



• Judah's sin would be followed by God's rescue – lives transformed

Isaiah 28–35 deals with God as the Lord of history. It has six sections. Isaiah 28 described Judah's spiritual rebelliousness. The main point of 29:1–14 was to promise that Judah's sin would be followed by God's rescue. Isaiah 29:15–24 spoke of God's power to transform the lives of men and women. The next three units of the section¹ went over the same ground but now they add details and fuller information.

¹ 30:1-15;
31:1-32:20;
33:1-35:10

• Victory is coming to God's 'Israel'

In the unit of Isaiah that runs from 33:1 to 35:10, the prophet is describing the way in which great victory is coming to God's 'Israel'. The immediate enemy, Assyria, will be destroyed¹. Zion will be saved by its King². But there is more. The sins of all nations everywhere will be destroyed³ and God's redeemed people will walk from wherever they are into a new Zion⁴. The main point of Isaiah 34:1–17 is that sin will be exterminated.

¹ 33:1-12
² 33:13-24
³ 34:1-17
⁴ 35:1-10

• Sin will be exterminated

• Israel will get a foretaste of what God will do

The great question is: how do we face the future? The Bible's answer is to point to what God will do eventually and then tell us that **God's future may have anticipations and we are likely to have some of it now**. All wicked nations will eventually be destroyed¹ but Israel will get a foretaste very soon when Assyria will be destroyed². There are two main points in these chapters.

¹ 34:1-17
² 33:1-12

1. All wickedness will eventually be destroyed

1. All wickedness will be destroyed; its destruction is only a matter of time. First the prophet calls upon the nations.

*¹Come near, you nations, and listen;
pay attention, you peoples!
Let the earth hear, and all that fills it,
the world, and all that comes out of it!*

• The nations must first know of God's anger

The nations must first know of God's anger. Sin and sinners are destined to be exterminated.

*²For Yahweh is angry with all nations;
his wrath is upon all their people.
He will totally destroy them,
he will give them over to slaughter.
³Their slain will be thrown out,
their dead bodies will send up a stench;
the mountains will be ruined by their blood.*

• Sin will not be allowed to go on forever

God rules this world. Sin is allowed to go on for a long time, but it is not allowed to go on for ever. Sooner or later God steps in. One of the themes of Scripture is that he will wipe the planet clean. He did it in the judgement in Noah's time. He will do it again. Sin is not eternal. It is not allowed to go on for ever.

• The heavens and earth will be abolished

The heavens and the earth will be abolished.

*⁴All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved
and the sky rolled up like a scroll;
all the starry host will fade
like withered leaves from the vine,
like shrivelled figs from the fig tree.*

• God's sword of judgement will fall upon all sin

Our planet in its present form is not eternal. 'Heaven and earth may pass away', said Jesus.

God has a sword of judgement. It falls from heaven upon all sin.

*⁵For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens;
see, it descends in judgement on Edom,
upon the people I have devoted to utter destruction*

• Edom represents the whole world

Edom was notorious as a hate-filled enemy of Israel. Here it represents the whole world. If the most hate-filled enemy cannot withstand God's sword nor can any lesser enemy.

*⁶Yahweh has a sword; it is filled with blood,
it is enriched with fat,
the blood of lambs and goats,
fat from the kidneys of rams.
For Yahweh has a sacrifice in Bozrah
and a great slaughter in Edom.*

• The judgement is like a sacrifice in Edom

The judgement is like a sacrifice in Bozrah (Edom's capital). Blood and fat were specially valued parts of the sacrifice and were wholly given to God.

*⁷And the wild oxen will fall with them,
the bull calves and the great bulls.
Their land will be drenched with blood,
and the dust will be soaked with fat.
⁸For Yahweh has a day of vengeance,
a year of full settlement, to uphold Zion's cause.
⁹Edom's streams will be turned into pitch,
her dust into burning sulphur;
her land will become blazing pitch!
¹⁰It will not be quenched night and day;
its smoke will rise for ever.*

• The fire of God's judgement will fall on Edom and all that she stands for

The fire of God's judgement will fall on Edom and all that she stands for. Nothing will be able to stop that fire from doing its work of extermination. As with Sodom and Gomorrah, the ascending smoke will be the sign of the disappearance of the city. Ascending smoke speaks of annihilation. Part of God's good news is the certain knowledge that our planet will be wiped clean.

• Ascending smoke speaks of annihilation

• Terrible emptiness after judgement

Isaiah 34:10c–17 speaks of the terrible emptiness after judgement has fallen upon Edom.

*From generation to generation it will lie desolate.
No one will ever pass through it again.
¹¹The desert owl and screech owl will possess it;
the great owl and the raven will nest there.
God will stretch out over Edom
the measuring line of shapelessness
and the plumb-line of emptiness.
¹²Her nobles will have nothing there to be called
a kingdom,
all her princes will vanish away.
¹³Thorns will overrun her citadels,
nettles and brambles her strongholds.
She will become a haunt for jackals,
a home for owls.
¹⁴Desert creatures will meet with hyenas,
and wild goats will bleat to each other;
there the night creatures will also repose
and find for themselves places of rest.
¹⁵The owl will nest there and lay eggs,
she will hatch them, and care for her young
under the shadow of her wings;
there also the falcons will gather,
each with its mate.
¹⁶Search in the scroll of Yahweh and read:
For none of these will be missing,
not one will lack her mate.*

*For it is my mouth that has given the order,
and his Spirit will gather them together.
¹⁷He allots their portions;
his hand distributes them by measure.
They will possess it for ever
and dwell there from generation to generation.*

• After judgement
humans will have
disappeared

After God's judgement has fallen, the land is pictured as everlastingly inhabited by animals and birds. All humans will have disappeared. Nothing but wild birds inhabit the land for ever. It is prophetic picture-language, but the picture assures us that Assyrians, Edomites, and everything that they represent, will be wiped clean away from planet earth.

1. 2. A new
Jerusalem will
be created for
God's people
to walk into

2. A new Jerusalem will be created for God's people to walk into. This is the theme of Isaiah 35:1–10.

God's redeemed people may walk from wherever they are into a new Zion¹. We must remember the 'panoramic' principle of prophecy. Old Testament prophets generally saw the entire future of what God would do for his kingdom, without their having revealed to them the steps and stages in which the predictions would be fulfilled. What this means in practice is that the prophets did not disentangle what would happen in their own times, in the years immediately ahead, at the time of Jesus' first coming (as we call it) and what would happen at the time of Jesus' second coming. It was all one 'panoramic' view of everything that God would do. There is coming a new world altogether, and we may taste it even now.

1 35:1-10

• A 'panoramic'
view of the future