of your voice (NIV), roaring voice (Oswalt) may refer to thunder which the ancients often thought of as the voice of God or as comparable to God's voice. The point is He only needs to speak and the whole situation is dramatically altered. "'Rise up' – the seated Lord awaits his appointed moment, and when it comes all he needs to do in the face of the massed powers of the world is to stand up."* [Motyer, *Isaiah*] *"But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool" (Heb 10:12,13).*

ISRAEL TAKES THE ATTACKER'S SPOILS — *"While the prophet is praying thus, he already sees the answer.... The noise comes from Jehovah, who is raising Himself judicially above Assyria, and thunders as a judge. Then the hostile army runs away; and your booty (the address returns to Assyria) is swept away, just as when a swarm of locusts settles on a field, it soon eats it utterly away.... The inhabitants of Jerusalem swarm in the enemy's camp like beetles; they are all in motion, and carry off what they can."* [K&D, *Isaiah*]

ISRAEL IS REMINDED ONCE AGAIN: ALL WE NEED IS THE LORD — *“If the Assyrian officers were below the city walls at the time of this oracle, with all hope of relief from Egypt gone, the words of the prophet are particularly significant.... This passage strongly reminds us of 1 Cor 1:30 and Col 2:2-3, in which these blessings in all their riches are made available to God’s people in Christ. In the historical context here, the chief thought seems to be that the Lord himself is more than enough to give the people protection from their enemies and wisdom in living as the people of God in the international world. There is another link with the wisdom tradition (cf. Ps 111:10; Prov 1:7) in the assertion that **this rich store becomes available through the fear of the Lord**. This reminds us of the association of the fear of the Lord with the messianic King (11:23).” [Grogan, *Isaiah*] “Exalted: for though highly exalted in Himself, He has performed an act of justice and righteousness, with the sight and remembrance of which Zion is filled as with an overflowing rich supply of instruction and praise. A new time has dawned for the people of Judah.” [K&D, *Isaiah*]*

The Lord is our King — “Now I will arise” (33:7-16)

Look, their brave men cry aloud in the streets; the envoys of peace weep bitterly. The highways are deserted, no travelers are on the roads. The treaty is broken, its witnesses are despised, no one is respected. The land mourns and wastes away, Lebanon is ashamed and withers; Sharon is like the Arabah, and Bashan and Carmel drop their leaves. “Now will I arise,” says the LORD. “Now will I be exalted; now will I be lifted up. You conceive chaff, you give birth to straw; your breath is a fire that consumes you. The peoples will be burned as if to lime; like cut thornbushes they will be set ablaze.” You who are far away, hear what I have done; you who are near, acknowledge my power! The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: “Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?” He who walks righteously and speaks what is

Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without: the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly. The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man. The earth mourneth and languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down: Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits. Now will I rise, saith the LORD; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself. Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you. And the people shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire. Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my might. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and

Lo, ‘Their Ariel,’ they have cried without, Messengers of peace do weep bitterly. Desolated have been highways, Ceased hath he who passeth along the path, He hath broken covenant, He hath despised enemies, He hath not esteemed a man. Mourned, languished hath the land, Confounded hath been Lebanon, Withered hath been Sharon as a wilderness, And shaking are Bashan and Carmel. Now, do I arise, saith Jehovah, Now I am exalted, now I am lifted up. Ye conceive chaff, ye bear stubble, Your spirit! — fire devoureth you. And peoples have been [as] burnings of lime, Thorns, as sweepings, with fire they burn. Hear, ye far off, that which I have done, And know, ye near ones, My might. Afraid in Zion have been sinners, Seized hath trembling the profane: Who doth dwell for us — consuming fire, Who doth dwell for us — burnings of the age? Whoso is walking

right, who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil — this is the man who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. His bread will be supplied, and water will not fail him. (NIV)

speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. (KJV)

righteously, And is speaking uprightly, Kicking against gain of oppressions, Shaking his hands from taking hold on a bribe, Stopping his ear from hearing of blood, And shutting his eyes from looking on evil, He high places doth inhabit, Strongholds of rock [are] his high tower, His bread hath been given, his waters stedfast. (YLT)

Having introduced the subject in brief (v1-6), Isaiah now proceeds to expand upon it by first declaring the need (v7-9) and God's promises to deliver (v10-16). He then continues to speak of the Lord's deliverance (v17-23) and a graphic conclusion (v23,24). *"The Assyrian crisis provides the backdrop to what is now a vision of world collapse before the Lord rising to judge."* [Motyer, *Isaiah*]

ALL HOPE IS REMOVED — "Verse 7 introduces a striking contrast, for the prophet focuses attention on the sorry condition of Jerusalem, which led the people eventually to call on their God in penitent faith. Terror grips the hearts of the warriors within the city gates. Those who have been sent out to parley with the enemy return weeping, for their words would not penetrate his hard heart. All normal commerce between communities comes to a halt (v. 8; cf. Judg 5:6), and the treaty that apparently existed between Sennacherib and Hezekiah was treated as null and void.... The whole land was in mourning (v. 9). The northern kingdom had already felt the heavy tread of the conqueror's feet; and the places named suggest that, apart from a divine intervention, Judah would go the same way. If the withering of Lebanon refers to its trees, then this is dearly an indication that what happened was a divine judgment; for its slopes were covered mostly by evergreens, whose leaves do not normally wither. Sharon was one of the most fertile parts of Palestine while the Arabah was dry and arid.... *The prophet surveyed places further north and saw the devastation, an earnest of what faced Jerusalem if the Assyrians gained entrance.*"

[Grogan, *Isaiah*] "In a moment like that, when the ambassadors came back empty-handed from Sennacherib's camp at Lachish, bemoaning the Assyrians' treachery, it would have become soberingly clear that there was nothing more human effort could do. *That is the sort of moment for which God waits, and for which he must wait. It is not until we have exhausted our efforts that we are finally able to recognize the hand of God at work and to stop claiming for ourselves what is rightfully his.*" [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] *the highways are deserted* is indicative of troubled times when a caravan dare not travel for fear of their safety. *the land mourns and wastes away* expresses the solidarity of the people with the land in the OT. Just as the people were downcast, so was the land. It may possible have a literal element to it as well since the attack may have been in the fall.

THE LORD ARISES TO DELIVER — Now appears three times in this short verse (v10). *"If the believer is called to abandon his or her own haste in patient waiting on the Lord, it is with the certainty that there always comes a divine 'Now!' One part of the importance of waiting is so that we will be sensitive to recognize God's moment when it does come (cp Simeon's prayer, Luke 2:25-32). Those who are consumed by their own plans are always taken unaware by God's work."* [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

THERE IS JUSTICE IN THE WORLD — v11,12 *“After the prophet has heard this from Jehovah, he knows how it will fare with them. He therefore cries out to them in triumph (v. 11), ‘Ye are pregnant with hay, ye bring forth stubble! Your snorting is the fire that will devour you.’ Their vain purpose to destroy Jerusalem comes to nothing; their burning wrath against Jerusalem becomes the fire of wrath, which consumes them.”* [K&D, Isaiah] Assyria’s destruction is compared to burning lime and thornbushes. Despite the seemingly solidity of Assyria’s power (as a rock) and the fierceness of their warfare (as a thornbush is hazardous), fire can consume the thorns almost completely in a very short time and the rock crushed to dust. “Verse 12 – ‘And nations become as lime burnings, thorns cut off, which are kindled with fire.’ The first simile sets forth the totality of the destruction: they will be so completely burned up, that nothing but ashes will be left, like the lump of lime left at the burning of lime. The second contains a figurative description of its suddenness: they have vanished suddenly, like dead brushwood, which is cut down in consequence, and quickly crackles up and is consumed (Isa 5:24, cf., 9:17).” [K&D, Isaiah] *“So the prophet asserts that there is justice in the world. If it comes too slowly for most of us, it still comes. Although what Sennacherib received outside Jerusalem’s gates was only a taste of Assyria’s ultimate destruction, it was a genuine taste and one which would be violently completed within a century (609 BC).”* [Oswalt, Isaiah]

THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD BRINGS FEAR — v13-16 relates the impact of God’s moving on the world and especially upon Judah. *“When they see God’s might displayed upon Assyria, there will be terror among those Jews who have been little more believing than the Assyrians. Like their forefathers at the foot of Sinai, they question whether anyone mortal can live in the presence of such intensity. Isaiah answers that mortality is not the issue, but ethical purity. For the ethically pure God will not be destruction but refuge.”* [Oswalt, Isaiah] When one really understands that *we live and move in God*, then that one will live in a reverential fear of the Lord. *“The judgments of God should have a salutary effect on the people of God, for they underscore his holiness and the impossibilities of sinning with impunity. God speaks, in fact, to the whole world, calling on people to learn from the object lesson provided by his judgment of Assyria. The terms ‘far away’ and ‘near’ (v. 13) describe the Gentile nations and Judah respectively (cf. 49:1, 57:19, Acts 2:39, Eph 2:13, 17).”* [Grogan, Isaiah] *‘Who of us can dwell in the presence of holiness?’ – “The cry of the convicted would seem to require a negative answer. No human being can dwell in the presence of such a holy God. Yet the prophet gives his hearers a wonderfully positive reply (v. 15). Time and again he had called his people to faith in God. To find security through the fear of the Lord is to have the key to great spiritual treasure, including that practical wisdom that indicates the way for the individual to walk as well as the right approach to international politics for the leaders (cf. v. 6).”* [Grogan, Isaiah]

‘FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD’ — These verses are saying exactly what James said centuries later (James 2:14-26). Putting this in the context of the NT, *this is not teaching men should live pure to obtain righteousness. Rather salvation is so synonymous with good works that the description of one living righteously is a description of one who has placed his faith and trust in the God of Israel.* “Entry into fellowship with God is only possible as a result of God’s grace, a fact which the OT teaches as well as the NT. But that truth has its own pitfalls, as Protestantism has frequently shown. *The suggestion has been made that since fellowship is by grace, realized righteousness is not attainable. A passage such as this one gives the lie to that position. The goal is always the same, conformity to the character of God. The revelation of God’s grace in Christ has not changed the goal. But it has shown us we were going about reaching the goal in the wrong way.*” [Oswalt, Isaiah]

The Lord is our King — The King in His beauty (33:17-24)

Your eyes will see the king in his beauty and view a land that stretches afar. In your thoughts you will ponder the former terror: “Where is that chief officer? Where is the one who took the revenue? Where is the officer in charge of the towers?” You will see those arrogant people no more, those people of an obscure speech, with their strange, incomprehensible tongue. Look upon Zion, the city of our festivals; your eyes will see Jerusalem, a peaceful abode, a tent that will not be moved; its stakes will never be pulled up, nor any of its ropes broken. There the LORD will be our Mighty One. It will be like a place of broad rivers and streams. No galley with oars will ride them, no mighty ship will sail them. For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; it is he who will save us. Your rigging hangs loose: The mast is not held secure, the sail is not spread. Then an abundance of spoils will be divided and even the lame will carry off plunder. No one living in Zion will say, “I am ill”; and the sins of those who dwell there will be forgiven. (NIV)

Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off. Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where is the scribe? where is the receiver? where is he that counted the towers? Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, that thou canst not understand. Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious LORD will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us. Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey. And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity. (KJV)

A king in his beauty, see do thine eyes, They see a land afar off. Thy heart doth meditate terror, Where [is] he who is counting? Where [is] he who is weighing? Where [is] he who is counting the towers? The strong people thou seest not, A people deeper of lip than to be understood, Of a scorned tongue, there is no understanding. See Zion, the city of our meetings, Thine eyes see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, A tent not taken down, Not removed are its pins for ever, And none of its cords are broken. But there mighty [is] Jehovah for us, A place of rivers — streams broad of sides, No ship with oars doth go into it, And a mighty ship doth not pass over it. For Jehovah our judge, Jehovah our lawgiver, Jehovah our king — He doth save us. Left have been thy ropes, They strengthen not rightly their mast, They have not spread out a sail, Then apportioned hath been a prey of much spoil, The lame have taken spoil. Nor doth an inhabitant say, ‘I was sick,’ The people that is dwelling in it, is forgiven of iniquity! (YLT)

HISTORICAL OR ESCHATOLOGICAL? — “The picture here seems to mingle the historical and the eschatological as well as the physical and the spiritual. On the one hand, the deliverance from Sennacherib seems to be in view (v18,19), yet the picture in v20-22 is not merely of a historical deliverance. Furthermore, as v24b makes explicit, the true benefits of God’s kingdom are spiritual. In the merely physical world there is no permanence; all things tend to decay. But in a world of the spirit where sin is truly forgiven (lit. lifted away), there is not merely stability, but growth from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18).” [Oswalt, Isaiah] “Historical

events can be read between the lines, but our eyes are held all the time by the undated future.” [Motyer, *Isaiah*] “It is clear that viewing the land is presented as somehow complementary to seeing the king, and the greatness of the Messiah’s earthly dominion has been asserted in passages like 9:7; 11:9-10 (cf. 26:15). In contrast to this embattled city, the only free territory left to God’s people, the future king would appear as ruler over a wide empire.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY — That verse 17 does not speak of a mere human monarch (Hezekiah) is as follows:

- Isaiah has again and again shown the folly of trusting in a human king, it would be incredible for Isaiah to now reverse that stance
- according to Oswalt, the word ‘king’ does not have a definite article which suggests an ideal is being spoken of, as the Messiah in Ps 45.
- v 17 speaks of the royal realm as being *a land that stretches afar; a land of distances* which could hardly be spoken of as Hezekiah’s domain, even poetically
- v 22 makes it clear Jehovah is our King

Rather than making reference to the immediate circumstances, Isaiah uses the present deliverance from Sennacherib to speak of a day when true and final deliverance will have come.

‘YOU WILL SEE YOUR OPPRESSORS NO MORE’ — v18,19 Isaiah shows the people reflective as they consider their deliverance, the immediate context of Assyria being the springboard to our final deliverance from the presence of sin. He speaks of those who went out with the tribute to buy off Sennacherib (to no avail). He mentions what they thought of as ‘chatter’ as the Assyrians spoke in their unintelligible, foreign tongue. “What had seemed so permanent at the time will be gone, and its passing will be a source of wonder.” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

THE FACE OF THE LORD — v20-22 Instead of the Assyrian overlords, Judah will see their city secure and protected. **PERMANENCE** – *A tent that will not be moved* quite likely referred to the tabernacle, the place where the children of Israel met with the Lord upon their formation into a nation. *It was a great city, yes. It was the city of David, yes. It was the city with the temple of God, yes. But that is secondary now. Now what matters is it is here that we meet God face to face.* The sense, regardless of how this is taken, is *the permanence of the dwelling of the Lord*. The tabernacle was built to move with the people; now *its stakes will never be pulled up, its ropes never broken*. “Tent looks back to the wilderness days, so often thought of as an ideal of walking with God, but here the tent pegs are never moved again, so pilgrimage is over and the travelers are home at last.” [Motyer, *Isaiah*] **SECURITY** – Assyria and Babylon had its great rivers to contribute to its defense, but Jerusalem had the Lord which was of greater benefit than the rivers. A formidable naval attack could forge a wide river but none can advance beyond the Lord. **THE CHARACTER OF GOD** – The Lord is Israel’s Judge (in the sense of the book of Judges; i.e. a governing deliverer); He is their Lawgiver and therefore will be just with His people; He is their King to lead them in deliverance. *“All three recall different periods in Israel’s history, for the period of the judges was preceded by that of Moses the lawgiver and succeeded by that of the king. All three were savior figures, acting as agents of God to bring deliverance to his people. Their God would now sum up all these functions in himself. How great then would be his salvation! The verse is reminiscent of the way so many functions — discrete and distributed among many human figures in OT days — meet in the NT presentation of Jesus Christ.”* [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

BROKEN PRIOR TO DELIVERANCE — v23 This verse is difficult and has caused some commentators to be inserted in the wrong place. There are several difficulties with making that assumption which Oswalt says causes more problems than it solves (Oswalt states that taking the following interpretation “*does not automatically explain away all difficulties but it does offer a viable possibility*”). As it is, Isaiah refers here to either Assyria or Judah. If Assyria, the sense is she is a ship in disarray about to be plundered by Israel. In favor of this is the previous portions of the chapter which speak of Assyria’s demise. If it is Judah then the sense is that it is Judah in disarray at first but (as if a ‘*before/after*’ contrast) then the Lord will give them abundance of plunder by reversing their circumstances.

FORGIVEN! — v24 provides a fitting conclusion and speaks of a need deeper than deliverance from oppression. “*Ultimately, says Isaiah, our problem is a broken relation with God because of sin. That being so, mere defeat of enemies and restoration to the land will not do. The final goal is a forgiven people living a life in keeping with God’s character.*” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] “*Verse 24 reminds us that the whole passage is really a description of the future blessedness of Jerusalem. The blessings of God will take both physical and spiritual forms. In Psalm 103:3, the greater blessing of forgiveness is placed first, for the psalm is only just beginning; here it is placed at the end, to provide a climax for the whole chapter. In Heb 10:17-18, the long and full exposition of Christ’s priestly and sacrificial work that began at Heb 7:1 comes to its triumphant conclusion in the statement that sin has been forgiven. No blessing is greater, none more urgently needed.*” [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

“Your eyes will see the king in his beauty
and view a land that stretches afar.”

— Isaiah 33:17 NIV