



Preaching Through The Bible, Michael Eaton

Isaiah Transformations (29:15-24)

Part 41

• Judah asked Egypt for protection from Assyria

• God rescued them despite their foolishness

1. Men and women turn things upside down

• Sin is deceitful

• We deceive ourselves and others

• We even act as if we can deceive God!

2. But God can also bring about great changes as well!

• The Bible looks ahead to salvation and judgement

• Creation will be healed

• Deafness and blindness will disappear

• The humble and needy will be lifted up

• The wicked will disappear

Isaiah has at this point six sections beginning with the word 'Ah' or 'Ah, how terrible . . .'. 'Ah! That crown of pride . . .' ¹. 'Ah, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David settled!' ². Now we come to the third 'Ah'.

¹ 28:1
² 29:1

Isaiah is still referring to the time when Judah sent messengers to Egypt asking for their protection against Assyria. They were rejecting God's word to them through Isaiah¹. Going to Egypt was foolish and yet God promised he would rescue them². Now Isaiah ponders the way in which people turn things upside down but God turns them the right way up!

¹ see 28:9-10
² 29:1-14

1. Men and women turn things upside down.

*¹⁵Ah, how terrible for those who go to great depths to hide their plans from Yahweh. Their works are done in darkness, and they say, 'Who sees us? Who knows about us?'
¹⁶How you turn things upside down! It is as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'He did not make me'? Can the pot say of the potter, 'He does not discern anything'?*

Sin is so deceitful! We deceive ourselves. We deceive others, sometimes in a most 'spiritual' manner, and we even act as if we can deceive God! But when we act in a deceitful manner we do so because our conscience is not clear in what we are doing. We are acting as if we had the right to do what we like. We – the clay pot that God is shaping – somehow think we can argue with or deceive our Creator!

2. But God can also bring about great changes as well! If men and women turn things upside down God turns them the right way up again.

¹⁷In a very short time, Lebanon will be turned into a garden land and the fertile field will obviously be a forest.

The Bible's way of facing the future is to look to the very end of what God is planning to do. It looks far ahead to 'that day' when salvation and judgement will come. Creation itself will be totally healed. Even the best (beautiful Lebanon) will be made even better. Fertile fields will become lush forests, as will be plain to everyone.

Deafness and blindness will disappear.

¹⁸In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see.

The humble and needy will be lifted up.

¹⁹The humble will have fresh joy in Yahweh; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

Society will be so changed that the wicked will disappear.

²⁰The ruthless will vanish, the mockers will disappear, and all who watch for opportunities to do evil will be cut down.

• People who misuse the legal system will be removed

People who misuse the legal system ('We have a law and by that law he ought to die . . .') will be removed.

²¹They will be cut down, those who with a word make out a person to be guilty, who ensnare the defender in court and with false testimony deprive the innocent of justice.

• God can undo the sins of men and women – where sin abounds grace abounds more

The second paragraph of this section²¹ is a reply to the first paragraph²². Men and women turn things upside down, but God's final glorified world will put everything back to what it ought to be. God can undo the sins of men and women. Where sin abounds grace abounds all the more.

²¹ 29:17–21
²² 29:15–16

3. The transformation can begin immediately

3. The transformation can begin immediately²³. The first paragraph looks at what men and women do; the second paragraph looks at what God can do. Now a third paragraph insists that God is doing this work of transformation among his people, his 'Israel':

²³ 29:22–24

• God is transforming His 'Israel'

²²Therefore this is what Yahweh, who redeemed Abraham, says to the house of Jacob . . .

• God redeemed Abraham

They are the children of Abraham. God's transformation of society began a long time ago. He has already started transforming the world by saving people. He redeemed Abraham, and Abraham became the model believer. One of Abraham's grandchildren, Jacob, became the ancestor of the people of Israel. So let Israel in Isaiah's day (what is left of it) submit to God's work of transforming men and women within their own nation.

• Let Israel submit to God's work of transformation

'No longer will Jacob be ashamed; no longer will his face grow pale.'

• Jacob horrified by his descendants until they turn back to God

Isaiah imagines Jacob looking at his descendants. He is horrified at what he sees. But when Judah turns back to the God of Israel, Jacob will no longer be so horrified.

²³For when he looks and sees his children, the work of my hands, in his midst, they will acknowledge the holiness of my name; they will acknowledge the holiness of the Holy One of Jacob, and will stand in awe of the God of Israel.'

• Israel will confess God's holiness and live accordingly

The day will come when Israel confesses the holiness of God's character and lives accordingly as God's people with great awe for the holy God who has transformed them.

²⁴Those who are wayward in spirit will gain discernment; those who stubbornly complain will grasp hold of instruction.'

• Great spiritual wisdom

The much-changed life of God's people will include a new steadiness in which previously unreliable people come to great spiritual wisdom, and those who have before been grumblers and complainers submit to God's instruction and so change their ways.

• Submission to God's instruction

The three paragraphs of this section of Isaiah²⁴ have all considered some kind of turnaround: those who turn upside down their relationship to God; the God who acts to turn us around so that our relationship to him is right; and the newness of life that appears in God's people when he rescues us from our upside-down ways of living.

• Turnaround