

## Isaiah Lesson 11 Articles

Like all devout Jews, Isaiah loved Jerusalem, the holy city, the city of David, the place of God's dwelling (Pss. 122 and 137). But Isaiah saw storm clouds gathering over the city and announced that trouble was coming. It was time for the nation to turn to God in repentance.

He began his message announcing *God's judgment on Ephraim*. Surely their neighbor's fall would serve as a warning to the people of Judah and Jerusalem. If Assyria conquered Samaria, then Judah was next on the list. The Northern Kingdom was proud of its capital city, Samaria, that sat like a beautiful crown (or wreath) at the head of a fruitful valley. But their arrogance was detestable to God, for they thought their fortress city was impregnable. Samaria reigned in luxury and pleasure and had no fear of her enemies.

The Lord was also appalled by their *drunkenness*. To the Jews, wine was a gift from God and a source of joy. The Law did not demand total abstinence, but it did warn against drunkenness. The Prophet Amos denounced the luxurious indulgences of the people in both Judah and Samaria, and Isaiah also thundered against such godless living.

A government official in Washington, D.C. once quipped, "We have three parties in this city: the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, and the cocktail party." Indeed, Washington, D.C. ranks high on the list of cities noted for alcohol consumption. Many people don't realize that alcohol and nicotine, America's favorite legal narcotics, do far more damage than all the illegal drugs combined. According to Dr. Arnold Washton, alcohol and nicotine kill 450,000 people annually, while illegal drugs kill about 6,000 (*Willpower's Not Enough*, Harper & Row, 1989; p. 13). This does not make illegal drugs acceptable, but it does help us put things in perspective. What hope is there for our affluent, pleasure-loving society that gives lip service to religion and ignores the tragic consequences of sin and the judgment that is sure to come?

Perhaps the people of Judah rejoiced to hear Isaiah announce the fall of their rival kingdom, but their celebration was short-lived; for the prophet then announced that *Judah was guilty of the same sins as Samaria and therefore was in danger of judgment (28:5–8)*.

But pride and drunkenness were not Judah's only sins; they also *mocked God's prophet and rejected God's Word* (vv. 9–13). Society today often takes a similar attitude toward God's servants and God's Word. People are so intoxicated by intellectual pride that they laugh at the simple message of the Gospel presented by humble witnesses (1 Cor. 1:18–31). The Prophet Amos was ejected from the king's chapel because he was a simple farmer and not a member of the religious elite (Amos 7:10–17). Evangelist D.L. Moody was often laughed at because his speech was not polished, but God used him to bring many thousands to the Savior.

Their only hope was in the tried and true foundation stone (28:16), the "Rock of ages" (26:4; 8:14; 17:10). This is definitely a reference to the Messiah and is so interpreted in the New Testament (1 Peter 2:4–7; Rom. 9:33; Mark 12:10; see Ps. 118:22). If they had faith in Jehovah, they would not be rushing here and there, trying to forge alliances, a practice that only leads to shame and failure (Rom. 10:11). A solid rock is better protection than a flimsy covering of lies!

Isaiah's final announcement was that *their confidence that God would not judge them was a delusion* (Isa. 28:21–29). "But God defended His people in the past!" they argued. "What about David's victory over the Philistines at Mount Perazim [2 Sam. 5:17–21], or Joshua's victory over the Amorites at Gibeon [Josh. 10]?" But Joshua and David were godly leaders who trusted Jehovah and obeyed His Word. What Isaiah's scoffing opponents did not realize was that God would do a "strange work": *He would use the enemy to fight against His own people!* Just as a farmer has different tasks to perform and must adapt himself to each task, whether plowing or threshing, so God must do the work that is necessary to bring about His eternal purposes. He knows just what tool to use and when to use it.

Jerusalem watched the Northern Kingdom fall to the Assyrians, but this judgment did not bring them to repentance. When we start saying to ourselves, "It can never happen to me!"—*it is sure to happen!*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Comforted* (pp. 69–74). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.