

• *God never gives up on His people*

• *Prophecy of coming Saviour and what God will do with Him*

### 1. Sometimes our troubles are of our own making

• *Compromise with the world out of fear is always a mistake*

• *Only Jesus can be the foundation of a kingdom of righteousness*

• *The covenant with the Egyptians will be swept away*

• *God may wait for us to learn tough lessons before restoring us*

• *God's Saviour is the foundation of a kingdom of righteousness*

Isaiah ministered in very difficult times. Judah and northern Israel had both fallen into unbelief. But God is the Lord of history. He has plans to bring salvation to the world through his people. They were in a bad condition but God never gives up on his people. The people of Judah had put their trust in pagan Egypt but God is inviting them to put their trust in his Saviour who is yet to come. Isaiah 28:16 has a prophecy of a coming Saviour. Then Isaiah 28:17–29 goes on to tell us what God will do in connection with this Stone – our Lord Jesus Christ – who is the foundation of all the purposes of God.

1. **Sometimes our troubles are of our own making.** The people of Judah had entered into a 'covenant with death'. In order to protect themselves against the Assyrians, the Judeans made a treaty with Egypt, but their covenant with Egypt was a covenant which would bring them spiritual death. They were going back to the very people from whom they had been redeemed! Modern Christians make the same mistake when they ally themselves to worldly covetousness, worldly philosophy, worldly morality and so on. Compromise with 'the world' out of fear for ourselves is always a mistake. Only Jesus can be the foundation of a kingdom of righteousness.

<sup>17</sup>*'I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb-line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place.'*

Isaiah promises that one day this covenant with the Egyptians (for that is what he refers to) will be swept away. The Judeans had brought their own problems on themselves, but God would eventually have mercy on them. Even if we have brought down our own troubles, God will have mercy on us, but it may be a long time. God may well wait till we have learned some tough lessons before he restores us. In the case of eighth-century-BC Israel, it would take centuries.

God says, 'I am the One who lays a stone in Zion'. The Stone must be identical to the child of 7:14 and 9:6, the righteous Davidic King of 11:1–10. He is the foundation of a kingdom of righteousness<sup>1</sup>. God will bring his Saviour. His kingdom will be like a building, but it will not be built with lies or deceit or secretiveness. All of that will be swept away. We are making trouble for ourselves if we look for any other kind of kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> 28:17a

**2. If we are spiritually awake we must see we have no alternative but to submit to God's plan of salvation**

• Alliances between God's people and pagans will be cancelled and broken

• The Assyrians will invade

• The people will not change their ways – God will rise up against them

• The God who is mighty to save is also mighty to purge His people from their sins – the sooner they cooperate with God, the better

**3. God knows what he is doing when he rebukes his people**

**2. If we are spiritually awake we must see we have no alternative but to submit to God's plan of salvation.** An overwhelming scourge<sup>□1</sup> will come otherwise. It will be totally uncomfortable for us<sup>□2</sup>. The alliances between God's people and pagans will certainly be cancelled and broken. It is only a matter of time. God will not allow them to continue. Isaiah says to Judah:

□1 28:18  
□2 28:20

*18 'Your covenant with death will be annulled;  
your agreement with Sheol will not stand.  
When the overwhelming scourge sweeps by,  
you will be a place for it to trample on.*

*19 'As often as it sweeps by it will carry you away;  
morning after morning, by day and by night,  
it will sweep through.'  
The understanding of this message  
will bring sheer terror.*

The Assyrians will certainly come. Anyone of God's people who listens to Isaiah will realize how terrifying the Assyrian invasion will be. Until the people change their ways there will be nothing but discomfort; rest will not come to them.

*20 'For the bed is too short to stretch out on,  
the blanket too narrow when one curls up.*

If they will not change their way, God will rise up against them as he once rose up to save them.

*21 'Yahweh will rise up as he did at Mount Perazim,  
he will rouse himself as in the Valley of Gibeon –  
to do his work, his strange work,  
and perform his task, his alien task.*

The destruction would sweep down into Judah. Mount Perazim and the Valley of Gibeon are places near Jerusalem where God gave David dramatic victory over the Philistines<sup>□1</sup>. But the God who is mighty to save is also mighty to purge his people from their sins. The sooner they co-operate with God, the better.

□1 see 1  
Chronicles  
14:11, 16

*22 'Now stop showing yourselves to be scorers,  
or your chains will become heavier.  
For I have heard from the Sovereign Lord,  
Yahweh Almighty:  
a sure and certain destruction is decreed against  
the whole land.*

**3. God knows what he is doing when he rebukes his people.**

*23 'Listen and hear my voice;  
pay attention and hear my speech.  
24 'When a farmer ploughs in order to plant,  
does he plough continually  
Does he keep on breaking up and harrowing the soil?  
25 'When he has levelled the surface,  
does he not sow caraway and scatter cummin?  
Does he not plant wheat in its place,  
barley in its plot,  
and spelt in its field?*

• God is like a farmer

• His severity is temporary and purposeful

• Reaping

• The right treatment for each seed

• God's punishment is to produce fruit

• God knows how to adjust our circumstances to bring us and keep us close

<sup>26</sup>His God instructs him and teaches him the right way.

God is like a farmer breaking up the soil. Savage treatment of the ground by the farmer does not go on for ever. He merely is breaking up the ground in order to plant seed. His 'severity' is purposeful. The same is true in his dealings with his people. His severity is always temporary, always purposeful.

Isaiah 28:27–29 turns from sowing to reaping. Once again God is like a farmer.

<sup>27</sup>For caraway is not threshed with a sledge, nor is a cartwheel rolled over cummin; caraway is beaten out with a rod, and cummin with a stick.

<sup>28</sup>Grain must be ground to make bread, but one does not go on threshing it for ever, nor keep driving the wheels of his threshing cart over it, nor keep grinding it with horses.

The right treatment is given each particular seed. Israel are not to be crushed; but the nation is getting a beating! God does not beat us for ever. He does it discriminatingly, and what he does is purposeful. He produces fruit in us. Grain must be ground to make bread; God's people must be beaten to produce saints.

God's amazing grace is wonderful to save us, wonderful to keep us. He knows how to mix precisely the right set of circumstances so as to bring us to him and keep us close.

<sup>29</sup>All this also comes from Yahweh Almighty, wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom.



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Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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