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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Isaiah 33.

(2015)

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But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

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Isaiah 33.

Topics.

- Ah, you destroyer, you traitor, you will be destroyed and betrayed.
- The LORD'S spoil is gathered as the caterpillar gathers; as locusts leap.
- The LORD is exalted for He dwells on high; He will fill Zion with justice.
- The LORD will now arise and lift Himself up and be exalted.
- You give birth to stubble; the peoples like thorns will be burned in the fire.
- The godless in Zion are trembling, who can dwell with the consuming fire?
- Your eyes will behold the king in his beauty and a land that stretches afar.
- The LORD will be for us; He is our judge and our King; He will save us.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION: Isaiah is the exciting story of the Old Testament and the New Testament compacted into one book. It covers the wonder and splendour of Bible prophecy and echoes of the Lord Jesus Christ resound throughout Isaiah's visions and his messages. It teaches history as it affects God's people and constantly points to a future age when righteousness, justice, joy and peace will be established on earth. Isaiah prophesied about 740–700 B.C. He lived during the decline of Israel in the shadow of the powerful Assyrian Empire. He spoke the word of God to a people who were "deaf and blind" (Isaiah 6:10) who refused to listen to his warnings of looming disaster.

Isaiah warned the people of Judah's that their sin would bring God's judgment (i.e., seventy-years captivity) and declared that God is sovereign and would use Cyrus the Persian to return the people from exile. He spoke also of a servant and man of sorrows who would be wounded for our transgressions faithfully accomplishing God's purposes of salvation (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12). The final chapters give a beautiful description of a new creation in which Christ will rule as King, judging the wicked and establishing God's Kingdom on earth.

Following are four points that will help the reader understand the book of Isaiah as they travel through it: -

1. The history of Israel and Judah. At this time in the story Assyria has taken the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria into captivity and marched up to Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) to destroy it, but failed. Later in the story Babylon attacks Jerusalem and conquers the city and takes the people of Judah into captivity. After this victory Babylon conquers Assyria which resulted in Israel and Judah being brought under the submission of Babylonian rule and the tribes being brought together during the seventy year Babylonian captivity.
2. Many of Isaiah's visions are written as though they have already taken place, but a majority of these visions are predicting future events that are about to happen during Isaiah's generation while others will come to pass in a future age. Though these visions are of future events Isaiah speaks them in the present tense, because he spoke them as they came to his mind and as he saw the events unfolding before him. They are often spoken in this manner because of the certainty of it and because God had ordained them and revealed them to his prophets who spoke them to His people so they must come to pass, because God cannot lie.(Titus 1:2).

3. Though Isaiah is primarily speaking to Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) much of what he says applies to Israel (the ten tribes in Samaria) because both Judah and Israel are in the same corrupt spiritual condition.
4. All the promises to Israel are now in Christ. God's promises to Israel now include the Jews and the Gentiles. This is because under the New Covenant God is building an entirely new nation made up of Jews and Gentiles of which Christ is the head. In this new nation that God is creating in the Lord Jesus Christ Jews have no advantage over Gentiles since all are one in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul wrote: Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (i.e., one nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:1-22). The practical application of what this means, is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel through Isaiah also apply to Gentiles who by faith belong to Christ.

Ah, You Destroyer, You Traitor, You will be Destroyed and Betrayed.

Isaiah 33:1 ----- ¹Ah, you destroyer, who yourself have not been destroyed, you traitor, whom none has betrayed! When you have ceased to destroy, you will be destroyed; and when you have finished betraying, they, will betray you.

The King James Bible says: -

- Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou *wast* not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; *and* when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.

Ah, you destroyer: refers to Sennacherib and his army, who destroyed all the fortified cities of Judah and laid their land waste and who were about to advance to Jerusalem for the same purpose

- Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, devoting them to destruction. And shall you be delivered? (Isaiah 37:11).

You yourself have not been destroyed: (v1) (thou *wast* not spoiled in KJV) means that Sennacherib had not received any injuries from other nations. This is a common practise of oppressors to make war on their neighbours without any just provocation or justification and without having received any harm from them. They invade from a lust for power and a greed for the spoils of those they go to war against. Sennacherib had not been plundered by the Jews against who he is coming against. He did not meet with any considerable opposition, but was victorious over all his enemies of which his spokesperson the Rabshakeh boasts on behalf of Sennacherib saying to the men on the wall of Jerusalem: -

- Are not my commanders all kings? ⁹Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad? Is not Samaria like Damascus? (Assyria destroyed these nations). (Isa. 10:8-9).
- Beware lest Hezekiah mislead you by saying, "The LORD will deliver us." Has any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? ¹⁹Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? (The Assyrians destroyed these nations). (Isaiah 36:18-19)

It was because the Assyrian wars were so unprovoked and unjust, that God would bring fierce vengeance against them when they had finished their purpose of chastising the people of Israel.

You traitor, whom none has betrayed: (v1) you who dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! (in KJV) this refers to Sennacherib king of Assyria treacherous dealings with Hezekiah. The story begins with Hezekiah rebelling against Sennacherib spoken of in the following verse: -

- The LORD was with him (Hezekiah); wherever he went out, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him. (2 Kings 18:7).

Hezekiah did rebel against Sennacherib the king of Assyria in that he would not agree with the treacherous terms of slavery, to which his father Ahaz had agreed to when he professed himself the servant of Tiglath-pileser the king of Assyria.

- Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your son. Come up and rescue me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are attacking me. (2 Kings 16:7).

Ahaz begged Tiglath-pileser assistance against the Syrians and Ephraimites, for which he paid him well; but Tiglath-pileser did not keep this agreement with him, but instead came up against him.

- So Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came against him (Ahaz) and afflicted him instead of strengthening him. (2 Chron. 28:20).

However Hezekiah did eventually agree to give Sennacherib thirty talents of gold and three hundred talents of silver, with an understanding that this was all that Sennacherib demanded and that if this was paid he would leave the people of Jerusalem in peace: -

- In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, "I have done wrong; withdraw from me. Whatever you impose on me I will bear." And the king of Assyria required of Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. ¹⁵And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house. ¹⁶At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD and from the doorposts that Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid and gave it to the king of Assyria (Sennacherib). (2 Kings 18:13-16)

But even though Hezekiah paid Sennacherib what he demanded he deceitfully disregarded his implied promise to withdraw from Hezekiah and instead sent his armies up against Jerusalem.

- And the king of Assyria (Sennacherib) (v13) sent the Tartan, the Rab-saris, and the Rabshakeh with a great army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. (2 Kings 18:17)

Sennacherib's armies marched up to the walls of the city of Jerusalem threatening to destroy the city, but could not. This is because God sent an angel into the Assyrian camp that slayed 185,000 soldiers, so Sennacherib with the survivors returned to their homeland. (2 Kings 19:35-36). The Assyrian Empire eventually lost its splendour and power, and was finally merged in the far greater and mighty Empire of Babylon.

When you have ceased to destroy, you will be destroyed: (v1) when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled in KJV). This does not refer to Sennacherib having voluntarily ceased to plunder (since his goal no doubt was to conquer all nations and create an Assyrian Empire throughout all the land), but to the fact that God would put an end to it. The idea is that there would be a completion of Sennacherib acts of treachery toward the Jews. This end would come about when God had allowed Sennacherib to do his worst, in carrying out His judgment upon the people of Judah and then turned His judgment from His own people to the Assyrians.

- When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes. (Isaiah 10:12).

The Assyrians literally ceased to destroy and were destroyed when God sent an angel into their camp and slayed 185,000 soldiers: -

- That night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. ³⁶Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went home and lived at Nineveh. (2 Kings 19:35-36).

But the ultimate destruction of the Assyrian Empire came when it was finally merged in the far greater and mighty Empire of Babylon and it lost its splendour and power.

When you have finished betraying, they will betray you: (v1) (when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee in KJV). When Sennacherib has performed the work of chastising the LORD'S people, to which He had sent him, he would be treacherously dealt with himself this was literally fulfilled when his own sons slayed him as he was worshipping his god.

- As he (Sennacherib) was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, struck him down with the sword. And after they escaped into the land of Ararat, Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place. (Isaiah 37:38).

OVERVIEW: the sense of the whole is that God would not only punish Assyria for their deceitfulness and treachery against His people, but also punish Sennacherib's evil effort to use military might to subject the royal house of Israel (that had not inflicted any harm upon him) to his authority and rule by the desolation of his own land to the Empire of Babylon.

The LORD'S Spoil is gathered as the Caterpillar Gathers; as Locusts Leap.

Isaiah 33:2-4 ----- ²O LORD, be gracious to us we wait for you. Be our arm every morning, our salvation in the time of trouble. ³At the tumultuous noise peoples flee; when you lift yourself up, nations are scattered, ⁴and your spoil is gathered as the caterpillar gathers; as locusts leap, it is leapt upon.

At this time the inhabitants of Jerusalem are trapped within its walls of Jerusalem no one can come in or go out because they are surrounded by the fierce armies of Sennacherib the king of Assyria.

O LORD, be gracious to us: (v2) is firstly a statement of repentance and acknowledgement of their sin before God and secondly a cry for God's grace and blessing.

We wait for you: (v2) firstly implies they are fully aware they are in a situation that on their own they cannot free themselves from and secondly it is an earnest cry for God to deliver them.

Be our arm every morning, our salvation in the time of trouble: (v2) firstly shows that they are suffering extreme hardship every day (mostly famine, disease and sickness) and secondly that they are faithfully looking to the LORD their God for help in contrast to looking to stronger nations or other gods which they were doing prior to these events.

Peoples flee when you lift yourself up, nations are scattered: (v3), again these are words of true faith in the LORD God of Israel and that He has the power over all nations. This is a total contrast to the corrupt faith that Israel previously had. Prior to these events they made covenants with surrounding nations seeking their protection and looked to their pagan gods for help.

Your spoil: (v4) the common practise of war is that the victor takes the spoil of their defeated enemy and since it was God's angel that destroyed the Assyrian army their spoils are rightly spoken of as being God's spoil which means that they become the spoils of His people.

This principal is seen in the following verse: -

- Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” (Rev. 11:15).

When God’s plan and purposes come to their final end the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ and he shall reign forever and ever with the faithful he has gathered to himself will become heirs of the spoil with Christ. For further information concerning this future Kingdom see the title:

- Future Kingdom of God in the New Testament.

In, Kingdom (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar: (v4) the language here is such that it can carry the following two ideas: -

1. In countries where caterpillars and locust were gathered for food they were often scraped together in large quantities, and thrown into ditches or into reservoirs, and stored to be eaten. This is still the custom in some parts of Africa. In this scenario the caterpillar and locust would symbolise the armies of Assyria being gathered up by their enemy the Babylonians and Media Persia which came about many years later.
2. The Assyrian army and their spoil and plunder would be collected by the Jews as the caterpillars and locust gathered its food. The idea here is of plagues of locusts (or caterpillars) going without fear to and fro over the land consuming everything in their path. The symbolism is of the Jews in like manner going without fear and in great numbers to and fro through the Assyrian army collecting their spoils and plunder. In a country where such devastation was made by plagues of locusts and as in Palestine this would have been a very striking image.

Your spoil is gathered as the caterpillar gathers; as locusts leap, it is leapt upon: (v4) these words are addressed to the Assyrians they are the ones who came to spoil and it is them who will find themselves spoiled. As plagues of caterpillars and locusts devour all the green herbage, likewise the people of Jerusalem will strip the Assyrian camp of all its treasures. It refers to the treasure and booty that the Assyrian army had gathered from the different nations on their march toward Jerusalem, and which would now be left by them in their flight to be collected by the Jews.

- That night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. (2 Kings 19:35).

This was the answer of the LORD to the prayer His people had prayed while trapped within the walls of Jerusalem by the Assyrian armies. The LORD’S people would be victorious and enjoy the spoils of their enemies as easily as the caterpillar (or locust), gathers and consumes herbs and every green thing; or as easily as they are gathered, and laid on heaps, being weak and unable to defend themselves, which is exactly what happened to the mighty armies of Assyria after the destruction of them by the angel, and the Jews walking into their camp and gathering their spoil.

As the running to and fro of locusts: (v4) the symbolism here is of the 185,000 Assyrian soldiers being slain in their camp and the people of Judah running amongst the corpses and through the camp without any fear gathering all the treasures, spoil and plunder like a plague of locusts and caterpillars jumping and hopping through a field of rich ripe herbs and green plants.

All of these following expressions are perfectly suited to fit the cries and prayers of God’s people trapped within the walls of Jerusalem.

- LORD, be gracious to us.

- We wait for you.
- Be our arm every morning, our salvation in the time of trouble.
- Peoples flee when you lift yourself up, nations are scattered.
- Your spoil is gathered.

They are the cry of the inhabitants of Jerusalem who are suffering extreme famine, disease and sicknesses in the city of Jerusalem

The LORD is exalted for He dwells on High; He will fill Zion with Justice.

Isaiah 33:5-6 ----- ⁵The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness, ⁶and he will be the stability of your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is Zion's treasure.

Keep in mind that what is being said is a vision of future things yet to come to pass and that visions are not always written in a neat chronological order as we would write a story. Here it is as though the vision suddenly takes a different line of thought. Perhaps to give those held trapped in the city walls some hope that the LORD is with them and that Jerusalem will again be filled with justice and righteousness in contrast to corruption, lies and deceit. This prophecy can apply to the following two events: -

1. The angel of the LORD slaying the 185,000 soldiers in the camp of the Assyrians. (2 Kings 19:35) and the godly king Hezekiah (or Josiah) being established in royal robes on the throne of Jerusalem without fear of enemies and destroying all the idols and pagan gods Israel had erected and doing what is right before the LORD.
- 2 To the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to destroy the antichrist and his kingdom and establish God's Kingdom on earth during his glorious millennial reign.

The dead in Christ (Old and New Testament) and the faithful, who are alive, will be gathered together in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6) to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God.

Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth. Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish.

The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce (Isaiah 65:17-25).

All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's Name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God.

The book of Revelation states: -

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

In Revelation chapter five we are told that: -

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

The great prophet Isaiah wrote: -

- They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9).

At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev. 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory.

For further information see titles: -

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment.

In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The LORD, will Now Arise and Lift Himself up and Be Exalted.

Isaiah 33:7-10 ----- ⁷Behold, their heroes cry in the streets; the envoys of peace weep bitterly. ⁸The highways lie waste; the traveler ceases. Covenants are broken; cities are despised; there is no regard for man. ⁹The land mourns and languishes; Lebanon is confounded and withers away; Sharon is like a desert, and Bashan and Carmel shake off their leaves. ¹⁰"Now I will arise," says the LORD, "now I will lift myself up; now I will be exalted.

Assyria had destroyed the entire land of the ten tribes of Israel and taken them captive and destroyed all the fortified cities in the land of Judah. Now the walls of Jerusalem are surrounded by the armies of Sennacherib king of Assyria, no-one can go in or out of the city. Within the walls there is great famine and it is almost certain many would have died from extreme hunger. This is why even the most courageous men of Judah are pictured in the streets of the city with great sorrow.

Lebanon: though never totally occupied it is included in God's promise; it is a snowclad mountain range extending 100 miles along the Syrian coast with peaks reaching 10,200 above Sea Level. The melting snow creates great rivers including the Jordan River that meanders through Palestine to the Dead Sea. Writers of biblical poetry speak at length on the motion of Lebanon's famous cedar trees; their massive branches; their fragrance and on their height as a symbol of dignity and pride and on their growth and resistance to decay as a symbol of endurance.

Lebanon's isolated crags, supported watch towers and refuge-points and came to symbolize the exalted status of Judah's royal house. The psalmists' speaks of the greatness of the Creator who both plants the cedars and shatters them by His voice. The Lebanon's were also famous for choice-wine the lion and the leopard.

Isaiah makes an amazing statement concerning Lebanon: Lebanon was not only famous for its cedar trees, but for the multitude of its animals, including the lion and the leopard, yet the LORD says: -

- Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering. (Isaiah 40:16).

Even all the blood of Lebanon's most glorious animals would not be enough for burnt offerings. There was only one blood type that had the right DNA to cleanse us and make us whiter than snow in the eyes of God and it was not in an animal, but a man whose name was Jesus.

Sharon: is the coastal plain between Joppa and Mount Carmel, a place legendary in ancient times for its fertility, pasturage and beauty, its suburbs and pasture lands were possessed by the tribe of Gad. Figuratively Sharon is used as a symbol of man's state of fruitfulness and glory and of man's eternal state of peace for evermore.

Bashan: is the broad, fertile region east of the Sea of Galilee in Samaria, extending roughly from Gilead on the south to Mount Hermon on the North. The whole district was assigned to the half tribe of Manasseh.

Mount Bashan: the mountain of Bashan is a mountain with many peaks it is personified as looking at God's Holy Mountain Zion with hatred. (Mount Bashan became a symbol of those who hate God). (Psalm 68:15-16). The towering ranges and high peaks of Bashan are pictured as being envious of the distinction given to the lesser peaks of Judaea.

The contrast here is between the smallness of Israel and the largeness of the nations that surround them and the jealousy with which these prideful surrounding nations had toward Israel which is represented by the high mountain ranges of Bashan watching Mount Zion with great hatred.

By extension the mountains of Bashan and their jealousy and hatred toward Mount Zion can be seen as a symbol of the all those in the world who have aggressive hatred toward God and the faithful believer and the faithful church dwelling amongst the world.

Carmel: (means garden) it is a village allotted to the tribe of Judah and a prominent Mountain range in Israel that juts out into the Mediterranean Sea. It is west of the Sea of Galilee and forms the best natural harbor south of Beirut. South of Carmel is the fruitful valley of Sharon and north east of it flows the river Kishon through the plain of Esdraelon.

Carmel is often used as a symbol of beauty and fruitfulness, because of its lush tree cover, but its withering trees became symbolic of destruction and desolation. At Carmel Elijah stood against 850 heathen prophets and defeated them (1 King 18) and it was visited by Elisha (2 Kings 2:25) (2 Kings 4:25).

Now I will arise, says the LORD: (v10) the picture presented here is of God laying down while the enemies of His people carry out His judgment and punishment upon the prideful, wicked and self-exalted inhabitants of Israel's royal house in the city of Jerusalem until they have been brought low and humbled themselves before the LORD their God and repented of their idols and the pagan gods that they worshipped and of trusting in the covenants they made with stronger nations to protect them (which was against the law of Moses).

Once they humbled themselves and heeded the words Isaiah spoke the LORD is then pictured as rising up to fight for them which He did by sending an angel into the Assyrian camp to slay 185,000 warriors (2 Kings 19:35) and in this way God was exalted.

An overview of these verses: Judah's heroes are in the streets of Jerusalem weeping because Assyria has destroyed the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria and destroyed all the fortified cities in the land of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem are now powerless to fight against the surrounding armies of Assyria. The ambassadors of peace are weeping, because Assyria has broken all the covenants of peace they had made with Judah.

The highways lay waste and the travelers have ceased because no one can go in or out of the city and the fierce warriors of Assyria show no mercy toward their enemies.

Lebanon is stunned that Jerusalem should be in such a pathetic state before her enemies, the land of Sharon has been emptied of its people and Bashan and Carmel are pictured shaking off their leaves signifying the peoples amazed bewilderment that such terror, horror and widespread defeat could befall the people of Israel.

You give Birth to Stubble; the peoples like Thorns will Be Burned in the Fire.

Isaiah 33:11-12 ----- ¹¹You conceive chaff; you give birth to stubble; your breath is a fire that will consume you.
¹²And the peoples will be as if burned to lime, like thorns cut down, that are burned in the fire."

Seeds were sieved to separate them from the surrounding chaff, the small seeds would fall through the sieve into a storage container while the chaff remained in the sieve some would blow away in the wind and what remained would be cast aside since it was of no use for anything. Here the people of Judah are pictured as chaff they should have given birth to noble and godly men, but instead have brought forth prideful, hypocritical kings, priests and leaders (i.e., stubble to be burned).

Your breath is a fire that will consume you: (v11) means the words their kings, prophets and priests speak are as fire that devours everything in its path. Their lies, deceptions and falsehood will not only consume those who speak them as a fire consumes all that its flames touch, but will also consume those who listen to them and heed them.

Burned to lime, like thorns cut down that are burned in the fire: (v12) lime comes from the Hebrew word (*siyd*) in this context it carries the idea of boiling. The primary reason for boiling water (especially during these ancient times) was to purify it. God's people have fallen so far from what they were called to be they are compared to polluted water that needs purifying and to weeds that are only fit to be cast into a fire. This is because polluted water and weeds destroy the good crops in fertile farmland and bring to ruin beautiful gardens. How grieved God must have been to see the people He longed to bless become so corrupt that instead of clothing them with His favour and blessing He is forced to bring His judgment upon them.

The godless in Zion are Trembling, Who can dwell with the Consuming fire?

Isaiah 33:13-16 ----- ¹³Hear, you who are far off, what I have done; and you who are near, acknowledge my might.
¹⁴The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling has seized the godless: "Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" ¹⁵He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, who despises the gain of oppressions, who shakes his hands, lest they hold a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes from looking on evil, ¹⁶he will dwell on the heights; his place of defense will be the fortresses of rocks; his bread will be given him; his water will be sure.

Those who are near refer to God's people, while those who are far refer to the surrounding Gentile nations. The LORD is basically saying to all nations, "Look at my godless people in the city of Jerusalem they are trembling for fear of my judgment and if they cannot escape my judgment and my wrath nor will any other nation (especially those that inflict harm on God's people).

Who among us can dwell with consuming fire and everlasting burnings? (v14) this is not a reference to a place called hell, but means who, can dwell with God's wrath forever toward them. However some do use verse fourteen to support the worldwide traditional religious teaching that the dead go to a place of torture and extreme suffering and pain called hell, but this teaching is a gross misunderstanding of a select few Scriptures.

Those who are judged unworthy of eternal life do not go to a place of fiery flames called hell where they are cruelly and brutally tortured by evil eternal creatures called demons and their bodies burned by fiery flames so that they suffer the worst of all agonies for all eternity.

This age old traditional doctrine is not only a gross misunderstanding of Scripture, but is also a gross misrepresentation of God's character, since it portrays Him as an extremely sadistic God, especially when it is considered that even those in the secular world would not inflict such brutal and cruel torture on a human for their entire life let alone for all eternity. Added to this John tells us that God is love (1 John 4:8) (1 John 4:16).

Consider the following verses concerning death: -

- Why did I (Job) not die at birth, for then I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept and been at rest. There the wicked cease from troubling, the weary are at rest and the prisoners are at ease together. The small and the great are there and the slave is free from his master. (Job 3:11-19).
- For God sees that even the wise die; the fool and the stupid alike must perish and leave their wealth to others. ¹¹Their graves are their homes forever, their dwelling places to all generations, though they called lands by their own names. (Psalm 49:10-11).
- Man in his pomp will not remain; he is like the beasts that perish. ¹³This is the path of those who have foolish confidence; yet after them people approve of their boasts. *Selah* (Psalm 49:12-13).
- What happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. ²⁰All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. (Eccles. 3:19-20).

The true teaching of the Bible is that the grave is forever the home of those who deny God (Psalm 49:11). The horrific doctrine of hell was most likely perpetuated in the early years of the church by religious leaders to scare the naïve into the church and has been adopted and perpetuated by their followers (without question) from generation to generation through tradition and religious institutions and organisations. Eternal life or eternal death (i.e., utter and total extinction) is the only two choices the Bible teaches from Genesis to Revelation. For further information see the titles: -

- Hell or the Grave (Final destination of Humans).
- The Lake of Fire.
- Both titles are in, Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The answer to the question asked in verse fourteen, “who among us can dwell with consuming fire and everlasting burnings?” Are those who: -

- Speak words that are not offensive before the LORD and are without malice, deceit and lies. (v15).
- Do what is right before God and toward their neighbour. (v15).
- Despise those who oppress others for their own gain. (v15).
- Refuse to take a bribe (i.e., shake hands as a sign of rejecting a bribe). (v15).
- Refuse to take part in plotting acts of violence (i.e., hearing bloodshed). (v15).
- Refuse to look upon anything evil or take part in such things. (v15).

Whoever makes these things the foundation of their life will not only escape God's wrath and His judgment, but will also hear the words of their master say, “Well done, good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much, enter into the joy of your master.” (Matt. 25:21, 23) (Luke 19:17).

This is an interesting picture of the LORD: Isaiah pictures God as an everlasting fire (v14), he then asks, “Who can live with an everlasting fire?” Then answers his own question by saying, “Those who walk righteously and speak uprightly.” When the Bible speaks of the Day of Judgment it pictures people walking through a fire and while in that fire whatever is an offence to God is burned up. Some will walk straight through the fire without anything being burned, others will be burned, but enough will remain that they are saved, while still another group will be totally reduced to ashes, never to rise again.

The apostle Paul speaks of a similar judgment in his writings: -

- If anyone builds on the foundation (the Lord Jesus Christ) with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, they will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone's work is burned up, they will suffer loss, though they themselves will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

Those who walk through the fire without being harmed are those who accept God's plan of salvation, refuse to take a bribe; are offended at people who oppress others for their own gain; have nothing to do with harming other humans and refuse to take part in anything that is evil, this group will withstand the LORDS consuming fire. (Isaiah 33:15-16).

NOTICE: the world system of mammon (money) is based on oppressing the worker to make as much profit as the boss or the company can. This principal is especially seen amongst companies operating in third world countries. Isaiah tells us anyone who oppresses people for their own gain will not be able to dwell with God (scary stuff). Here oppression would refer to anyone not paying a wage that is considered fair relative to the financial status of the country and relative to the profit being made.

Your Eyes will behold the King in His Beauty and a Land that Stretches Afar.

Isaiah 33:17-19 ----- ¹⁷Your eyes will behold the king in his beauty; they will see a land that stretches afar. ¹⁸Your heart will muse on the terror: "Where is he who counted, where is he who weighed the tribute? Where is he who counted the towers?" ¹⁹You will see no more the insolent people, the people of an obscure speech that you cannot comprehend, stammering in a tongue that you cannot understand.

Isaiah's vision now transcends all the horror, terror and suffering to a time when God's people will behold their king in his beauty and dwell in a widespread land of peace that is so fertile it will produce an abundant harvest. Added to these blessings instead of fear being in their hearts they will enjoy the thought that their enemies that spoke with a stammering tongue (i.e., foreign language) who they were forced to pay taxes to and who mocked them and destroyed their cities and laid their land waste are no longer a threat to them.

The king that they will behold in his beauty is Hezekiah delivered from his enemies and restored to honour and glory and seen publically no longer in sackcloth and ashes, and with downcast eyes, but in all the beauty of triumph and royal majesty in a prosperous condition to the great joy of all his loving subjects

The land that stretches afar: (v17) refers to the whole land of Israel being prosperous and peaceful, contrasted with the people being bound within the walls of Jerusalem during the Assyrian siege. No longer will they be confined by a siege and bound within the confines of the walls of Jerusalem as they were by Sennacherib. The kingdom of Hezekiah will be extended over the whole land that belongs to Israel, and the people will roam freely over it even over the parts that are now occupied by the forces of the Assyrian.

Your heart will muse on the terror: (v18) they will call to mind the troubles and distresses that came upon them and with a grateful heart praise God for His mercy in forgiving them of their rejection of Him, forgiving them of their worshipping of other gods and forgiving them of their gross wickedness and saving their nation from certain annihilation from the face of the earth.

Where is he who counted the tribute and the towers? (v18) since this statement is in the context of Israel no longer seeing the insolent people that spoke a foreign language, it refers to Jerusalem's triumph over the vanquished army of the Assyrians. The people of Judah are pictured saying with glee, "Where are the Assyrian treasurers, bankers and accountants who demanded our taxes and where are the Assyria's commanders, officers and captains who surveyed the fortifications of our city as they besieged it and took an account of the height and

strength, of the walls and towers that they might know where to make their attack with the greatest advantage.” It is a picture of the people of Israel being free to keep all their taxes for their own nation and of them being in such peace and having such freedom to move throughout their land that it is now hard to comprehend the oppression they were once under and the horrors and terrors that came upon them.

You will see no more the insolent people with a stammering tongue: (v19) Sennacherib king of Assyria sent his armies to surround the city of Jerusalem during this time Sennacherib spokesman the Rabshakeh mocked and scorned Israel’s God telling them that there is no God greater than the gods of Assyria and for this reason Hezekiah and those with him should not trust in their God, but surrender themselves to the king of Assyria. The expression “stammering tongue,” tongue simply means a foreign language, it is referred to as a stammering tongue because to the listener who does not speak that language it sounds as though the one speaking is stammering, because it is difficult to understand them.

The LORD will be for us; He is our Judge and our King; He will Save Us.

Isaiah 33:20-24 ----- ²⁰Behold Zion, the city of our appointed feasts! Your eyes will see Jerusalem, an untroubled habitation, an immovable tent, whose stakes will never be plucked up, nor will any of its cords be broken. ²¹But there the LORD in majesty will be for us a place of broad rivers and streams, where no galley with oars can go, nor majestic ship can pass. ²²For the LORD is our judge; the LORD is our lawgiver; the LORD is our king; he will save us. ²³Your cords hang loose; they cannot hold the mast firm in its place or keep the sail spread out. Then prey and spoil in abundance will be divided; even the lame will take the prey. ²⁴And no inhabitant will say, "I am sick"; the people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity.

Isaiah prophecy now changes to one of comfort and hope. Jerusalem will not only be free from all hardships and trouble, but that the LORD their King; will forgive their rebellion and wickedness and save them in such a manner that the spoil of their enemy will be so abundant that it will be enough to divide up amongst all the people even the lame and crippled will be able to take their share. This of course was fulfilled when God defended the city to save it by sending: -

- The angel of the LORD who went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. ³⁶Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went home and lived at Nineveh. (2 Kings 19:35-36).

There is no doubt this massive army would have loaded donkeys and horse drawn carts and wagons with vast amounts of spoil and treasures that they had collected from the nations they passed through on their way to Jerusalem to take back to their own land.

Where no galley with oars can go, nor majestic ship can pass: (v21) this embraces both small sailing vessels that did not need a large number of rowers to propel it and to the much larger ships that did. The ships in focus would be ships of war and not ships for trading since they bring prosperity to a nation and therefore would be an advantage and not something to speak against.

Unlike Babylon on the Euphrates River; Nineveh on the Tigris River; Thebes on the Nile River; Rome on the Tiber River; Jerusalem had only a few fountains, wells and seasonal streams. Their lack of water is and always has been a great difficulty and challenging barrier to the city ever having a great population. The expression, “no gallant ships shall pass” carry the idea that no matter how mighty or magnificent an enemy is they will not be able to approach Jerusalem.

No enemy would be able to come up against it for the LORD will be as a mighty river of defence and protection and not allow an enemy to come near them. The idea is that the presence and favour of God would be to Jerusalem as a mighty river of defence that would by far surpass the glory of all other mighty rivers of all other great cities.

Though these words are spoken to comfort the suffering people of Judah at the time of Isaiah and were partially fulfilled when the LORD'S angel destroyed Sennacherib mighty army (2 Kings 19:35) and Hezekiah was restored to the throne of Israel in his royal robes and a godly period of prosperity and blessing followed. The complete and perfect fulfilment refers to the future climax of the following verses of Ezekiel: -

- Again he measured a thousand, and it was a river that I could not pass through, for the water had risen. It was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be passed through. (Ezekiel 47:5).

This vision of living waters flowing from the Temple which Ezekiel saw is a variation of this same theme of this prophecy in that it carries symbolism that suggests that in the Messianic days a spiritual stream shall flow out from beneath the temple doors spring up and increase in depth and width with no tributaries coming into it as it flows out into the world giving life to everyone who drinks of its waters until it covers the whole earth.

This stream flowing out from beneath the Temple doors refers to the Gospel flowing out into the world until the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.

Your cords hang loose: (v23) they cannot hold the mast firm in its place or keep the sail spread out. For the ropes on a ship to be tight, and the sail full there has to be strong winds, Isaiah is saying, when there is no stormy wind, meaning when there is peace, then there will be an abundance of spoil so much so that even the lame will have more than enough.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem will no longer say they are sick: (v23) in contrast to many being sick and dying in the city of Jerusalem because of the extreme famine due to no one being able enter the city or go out from it.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem will be forgiven their iniquity: (v24) the whole reason the citizens of Jerusalem are suffering such horrific circumstances is because of their rebellion against God; they would not heed the words of the prophets; their extreme wickedness; their lies and falsehood; their perverting of justice; their sacrificing of their children; and their worship of idols and pagan gods.

Except for God's mercy they would have being utterly annihilated. Their history immediately after the angel had slain the Assyrian army evidences that they understood this truth they followed king Hezekiah who did what was right before the LORD and faithfully followed the LORD their God with a grateful heart, sadly things rapidly went downhill after Hezekiah's death and under the reign of his son Manasseh.

An echo of Christ: contained within the prophetic language of this prophecy is an echo of the Lord Jesus Christ when he returns in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth. For further information concerning this future Kingdom, see the notes under the title: "The LORD is exalted for He dwells on High; He will fill Zion with Justice," following (v5-9) (above).

The kingdoms of this world shall become Christ's, and his Kingdom and the greatness of it under the whole heaven shall be given to the faithful of the Most High God when the seventh angel sounds and there is heard great voices in heaven saying: -

- The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. (Rev. 11:15).

End