

Wednesday, November 15, 2023 • Read Isaiah 29:1–14

Questions from the Scripture text: Upon whom/what is the second woe pronounced (v1a)? What is its great boast? What else does it boast (v1b–c)? But Who is going to be against them (v2–3)? How is God's attitude toward doing so described, in human terms (v2b–c)? And what will the effect be upon them (v4)? How low are they described as being brought down (v4b, c, d, e)? Whom else will God bring this low (v5)? Despite what appearance of theirs (v5c)? What will their comparative weightiness end up being (v5d)? How long will this take (v5e)? Who is punishing Jerusalem in this way (v6)? How severely? But after they have distressed her, what will the end result be (v7–8)? What are the people of Jerusalem like, in response to this vision (v9)? Who is doing it to them in v9b? But Who is superintending this in His providence (v10)? By the removal/confusion of whom is He especially judging them (v10c–d)? What effect does their spiritual blindness have on their ability to understand Isaiah (v11–12)? Under such judgment, what are the people yet doing (v13a–c)? But with what inner substance (v13d)? From where does religion come, when there is this blindness-induced hypocrisy toward God (v13e)? What are they, therefore, especially unable to see (v14, cf. 1Cor 1:18–25)?

How is pride dangerous? Isaiah 29:1–14 prepares us for the first serial reading in public worship on the Lord's Day. In these fourteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **pride puts us in danger of stumbling over the Cornerstone, inventing our own theology, and devising our own worship.**

God opposes the proud. Jerusalem, here, is a warning against spiritual pride. They were proud to be Ariel, "lion of God" (v1a, cf. Gen 49:9–10). They were proud to be the city of David (v1a). They were proud of how long their city had stood (v1b). They were proud to be the location of the feasts (v1c). But being near to God and used of God is cause for humility, not pride. And the Lord Himself will humble them. He will distress and grieve them (v2), bring them down (v3–4a), and silence their proud talk (v4b–e). Let gratitude and worship be our humble responses to all of God's goodness to us, lest we learn by sad, humiliating, silencing experience: God opposes the proud (cf. 1Pet 5:5–7).

God destroys His people's oppressors. It is God's prerogative to distress Jerusalem (v2a), but those mere creatures who gladly distress His people (v7c) have their days numbered. Though their day seem great and fierce ("multitude of the terrible ones," v5c), it will ultimately amount to nothing (v5, 7d–8), and the Lord will punish them (v6). This is a warning to any who would oppress or persecute the church—and since the Lord may surprise us with regard to in whom He has begun a work of grace, it is truly a warning against oppressing or persecuting any. But it is also an encouragement to believers who are being oppressed—that we would trust God's vengeance, leave room for His wrath, and refuse to trust in our own wisdom or strength for help.

Spiritual blindness the worst judgment. The Lord will disable and disorient Jerusalem (v9). He will remove His prophets from among them (v10) and incapacitate their understanding (v11–12). Without having or understanding God's Word, they will think that they draw near to God and honor God, but the truth will be that their hearts are far from Him (v13). Their theology—especially their theology of worship—will be merely the ideas, the commandments, of men. Manmade worship and theology is a dreadful judgment. May God deliver us from thinking about Him according to our thoughts instead of His! May God deliver us from worshiping Him according to our ideas instead of His instruction!

The marvelous wisdom and work of God. The city that was proud of being the lion of God will be the city where God lays a cornerstone—the very cornerstone that they reject (cf. 8:14, 28:16)! But the wisdom of man could never come up with a plan in which the Lord of Glory is crucified for sinners (cf. 1Cor 1:18–2:16). Right in the place where the folly of pride had presented itself, God did the marvelous work that makes the wisdom of men to perish and the understanding of men to be hidden (v14). When the Cornerstone Himself came, they were under the blindness of the wisdom of men and could not perceive the wisdom of God in the marvelous work of Christ and His cross.

What blessings have you received that might become causes of pride? How must you be careful not to think of God? What are some manmade ways of doing so? How must you be careful not to worship God? What are some manmade ways of doing so? What has God's wisdom and power done for you? What other hopes must you reject?

Sample prayer: Lord, we praise You for preparing for Your people that which no eye could see, no ear could hear, and the heart of man could not understand. Forgive us for how often we have tried to make You make sense to us, rather than following the logic of Your Word. Forgive us for how often we have desired to worship You in a way that felt worshipful to us, rather than the way that You have defined. In that way, we have drawn near to You with our lips, when our heart was far from You. But indeed, in Your wisdom and power, You have given Christ for us, through Whom we look to You for grace, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP32AB "What Blessedness" or TPH426 "How Vast the Benefits Divine"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Isaiah 29 verse 1 through 14. These are god's words. Wow. To ariel ariel. The city where David dwelt? Add here to year that feasts come around. Yet, i will distress Ariel. There shall be heaviness and sorrow. And that shall be to me, as Ariel. I will encamp against you all around.

I will lay siege against you with a mount. And i will raise siege works against you. You shall be brought down. You shall speak out of the ground. Your speech shall be low out of the dust. Your voice shall be like a mediums out of the ground. Your speech.

So whisper out of the dust. Moreover, the multitude of your foes shall be like, fine dust. And the multitude of the terrible ones. Like, chaff that passes away, yes it shall be in an instant suddenly. You will be punished by your way of hosts. With thunder earthquake and great noise with storm and tempest and the flame of devouring fire.

The multitude of all the nations who fight against Ariel. Even all who fight against her and her fortress and to stress her So be as a dream of a night vision. It'll be shall even be as when a hungry man dreams and look he eats but He awakes. And his soul is still empty.

Or is when a thirsty man dreams and look he drinks but He awakes. And indeed, he is faint and his all still craves. So, the multitude of all the nations shall be, To fight against Mount, Zion. Pause and wonder blind yourselves and be blind. They are drunk but not with wine.

They stagger but not with intoxicating drink. For y'all, he has poured out on you, the spirit of deep sleep. And his closed, your eyes, namely the prophets. And he has covered your head's. Namely the sears. The whole vision has become to you. Like the words of a book that is sealed.

Which men deliver to one who is literate saying read this, please. And he says, i cannot For to sealed. Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate saying, read this please. And he says I am not literate. Therefore, the lord said. In as much as these people.

Draw near with their mouths and honor me with their lips. But have removed their hearts far from me. And their fear toward me. Is taught by the commandment to men. Therefore behold, i will again do a marvelous work among this people. A marvelous work into wonder. For the wisdom of their wise, men shall perish on the understanding.

Of their prudent. Men shall be hidden. Amen. Thus ends this reading of god's inspired and inerrant. This is. Sorry. This is a woe against jerusalem. You can see that it's the city. Where david dwelt, it's the city. Where The feasts were held. And indeed, these things had become points of pride to them.

The lord had honored jerusalem. Uh, by making it the city at the heart of judah. Who is called a lion's welp? The One who will have the scepter, Uh, from Uh, from

the lord, the rain, the rule among israel and genesis 49 9 and 10 juda is a lion of god.

And that's what Ariel means. Um, the lion of god. And so they were very proud. To be the lion of god, very proud to be. David's home city, very proud. Of the hundreds of years of Of strength or at least self-perceived strength, add year to year. The third line of verse 1, very proud to be.

The location of the feasts. But this is an indication that you have no idea. Who God is? If we can come near god and to be proud of ourselves, We may be certain that we have not actually been near god. That we have drawn near with our lips, but our hearts have been far from him because only the heart that is far away from god can be proud of itself.

The heart that it has draws near to god, may be full of joy. It may be full of hope and maybe strengthened and encouraged, and refreshed. But it is not impressed with its own bigness. It is impressed with his. And so there's a wool pronounced against jerusalem here. Who had had all these spiritual privileges?

And the result was, This pride dreadfulness. Of spiritual pride. And we know, of course, God, opposes the proud. To be proud. Is to set ourselves over against. The living god and he will not tolerate that. Nor should he? Whether in his people who must be chastened and brought low, Which he does here and he describes.

And The first four verses he's going to give them. This grief and verse 2. Having essence sorrow he's gonna Humiliate them. In verse 3. Uh, make them unable to do anything and bring them low verse 4. And not just bring them low, you shall be brought down but the, the emphasis and verse 4 on how he's going to change the way they talk.

Rather than talking like they or something big, they will barely whisper from the dust. Into which they have been laid low. And He gives a four-fold repetition of that. In verse 4. And so, let us learn. Not to speak as those who are great. In ourselves, but to speak with humility.

To speak with meekness. Uh, lest we become candidates. To be the latest example of how god opposes the proud. Well, the opposes the proud when they are his people by disciplining them. But he opposes the proud who are against his people. By destroying them. And we see that in verse 5 through 8, They seem Uh, terrible, they seem Uh, fearsome.

At first, they are the multitude of terrible ones. Verse 5 says, And for a time, they are a storm and tempest and flame of fire and thunder and earthquake verse 6. Um, But they are that from the lord. It is your way of hosts himself, who is all these things towards his people, as he disciplines them.

We're not to fear the enemy. When the lord providentially raises up enemies. To discipline us to chasten uses people. We're not to fear them, we're to fear him. Because they have no substance in themselves and he's going to destroy them. In fact, by the time he's done with them it will be like it was a dream.

Like the hungry man who dreams of eating and his can his eating dream. Fill him. Where the thirsty man, who dreams of drinking? And then, he wakes up to his Drinking dreams slake is thirst hydrate, his body. Well, those who seem to be something. For a moment on the world stage and particularly those Whom the lord uses to chasten and discipline his people in that way.

They are not. Uh, great, as they seem to be And the multitude of all the nations, all the terrible ones who fight against Mount Zion will ultimately Be like that. However fearsome. They appear to be. At the time. So let us not fear them. Let us fear the lord.

And let us not dwell upon their opposition and hostility. But on the lord's, right? And just and even merciful Chastening of us. Disciplining. Of us, lest we? Be those who hope in our own. Ideas. Or our own. Um, help. And, This brings us to The a judgment worse or a discipline worse.

Then when god, Permits and ordains. For us to be. Um, Oppressed and persecuted by others, and that's when he gives us over. To our own ideas. In theology. Or in worship. Now, this is something that was going to happen. And it happened fantastically. So for hundreds of years, you had the rabbinic tradition of teaching that had grown up by the time.

The Lord Jesus came into the world and they misread and miss understood the scriptures, terribly. So not only did god, give them a blindness and a silence and that they went for centuries without a profit. Um, between Uh, zechariah and malachi. And the time of Jesus's, cousin, John. But during those four centuries, those who did interpret the scriptures.

Did so as if they were illiterate as, if they were blind, So that when Christ came teaching the scriptures rightly. About himself rightly about the lord. It was very different. Than anything that they had experienced for hundreds of years. And those hundreds of years of spiritual blindness. Of theological ignorance by the ideas of man by Uh, drawing near to god not as his word had taught from the heart.

Uh, but in all of these things that they had invented, you remember the lord Jesus. Um, Picks the language of this chapter up in Matthew and in Mark. And in connection, with the, the hand washing offense on behalf of the Pharisees. And he uses it as an example of how when man starts to invent his own theological ideas and especially his own worship ideas, That.

Inevitably. They mess the commandments of god. And so, This was a great judgment against them, and if we live in a time and we do In which the scriptures are used to not to. Say what the scriptures. Teach not with scripture. Interpreting scripture. But the scriptures are used to say.

Whatever. Supposedly wise sophomoric. Theological or spiritual. I ideas that man has That's a judgment of blindness against the church. And when the worship of the churches, Is full of ideas of men. Rather than simple drawing near to god in truth and in reality through the instructions and only the instructions that God has given for worship when that happens to the worship.

That is a judgment from god. A chastening from god. And so we should be humbled before him. And ask that he would come and renew mercy. And forgive the church for its offenses. And turn her away from this blindness. This is. Uh, similar to Uh what one of the reformers Luther wrote when he talked about the Babylonian captivity of the church?

Specifically, talking about the papist church. At the time. Who had brought been brought under a similar judgment, the judgment of these 400 years for Israel that are being described here. In our passages, much more severe. Than the judgment of 70 years under Babylon or the judgment. That was coming a little bit sooner.

At the time of this writing. Um, by Assyria although it would be Babylon. Um, That finally, Laid seeds too. And And succeeded in its siege against. Uh, Jerusalem, the 400 years. Of silence and ignorance were much worse. Than the destruction of the Assyrians of the destruction. Of the Babylonians and the papers.

He was much worse. Than what Babylon. Uh, did to Jerusalem and what is happening today. In money of the churches. Is a severe. Chastening from god and the fact that much of the church can't see, it has actually part of the chastening. And so, we should be. Uh, crying out to god and looking to him from mercy.

Um, both for ourselves. That he not give us over to a blindness and For much of the church that it'd be retrieved from its blindness and he is merciful, And one of the great ways, the greatest way in which we see that mercy, Is what he does in verse 14.

It's in response to the blindness that he gives them over to in verse 13 that he will bring. At the height of their ignorance. At the height of their self-made, theology at the height of their self-made worship. He's going to come and instead. Do a marvelous work that they are not going to understand.

And they are. Uh they're going to stumble over the stumbling stone, that the cornerstone that he lays, as he said. And i in chapter 28, Will be for them a stumbling stone as he said. And back in chapter 8, but it will be Into that time of blindness and ignorance that you would do this marvelous work.

And make the wisdom of their wise men to perish. And first Corinthians the second half of chapter 1 and all of chapter 2, actually picks up that idea. And says, yeah there i couldn't see and their ear couldn't hear and their heart couldn't understand. That the lord of glory.

Was going to become a man and be crucified for sinners. But it is exactly this lord of glory, the lord jesus and his cross. That is the wisdom of god for us and the power of god for our salvation. And god by his spirit. Gives those that many think are ignorant.

The majority, think our ignorant, whether greeks, who, who think it's foolishness or jews, i think it's, it's skin.

Whether it's Greek who think it's foolishness greeks. Whether it's greeks who think it's foolishness or Jews, who think it's scandalous. Yet that minority. The those who are not noble or wise, or good, or great, and the side of the world. The it is to that minority that the lord, the spirit, Gives to no christ.

And him crucified. Which is why the apostle was determined to know nothing, but christ is and Him crucified. To the corinthians. And it was precisely. Into the time of the jewish ignorance. That was prophesied here as a chastening. That god would bring. His salvation in his son. So we know that he is of merciful character.

And that into times like this. In his church times that make us cry out and grief And humiliate ourselves before god and ask for his merciful and powerful work. That is precisely into times like this into times, like, the 16th century. We refer to Luther earlier. That god does extend his arm.

And show that mercy and exercise that power. And bring seasons of reformation and revival, and refreshing, and salvation. And so, Yes, this passage does make us abandoned all hope and man. But it also does. Reinforce to us the greatness. Of the hope that is in. That is in god through jesus christ.

So let us have that hope. Weather for ourselves. As we are humbled before him and realize how we are exposed by this passage. Or more broadly for the church in our day. Let's practice. How we thank you lord for your word and we thank you for this portion of your word.

Forgive us. Oh, lord. Our pride. Last, we continue in it and provoke you to oppose us and lay us low. We cry out to you and behalf of a church. That has laid low even to the point of the blindness. That is described in this passage and does not know it.

Have mercy of god. And restore her restore her to humility. Restore her to. Plain scriptural theology. And pure simple scriptural worship through jesus. Have mercy of god. Reverse. Her fortunes. And bring her and reformation and revival. Into a season of Of health and life. By your spirit from your son.

Our lord jesus. We ask for ourselves lord. That you would help us to see where we are pride. We're we're proud, where we are being given over. And that you would give us repentance and give us humility. And restore us as well. Glorify yourself. Oh god, as the god of wisdom and power.

And your salvation. And humiliate the so-called wisdom of maniac. In jesus name. Amen.