

Christ in Isaiah

Part 3

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[00:00:01] We'll read to begin a few verses in the 28th chapter, Isaiah chapter 28.

Verse 2, Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which, as a tempest of hail, and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand.

And then, verse 14, Wherefore, hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men that rule this people which is in Jerusalem, because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, [00:01:07] and with hell are we at agreement.

When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.

Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tritestone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation, he that believeth shall not make haste.

Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place, and your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand, when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. [00:02:04] Now just let us sing a short hymn, number 368, There is no other name than thine, Jehovah Jesus, name divine, on which to rest for sins forgiven, for peace with God, for hope of heaven.

There is no other name than thine, Jehovah Jesus, name divine, on which to rest for sins forgiven, for peace with God, for hope of heaven.

[00:03:04] Name above every name, thy praise shall fill your courts through endless days.

Jehovah Jesus, name divine, from all salvation above, mine.

A very famous preacher, not very long ago, overheard a conversation between some people [00:04:11] leaving the meeting, and as the story retelled by him, a conversation between two broad Yorkshiremen, and one of them was overheard to say, it's no good trying to follow this chap, I give up, it's no good trying to follow any more, and the next evening the preacher confessed that he had heard this conversation, and he said, I've got a piece of advice for my Yorkshire friend, it's this, don't give up love. I have heard myself, one or two especially younger [00:05:03] people address to me the

information that, well we haven't been able to follow it all, and I have heard of some also younger people who have said, it's a bit too deep for me.

Now I would like to say how our hearts are rejoiced to see younger people here with us seeking to share the things of God, and I would like to encourage you in good Yorkshire, don't give up love, however you feel about it. It is of course an open secret that I don't understand it all, lots of things are hidden from me, but one very important lesson that the Lord I think has taught me, and that is, that I try never to let what [00:06:04] I don't know spoil what I do know. And I think that's a very important lesson to learn, I'd like to pass it on to you. You can seize by the Spirit of God some things that are said, and some things I think it will almost always be true, throughout your life some of the things will pass you by. But I remember my father used to use a parable of this kind of thing, and he used to say, if you see a good meal on the table, and there's one dish you haven't seen before and it looks a bit doubtful, you surely wouldn't be foolish enough to let that one dish spoil your enjoyment of all the others, simply because you didn't understand that one. And so we need to thank God when we can pick up here a little, and there a little. And of course it's of this very chapter that this expression comes. It doesn't come with a very attractive sound in [00:07:07] this chapter. Nevertheless I think what does come out is, whether it's for good or for ill, this is the way of human learning. You have it in verse 10 of our chapter 28. Precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little. And in verse 13, But the word of the Lord was unto them, Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little. And if at the end of any session that you spend over the word of God in general or listening to the ministry of the word of God, it's always worth at the end trying to seize in your mind, more [00:08:05] definitely trying to seize the things that the Lord has taught you, the positive things. It might be only here a little and there a little, but these littles, as life goes on, will make much. And this is the way that you will, like all the rest of us, learn. And we got to remember that just as we have been, all of us, seeking to pray this week for the experience of the burning heart that came to those disciples to whom the Lord spoke on the resurrection day on the way to Emmaus, it was in that very connection that in the latter part of the chapter it says, Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the scriptures. And so, being satisfied with the Lord giving us here a little and there a little, let us always join [00:09:03] in praying that the Lord will open the eyes of our understanding, himself by his spirit, that we may understand the scriptures. Now, the section of chapters that we are particularly concerned with this evening is chapters 28 to 37. But the central thought, the central point, which has given us our title for this evening and to which I hope to return again, is this familiar verse, which is verse 16 of our chapter. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a trident stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation, he that believeth shall not make haste. Most of us know that this verse is, although there are many references to a foundation, and still more references to the Lord [00:10:03] Jesus Christ as the stone, this exact verse is twice quoted, and in particular it is quoted in the second chapter of 1 Peter, in a passage which I hope is well known to us. But I just read what it says. We are spoken of as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word. It goes on, If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house and holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he that believeth in him shall not be confounded. [00:11:01] Unto you therefore which believe he is precious. And so we learn that every one of us who has tasted that the Lord is gracious and has come to him, in doing so we have come to a foundation upon which God is erecting a house devoted to his worship. And whatever the verse may have meant in its original setting, this is the way that it's used for our good, for our blessing, by the Apostle Peter.

And it goes on to point out that in one verse in Isaiah, particularly this one, it says that he is a precious stone. In another place it says he is a stone of stumbling. And the Apostle says now, to whom therefore is this preciousness? And for whom is he a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense? And it goes on to say, to you therefore that believe is the preciousness. Now that's a wonderful [00:12:04] statement of Holy Scripture. To you and to me here this evening who believe, to us and for us is the preciousness. Let us pray that when we come back to this verse, as we find it in Isaiah chapter 28, that the Lord will grant that there may come into each one of our souls some fresh sense of the wonderful preciousness of this stone laid in Zion, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now I have just a little more to say about the background with this evening's section. We shall leave altogether the King of Assyria. We hear no more about him. But it's more than ever essential if we are to understand the oracles that form this section of the book. It's more than ever necessary that we shall understand what the [00:13:05] background is. We have seen how there is a tiny cluster of states, notably Judah and the other ten tribes here called Ephraim and also Syria, but there are several other tiny states forming this cluster of tiny states on the eastern seaboard of the Mediterranean. But their world is dominated by two superpowers to the south, Egypt, and away to the east and the north, the tremendous, ferocious, cruel, conquering power of Assyria.

I pointed out, reminded you yesterday, and I'll remind you for the last time now, that the three points of climax are what is called the Syro-Ephraimitic War, which we hear in chapter 7, [00:14:01] when Ahaz, the King of Judah, was so alarmed as to call in the King of Assyria and refuse the Lord's sign, and therefore Isaiah had to inform him that the Lord would bring the waters of the river strong and mighty, the King of Assyria. In chapter 8 we read, regarding Ephraim, that because they refused the waters of Shiloh that flowed softly and rejoiced in Rezin and Remeliah's son, therefore God would bring upon them this terrific scourge. And then we took note of the fact, and take note of the fact again tonight, that even when we come to the section we read tonight, the depopulation of Ephraim by the Assyrians was evidently still future. But 36 years [00:15:02] after that depopulation, then another Assyrian king, Sennacherib, came with a furious onslaught against all the walled cities of Judah, and only Jerusalem was left. But in the end, in accordance with the word of Isaiah, he was turned back and there was a great deliverance. Now the interesting thing is this, for our purposes this evening, that in the intervening period between the earlier pair of events, the war with Syria and Ephraim, and the depopulation of Samaria and Ephraim, there was an absolute welter of parties forming to try to find some means of protection for Judah against the now certain invasion by the Assyrians. And the [00:16:02] dominant party was all set to bring in the other great power, Egypt, for help. Instead of doing what Isaiah had said from the beginning, and that is going on in quietness and confidence in the Lord and realizing this would be their strength and their protection, it appears that they actually did make a treaty with Egypt for their protection against the Assyrians. Now I must do what I can again this evening to go through these chapters, asking you to gird up your minds and to look at the verses and the chapters and turn over the pages, because there's no other way of our getting an overall impression of the contents of this book than this way. Now there of course is quite a big gap in chapters between chapter 12, The Song of Salvation, which we had last evening, and chapter 28, where we've begun this evening. [00:17:03] Now at various periods in the intervening years, because in chapter 28 we must be somewhere close to the Assyrian invasion, the great fulfillment, the great climax, the great vindication of Jehovah and his prophet Isaiah. Over those years, Isaiah was from time to time issuing, proclaiming by some means or other, perhaps by word of mouth but more probably by the written word published abroad, he was giving various oracles on the other smaller nations mostly surrounding, and they are on Babylon, on the Philistines, on Moab, on Syria, on Egypt, on Edom, on Arabia, and Tyre. I'm afraid we shall have to pass these by altogether, practically altogether. Chapter 18 is of particular interest, [00:18:03] and it's just possible that we may have time

sooner or later to come back to it, but for the time being we'll pass these chapters by altogether and come immediately to chapter 28. Now 28 is the first of what are conveniently called the section of five woes. This is chapter 28 to chapter 35.

It's conveniently called the section of the five woes, but at the end of it, as usual, there is a celebration of the kingdom of Christ. Now the first woe, beginning in chapter 28, woe to the crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim. Although this particular oracle was almost certainly delivered in Jerusalem, yet it is an oracle against Ephraim, and it says in verse 2, the Lord has a mighty and [00:19:01] strong one, as a tempest of hail and destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing and casting down, and the leaders of Ephraim will be overcome by it. Now it's quite easy to see that this is almost the last reiteration of the warning given in chapter 8, which we read last night, where the Lord says by Isaiah, Now therefore behold, the Lord bringeth upon them, that is, this people who have refused the waters of Shiloh, the Lord bringeth upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory. He shall come up over all his channels and pass through into Judah. So we've come, after all these years, come much nearer, and it turns out very close now indeed to the fulfillment of these prophecies, when this terrible storm of hail and destroying flood would [00:20:02] come upon the people of Israel. But we read in verse 7, that the leaders of Judah are also implicated in this matter, and in particular when Isaiah comes to speak to them, he says to them in verse 14, Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men that rule this people which is Jerusalem, because ye have said, we have made a treaty with death. Now all the context indicates what this really means is that they had signed a treaty with Egypt for mutual protection. Egypt was out looking for allies against this murderous power to the northeast, and even the smaller states that would be buffers in between were worth having. And the prophet says to the elders, the leaders of Judah, that they had said to him, we have made a treaty or a covenant with death, and with hell we are at [00:21:01] agreement. They had made a treaty with Egypt. When the overflowing scourge, there it is again, shall pass through it shall not come unto us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves. But the Lord had a message in view of this particular form of judgment, that is an overflowing scourge, a terrible flood of waters. The Lord had a refuge. Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a trite stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation, he that believeth shall not make haste. When a flood comes upon a city, then there is tremendous scurrying about in haste to find a place of safety. But those whose heart was already set in faith upon the Lord's salvation would not make haste in that day, because they would be saved. He that believeth in him [00:22:01] shall not make haste, because he shall be saved. But the overflowing scourge should pass through, and would make absolute nonsense of their covenant with Egypt. It would all be nothing. And yet this overflowing scourge is said by the Lord to be judgment. But it's a lovely phrase in verse 21 to say that he is doing his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act. Such judgments, though there be upon the unbelieving and ungodly, there are no happiness, no pleasure to the heart of God who loves mercy and lovingkindness, and therefore he calls judgment his strange work, his strange act. The second woe is in verse 29, in chapter 29. And this time, of course, it is a woe against Jerusalem. It's called Ariel, or the Lion of God, [00:23:04] but it evidently indicates Jerusalem, because it goes on to say the city where David dwelt. But we read in the first few verses that it will be visited by thunders from the Lord, and would be brought very low, because of the enemies surrounding it. But in verses 7 and 8, we find that all the nations, because the Assyrian hordes were composed of many nations confederate with Assyria, all the nations who fight against Ariel should be brought to nothing. Just as though, verse 8, a hungry man dreamed, he thinks he eats, and behold he awaketh and his soul is empty. In other words, those enemies of the Lord would simply vanish overnight. But there is a reproof for those who are spiritually [00:24:02] asleep. And in particular, we have to note verse 13, for as much as this people draw near

me with their mouth, with their lips to honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men. How often, by the way, this kind of, um, this sorrow of the Lord over his people literally applies to us. How often we find ourselves in the situation when we draw near to God with our lips and our hearts are far from him. How near home this comes to us. How, uh, in themselves alike the people of God have been, in spite of his grace, in all ages. And we always have to be on the watch that we are not amongst the people who draw near to him with our lips, but in our hearts we are far from him. In any case, in the end, these enemies of the Lord would come to naught. Now, the next woe is in chapter 30, and this time it is absolutely plainly, um, [00:25:08] about going to Egypt to make a treaty. In verse 2, after saying woe to the rebellious children that take counsel but not of me, it says, woe to them that are walking at this moment, woe to them that are at this moment walking to go down to Egypt, and have not asked in my mouth to strengthen themselves. They are going to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh and trust in the shadow of Egypt. We are, they are warned that this confidence of theirs would let them down. Verse 13, this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. But it's very remarkable that although [00:26:01] this has actually taken place, yet in verse 18 the Lord still desires to act in grace toward them, and says, therefore will the Lord wait that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted that he may have mercy upon you, for the Lord is a God of judgment, blessed are all they that wait for him. Now it's very interesting that at the, um, end of this chapter, we have what is plainly, uh, the last final end of the Assyrian and the King of the North in the future. We have some points that are exactly like Daniel chapter 11, which talk about the attacks of the King of the North on, um, Jerusalem. You remember, for example, all of you who have read this chapter 11 of Daniel remember how quite suddenly, as it were, out of the blue, the King appears, who shall, um, [00:27:03] be worshipped and take the place of God in the temple of God. The King appears, and then we read that the King of the North comes against him, and eventually they're all destroyed by the coming of the Lord. Well, it is evidently exactly the same that is foretold here. In that last invasion, verse 32, in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tablets and harps, and in battles of shaking will he fight with it. For Tophet, that is the burning, hell, Tophet, the judgment of fire. For Tophet is ordained of old, yea, for the King, in exactly the same way the apostate King, the Antichrist, appears suddenly there. For the King it is prepared, he hath made it deep and large. The pile thereof is of fire and much wood. The breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it. The next war, in [00:28:01] chapter 31, also deals with going down to Egypt for help, but this time it's dealing plainly with the vanity of trusting in the horses and the chariots of Egypt. First verse, woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay in horses and trust in chariots, because there are many, and in horsemen, because they are very strong, but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord. And the vanity of trusting in Egypt is given. Now there's an extremely interesting section in verse 5. It's for the comfort of the hearts of those who are not disposed to trust upon Egypt, but it's what the Lord will do in these desperate days for those who trust in him. As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem. Defending also [00:29:05] he will deliver it, and passing over he will preserve it. Now I call that interesting because of its light upon the true meaning of the word Passover, going back to Exodus 12, so far away. When we read there of the Passover, we're not right in simply thinking that the destroying angel would leap over and miss the houses of Israel. We're told it means something quite different, because the words here are exactly the same. As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem. And the Lord would pass, like a bird defending its young and its nest, the Lord would pass over his people and grant them the protection of his name and his power and his hand. That's what happened in Egypt so long ago. That's what Passover means. The Lord would pass over them with a protective hand of power, would protect them in the day of judgment. Why? Because the blood [00:30:07] was upon the doorpost. To the

protection of the blood was also granted the protection of the name of the Lord and his promise to pass over, thus defending them from the destroying angel. And so it will be here. The main interest, I think, is in the meaning of the word Passover, which is clearly told there. But so it will be when Jerusalem is attacked. As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem. And then, in the last two verses, you have the final end of the Assyrian in the prophetic part for the last time. Not the end as it would appear here in the story, but the final end. Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man, and the sword not of a mean man shall devour him. In other words, [00:31:02] it will be no human hand that will in the end destroy the king of Assyria, the king of the north. It will be the hand of the Lord. And then, of course, after that final deliverance in chapter 32, we proceed as we did in chapter 11. The destruction of the Assyrian is followed by the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom when God's king should reign in righteousness. And see what a lovely verse we have in verse 2. A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind and a cover from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Just as we took great pleasure in the names of the king in a previous chapter, chapter 9, so we take great pleasure, we who have the Lord Jesus Christ as our savior and shepherd, in reading here that he is a man who is a hiding place and a cover from the tempest, [00:32:04] rivers of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. In verse chapter 33, we have the last of these woes, and it's a woe against the Assyrian, the one who was the spoiler. But the Lord intervenes in verses 16 and 17, and we have a wonderful statement, so far as the Old Testament is concerned, of the real hopes of those who trust in the Lord. The one who trusts in the Lord and walks righteously, it says he shall dwell on high, verse 16. His place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks, bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure, and I shall see the king in his beauty. They shall behold the land that is very far off. Well, presumably there is a reference to the [00:33:01] earthly king of David's house, but no Christian heart can fail to see a very wonderful promise for us. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty. Chapter 34, which I just mentioned in passing, is a very interesting one, because it tells us that when all the nations shall be assembled for the last attack on Jerusalem, then, so far as these nations are concerned, the final place of decision is Edom and Bosra, and the day of vengeance is here. In verse 6, the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bosra, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. Verse 8, for it is the day of the Lord's vengeance. Well, when we come to chapter 63, we'll have to come back and remember that we are already being told that the final destruction will take place in Edom and Bosra in the day of the Lord's vengeance. And then finally, [00:34:08] once again, in the loveliest language, we have the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ celebrated, the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as a rose. Now, this is the end of our summary of these prophetic chapters which set the situation for the hearts of God's people true and false relative to that judgment, and that was coming relative also to the prediction of the Lord. But in chapters 36 and 37, we have the fulfillment of all these previous chapters. There is a tremendous, dramatic, dramatic unity over all from chapter 1 to chapter 36 and 7. In chapter 1, we read that Zion, Jerusalem, [00:35:05] is left like a house in a garden, all isolated and alone. And that comes about in chapters 36 and 37. All the walled cities of Judah are overrun and own the Jerusalem. It begins by saying that Sennacherib, king of Assyria, took all the walled cities of Judah and sent Rabshaker and a great army to Jerusalem. Now, there is the stage set. From the very first words of the prophet, this is what he's been looking forward to, that all Judah will be overrun with its fenced cities taken and Jerusalem standing alone. And so it all turned out in the end just as Isaiah had said. Now, the highlights are these. If we've got our eye on chapter 37 particularly, when Rabshaker came and threatened the city and the people and the king, what did Hezekiah do?

[00:36:07] No longer a faithless king like Ahaz, perhaps not as firm as he should have been with those who wanted to make this treaty, but he was a man of God who comes in for great commendation in

the other parts of Holy Scripture. And I love these words about him. It came to pass when King Hezekiah heard it that he rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth, went into the house of the Lord, and then he sent a message to Isaiah, who was staying quietly at home in all this. In verse 4, the message says, it may be the Lord thy God will hear the words of Rabshaker whom the king of Assyria, his master, has sent to reproach the living God and will reprove the words which the Lord thy God hath heard. Wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant, here it is again, the remnant that is left. So the servants of King [00:37:06] Hezekiah came to Isaiah and Isaiah gave them his answer. He said, ye shall say unto your master, thus saith the Lord, be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold, I will send a blast upon him. He shall hear a rumor and return to his own land. I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land. In other words, just the same as he always said, Isaiah said, be quiet and trust in the Lord, and here in Zion there will be a great deliverance. But Rabshaker returned and this time sent a very threatening letter into the hands of Hezekiah. And here is a very wonderful little incident upon which we might always model ourselves in moments of difficulty. Verse 14, Hezekiah received [00:38:04] the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it. And Hezekiah went up unto the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord. And Hezekiah prayed unto the Lord and said, let us always remember what Hezekiah did in a moment of the most critical difficulty. He went in and he spread it before the Lord. And he prayed, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear. And so on appealed against them. Now in verse 21, Isaiah sent the Lord's answer to the prayer of Hezekiah. Verse 21, Isaiah sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib, the greatest king in all the earth, [00:39:01] with his thousands of furious, cruel warriors encamping there, whereas thou hast prayed to me against the king of Assyria, this is the word which the Lord has spoken concerning him. And at the end of this long answer that Isaiah gives in verse 33, Therefore thus saith the Lord, this is the end of Isaiah's message concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow here, nor come before it with a shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city to save it for thine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. And the angel of the Lord went forth. No one could have foreseen how it would happen. The angel of the Lord went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and eighty-five thousand, and when they arose in [00:40:04] the morning they were all dead. So dramatic a moment has come by Byron into English literature.

Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green, that host with its banners at sunset were seen. Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown, that host on the morrow lay scattered and strone. The angel of death spread his wings in the blast, and breathed in the face of the foe as he passed, and the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill, and their hearts but once heaved and forever grew still. There is an immense lesson in this for us, and it stands alongside the lessons of Elisha and Elijah. For the man of God and of faith in any age, when the conditions [00:41:07] of utmost confusion obtain amongst the people of God, and evil seems to prevail amongst them, it was the man who had been in the presence of the Lord, convicted, cleansed, and commissioned, who knew how to act and speak. He was able to be the single salvation of God's people by his faith and his trust in the Lord, and this is because he was habitually so near to God in his prayers that such quietness and confidence were his strength. He must have been a very young man when this took place, when we take account of the rest of this book. Young men and women, read this story, go over it in detail, and let every word be engraved in your heart and memory, [00:42:05] and you also can be men and women of God, prepared by nearness to God and faith in his word for every kind of challenge that will come against you. I have a feeling that this part of the story, on which I've been only able to deal very briefly because there has to be so much build up to understand it, but I have a feeling that this part of

the story is one that we nearly always miss. The lessons of Elisha and Elijah are an open book to us, but the tremendous triumph and vindication in deliverance for God's people and peace and quietness to them that was achieved by Isaiah's faith in God, it passes us by because there's a greater thing here. It is undoubtedly a greater thing to have here the things directly concerning the Lord, [00:43:01] but don't let us miss this lesson of the wonderful triumph of the faith of Isaiah in days of deepest confusion and darkness that by this fact are very much like our own days. Now, I have two special points to go back to and to draw your attention to in this passage before we close. If you turn your pages back to the 26th chapter, which is the usual celebration of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God's Christ, after these oracles on the surrounding nations, which I said we would pass by for the time being, in verse 3 we have this wonderful promise given out by Isaiah.

[00:44:07] Now, one of the most wonderful threads that pass through the writing of Isaiah is this theme of peace. Just as we were speaking yesterday about the use that he makes of running water, the waters of Shiloh, the gentle murmuring of the peaceful brook, representing the gracious way that God speaks when he does speak in grace. He has spoken above all through Shiloh, his sent one. It's the gracious message, the gracious tenderness of the Lord Jesus Christ in his offers of mercy and grace. They are the waters of Shiloh that flow softly, and the murmuring brook with its peace and quietness is a picture of the grace and the tenderness of the Lord Jesus [00:45:05] Christ bringing God's grace to men. And then immediately afterwards, the roaring tempest, a river in spate, destroying all before it, bringing down buildings and destroying every kind of shelter. That's in the next verse. This is the picture of the judgment of God. But in the end of Isaiah, there's yet a third very wonderful picture arising from the observation by the prophet of running water. If they had kept my word in chapter 48, verse 18, I would have extended to them peace like a river. And almost the last words of the prophet, I will extend to her, to the blessed Zion, when all the judgment is passed, and God's blessing rests upon his city and his people, I will extend to them peace like a river. And it's a very wonderful picture. You see, in these Mediterranean and eastern lands, [00:46:08] a mere brook dries up completely in the warm weather. All the water courses, the small water courses, are dry and hard and barren. But a river can still continue flowing with a smooth piece of its surface, and therefore being an emblem of the peace of God. Our hymn writer has it, when peace like a river attendeth my way, or sorrows like sea billows roll. You see, he's using the same kind of pictures that the prophet Isaiah is using. Well, it is to me a most wonderful thing that in all ages, the Lord has been disposed to give his people peace. What is peace? Well, of course, primarily, and even in the Bible [00:47:05] primarily, it's an absence of war. But that is an emblem of such in deeper. The peace of God, given to us men and women, is that tranquility which settles upon the spirit of the children of God because of the knowledge that every vital issue is settled. What gives men, robs men of their peace? They have no sure knowledge of the future. None of the vital issues of life in this world and death and entrance into the dark future, none of these issues are settled for them. But for the Christian, for the child of God, every vital issue is settled and he walks with the Lord and therefore making his requests known unto God, the peace of God which passeth all understanding keeps the heart and mind through Christ Jesus. We were speaking yesterday about the idols of sport and entertainment upon whom our society lavishes its honors and its rewards. But you [00:48:07] could go to these men and women, young and old, and you would find that not for one moment have they experienced true peace. But you are promised by the living God his peace if you only make your requests known to him and rest in him. And I think it's never been more wonderfully summarized than it is in this third verse. Thou will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon thee because he trusteth in thee. You know this is very closely allied to the song of salvation we had yesterday. I will trust, the writer says, and not be afraid. And it's only because I can trust that I can say I will not be afraid. And so it is here. Thou will keep him in perfect peace because his [00:49:01] mind because he trusteth in thee. Well here is a pathway and a

habit of mind and thought which is presented to us by the prophet here. God speaking to his people so long ago with the same accents of peace that he is speaking to us in the apostle Paul in the New Testament.

We are promised this perfect peace and the conditions are that our minds are stayed upon him. Well we could spend a fortnight trying to explain what it means to have the mind stayed upon the Lord. But when you think of the rock-like stability of God and his absolute mastery over all things in heaven and earth, if only our minds are resting upon his greatness and his wisdom and that he has committed himself in grace to a relationship with us that never can be broken. How wonderful it is [00:50:04] and how obviously true it is that for those of us whose minds are stayed upon him and his wisdom and power and grace and the absolute finality of the relationship we now stand in him into him which can never be broken we can easily see that if our minds stayed upon him this promise is fulfilled to us we shall be kept in perfect peace. God will extend to those who rejoice in his salvation. God will extend peace like a river. Now if we come back to chapter 28 and look again at this verse and the surroundings of it, verse 16. If the imagery that is being used is of a roaring torrent, of a flood overflowing rivers, [00:51:05] then what is required is some foothold of stability that can resist this tempest.

And the circumstances will certainly be that if this news breaks suddenly then there will be a tremendous alarm with people running hither and thither to try to find how they can get onto solid ground away from this. Up in the north here, not so very many years ago they had it. Didn't they in the border country around grant houses? In the middle of the night the news comes that the rivers are flooding and the waters are roaring down the valleys. What alarms! What rushing about to find a place of safety. What is required is a rock on which they can stand and they can rest and it will be able to resist the flood. And therefore it's absolutely true to this imagery that the Lord here speaks of his salvation as a rock that's [00:52:08] able to save them when the overflowing scourge of God's judgment comes. And it's very easy to see with what lively exactitude the Spirit of God takes up this figure and applies it to our Lord Jesus Christ who is to be our salvation against the storms of judgment. They shall never reach the one who are resting upon that rock. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, behold I lay in Zion for a foundation. That's what we want. We want something that won't be moved in view of that approaching storm of judgment. A trite stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation he that believeth shall not make haste. A trite stone. Now [00:53:02] what can it mean to say that our Lord Jesus Christ is a trite stone? Well there are two possible meanings for this that spring to my heart. One is that he has already withstood the storm. And the other is that multitudes have rested upon him and they have been kept in perfect peace. And it is true indeed that our Lord Jesus Christ has withstood the storm. All thy waves and billows passed over me, he said by the psalmist. It says, deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water spouts. The deep of God's demands against sin and wrath of God on sin. They were met and sustained by the deep of the capacity of our Savior to stand in our place and to bear on our account that storm which broke upon him.

[00:54:08] He is indeed by Calvary's cross. He is the trite stone. And if our faith is in him, we shall never even come into judgment. He is a trite stone. And then think of all the multitudes of those in all ages and especially since first he came. All those who have tasted that he is gracious. All those who have come to him as to the living stone. They have indeed tasted that the Lord is gracious and they've experienced the peace that comes from those who are absolutely certain that they're cleared of all suspicion of the application to them of the judgment of God that's coming on the unbeliever. Our Savior is a trite stone and with absolute security we can rest our souls upon him. It says he is a precious cornerstone. A precious [00:55:09] cornerstone. Well, in Peter this is applied and it is said to

us that although the Lord Jesus Christ is in other places called a stone of stumbling and rock of offense, this is for the unbeliever. But the preciousness of that stone is for the believer. All about him, especially in Peter there, is precious. The precious faith that he's given that rests in him. The precious blood which has redeemed us and made us his own. But there is a lasting satisfaction of heart and mind for those who know him which comes from the realization of his preciousness. Is it not a striking transformation that the same stone can be on the one hand the granite to withstand the flood, [00:56:05] the overflowing scourge, on the other hand a precious stone to be for the everlasting delight of all those who know him and rejoice in him. Unto you therefore that believe is the preciousness that belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. A preciousness that God has always seen in him to the full. He is a precious cornerstone and in the end it says he is a sure foundation. Well of course in this verse this obviously means that he is a sure foundation against the overflowing scourge. Against the storm of judgment he is a sure foundation. But in the New Testament it's taken further and that sure foundation which we first meet in our liberation from the fear of judgment, it becomes something upon which God is building. And we can become stones by contact with [00:57:05] the living stone. We can become stones in God's building and we can become part of that house that is surely being erected and is already certainly functioning for the worship of the Father in spirit and in truth. We, that is everyone who has come to him and tasted that he is gracious, they are being built up a spiritual house and holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. When we think of the last phrase of this verse then the different ways in which the Holy Spirit not perhaps translates it but interprets it to others is very striking. Here it says he that believeth in him shall not make haste. He that believeth in him shall not make haste. When I was very young and presumed upon my privilege [00:58:02] to reprove an old workman for not making haste he said you ought to know your bible. It says that believers shouldn't make haste and I was absolutely stumped in those days. What can it mean? Well in its setting it's quite plain what it means. When the flood comes and people suddenly become aware of it then there's a tremendous making haste to find the means of safety. But for those who are on this rock there never will be that alarm. There never will be that need to hasten here and there. Why? Because we have an eternal salvation which nothing can ever shake in the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the ways it's put in the New Testament is he that believeth in him shall not be ashamed and another place he that believeth in him shall not be confounded. And the issue of the matter is for us here taking the words of Isaiah to ourselves [00:59:02] and seeking to see in them our blessed savior the Lord Jesus Christ. What it's saying to us is this that once our faith is in him, once our lives are committed to him and to the tremendous enterprise of his service we shall never in time and eternity have cause to be ashamed of the fact that our trust is in the Lord. He that believeth in him shall not be ashamed. Now let us sing hymn number 99. We'll sing the whole hymn and I'll read the last verse. But most adore his precious name his glory and his grace proclaim for us condemned despised undone he gave himself the living stone.

[01:01:17] He gave himself the living stone.