

(Intended!) congregational handout; outline sermon follows

## Sermon Notes & References

Isaiah 28:9-13, 23-29

The Lord, the Teacher

February, 7, 2010

### A. Isaiah 28 in the context of the book thus far

1. Chs 1-12 – Crisis and Messiah
2. Chs 13-23 – The LORD is Sovereign both in Judah & in the Nations
3. Chs 24-27 – The LORD is Sovereign in both Punishment & Salvation
4. Chs 28-35 – So Trust in the LORD, not in Egypt!

### B. Chapter 28

1. Vv 1-8 – Ephraim's drunkenness<sup>A</sup>
2. Vv 9-13 – God's teaching will be understood, one way or another
  - a. the two understandings of verses 9-10
    - (A) only children will listen to God's words<sup>B</sup>
    - (B) or, the mocking words of the scoffer that say Isaiah's message is for little children
  - b. v 11, God will teach them, one way or another
  - c. v 12, God's gracious offer, but they would not have it<sup>C</sup>
  - d. v 13, then the little children's lesson they will have to learn

3. Vv 14-22 – Scoffing Judah is going to learn
  - a. v 14, the words to Ephraim apply to Judah
  - b. v 15, who thought that death would not come to them
  - c. v 16, but with this attitude, God will intervene
  - d. Vv 17-19, God will shake their confidence, sweep it away
  - e. Vv 21-22, a strange work, God fighting against His people
4. 23-29 – The parable of the farmer<sup>D</sup>
  - a. he uses different ways of working to accomplish his purpose: plowing, sowing, harvesting, threshing
  - b. he uses different tools to do these things
  - c. but he has but one purpose, to produce edible food
  - d. so God will use different ways and tools to chastise, correct, and punish: but all with the purpose of leading his people to the end that He has planned for them

### C. Application

1. God's overwhelming generosity to all mankind<sup>E</sup>
2. God's purpose in teaching mankind: that they come to Him; in teaching His church, that they be sanctified.<sup>F</sup>

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<sup>A</sup> Amos 6:1, 6

<sup>B</sup> Luke 18:16

<sup>C</sup> Luke 13:34

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<sup>D</sup> Mark 4:3

<sup>E</sup> Matthew 5:45

<sup>F</sup> Matthew 11:28-30, Luke 19:10, 1 Timothy 6:17, 1 Thessalonians 4:3

A. Introduction

1. in Sunday School, when I was a boy,
  - a. we used to sing a song, 'My Lord is writing all the time'
  - b. I am not sure about its theology, but I think its message was that God was writing, adding names to the Lamb's book of life found in Revelation 17:8, '... And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, ...' and 21:27, 'and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it (i.e. heaven), but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.' as 2 examples
  - c. so cheerfully we sang, 'My Lord is writing all the time'
  - d. well, be that as it may, there is another Bible truth
  
2. My Lord is teaching all the time...
  - a. this is self-evident in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ
    - (A) He began his public ministry choosing the twelve
    - (B) twelve men who would be learners – disciples – with whom He spent about 3½ years, teaching them truth
    - (C) His primary ministry was not performing miracles
    - (D) it was teaching the crowds and disciples about God
    - (E) miracles were God's approval place upon that teaching
  - b. in the OT, too, God shows extraordinary patience in the teaching of His people, both as individuals and as a nation
    - (A) this was true in the lives of the patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – how long it took to change Jacob, 'crafty supplanter,' to Israel, 'prince with God'!
    - (B) it was true in the life of Israel, as over and over again they rebelled against God and His Torah, 'instruction'
  - c. Isaiah 28 shows us the Lord is teaching all the time
    - (A) teaching His people Judah to trust in Him alone
    - (B) and, in His grace, His teaching of all mankind

- B. Let us first seek to put this chapter into its context in Isaiah
  - 1. In going in a rather detailed way through this book as we have
    - a. it is easy, as it were, to miss the forest for the trees
    - b. to look at individual texts and lessons
    - c. and miss the grand sweep of the message of the book
  - 2. so it is good, from time to time, to refresh our minds of the flow of teaching that is found in this grand OT gospel
    - a. the first 12 chapters lay out the crisis that is confronting Jerusalem and Judah, and the message of Messiah
      - (A) the crisis is sin; purely and simply, sin
      - (B) God brought nations against Judah to teach them this
      - (C) the solution to the crisis is the promised Messiah
    - b. the next 11 chapters are about Judah, as a nation whose king is God, living in a world of godless nations
      - (A) that these nations, along with Judah, will be punished
      - (B) that God is as sovereign in them as He is in Judah
    - c. then 4 chapters, which we have just finished, which show that God's sovereignty is shown both in His judgement and in the salvation and deliverance that He provides
    - d. in the next 8 chapters, 28-35, the section we commence today, the message is that the salvation and deliverance of Judah is not to be found in Egypt, but in the Lord
    - e. now, let us look at this 28th chapter, some parts briefly, some a little more closely, but in which we will anticipate to some extent, the message against Egypt of this section
- C. Ephraim's Intemperance, their drunkenness . . . . . 28:1-8
  - 1. Ephraim was the principal tribe of the 10 northern tribes
    - a. in it was Samaria, capital of that northern kingdom, Israel
    - b. Amos' description of Samaria agrees with Isaiah's, '[Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils, ...](#)' (Amos 6:6)

- c. Amos was a prophet to Israel, so we expect his message to be to them, but Isaiah was prophet to Judah, the southern kingdom – why now this prophecy against Israel?
- d. even when speaking to one kingdom, the prophets often had messages for the other – that is one way of getting the people’s attention – people don’t mind so much when the preacher is preaching against someone else’s sin!
- e. Amos did the same thing, ‘Woe to those who are at ease in Zion And to those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria, The distinguished men of the foremost of nations, To whom the house of Israel comes.’ (Amos 6:1)
- f. once the prophet gets their attention with those words about the other kingdom, then he applies it to them
- g. ‘you, Judah, are just as drunken as they, drunken scoffers’

D. God’s Teaching will be understood, one way or another . . . . . 28:9-13

1. verses 9 and 10 can be interpreted in two ways

- a. it may be understood as saying that since this people will not listen, will not learn what God is teaching them, that God will turn to teach young children, those who have not yet been corrupted by lives of sin and rebellion, taking them from the most tender age, and then command by command, line by line, little by little, teach them truth. These being those of whom Christ spoke, ‘Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.’ (Luke 18:16), which has much to commend it
- b. but it may also be interpreted as the words of the drunken priests and prophets of verse 7, who ‘sneer at (Isaiah), ... They are of age and free; and he does not need to bring knowledge to them...or make them understand the proclamation They know of old to what he would lead. Are they little children that have just been weaned...and who must let themselves be tutored?’<sup>{2}</sup>. They then proceed in verse 9, mocking drunkenly the message of the prophet in childish talk – Tsav latsav, Tsav latsav – words such as a mother might use to teach her child – Tsav, a shortened form of mitsvah, commandment – and similar words follow
- c. given the language of the verse, I prefer the latter, but in either case the message is the same: this people refuse to listen to the message of Isaiah – they know better than he

2. so God will teach them, verse 11 – ‘Indeed, He will speak to this people Through stammering lips and a foreign tongue,’
  - a. if they will not listen to God’s word through Isaiah
  - b. if they continue to seek their help in Egypt against Assyria
  - c. rather than trusting in the Lord their God
  - d. then they will learn the lesson the hard way
  - e. they will hear it from Assyria whose language, though it was very similar to Hebrew, was hard to be understood
  - f. they would learn by swords rather than by words
  
3. God had given to them a kind message, verse 12 – He who said to them, ‘Here is rest, give rest to the weary,’ And, ‘Here is repose,’ but they would not listen.
  - a. it was a message of rest and repose and peace
  - b. of trusting in the Lord against Assyria, rather than Egypt
  - c. but here are the terrible words: ‘they would not’
  - d. rebellious words against God which echo through Scripture
  - e. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it! (Luke 13:34)
  
4. The Lord’s word then, in verse 13, echoing verse 10, is that He will teach them like children: line upon line, little by little.
  - a. and this people
    - (A) drunken in their self-indulgent style of life, and,
    - (B) drunken in their pride and self-confidence, will learn
  - b. ‘... That they may go and stumble backward, be broken, snared and taken captive.’ (Isaiah 28:13)

E. Scoffing Judah is Going to Learn . . . . . 28:14-22

1. we looked at these verses in our adult Bible class: briefly,
  - a. verse 14 shows that what Isaiah has been saying about Ephraim, the prophets and the priests, is directed against Judah and its rulers: [Therefore, hear the word of the Lord, O scoffers, Who rule this people who are in Jerusalem...](#)
  - b. they thought that death could not come near (15)
  - c. in the midst of this attitude, God will intervene (16)
  - d. He will shake their false confidence, sweep it away (17-19)
  - e. their false confidence will give them no rest, verse 20, [‘The bed is too short on which to stretch out, And the blanket is too small to wrap oneself in.’](#); and so,
  - f. the God who has fought for His people Israel in the past, will do a strange work, fighting against his own (21-22)
  
2. to explain the way of God’s teaching, we are then told

F. The Parable of the Farmer . . . . . 28:23-29

1. It is introduced with these commanding words: [‘Give ear and hear my voice, Listen and hear my words.’](#) (Isaiah 28:23). Jesus began parables in the same way; Mark 4:3, [‘Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow; ...’](#) and His parables, too, were often about farming and crops of the land.
  - a. parables were stories about familiar things
  - b. perhaps, not being farmers in Palestine, some of the items here are not as familiar to us as to Isaiah’s audience
  - c. nevertheless, I think we all got the idea when we read it
  - d. the farmer uses different ways of working at different stages in his farming
  - e. when one job is completed he goes on to the next
  - f. at the harvest he uses different tools for different crops
  - g. many of these ways and tools suggest pain, difficulty
  - h. but in everything: ploughing, sowing, threshing, grinding, he is working toward an end: producing food to eat

i. and in all his work, as it is properly carried out to achieve this result, instruction and knowledge has come from God, 'For his God instructs and teaches him properly.' (verse 26)

2. but God the Father, too, said Jesus is a husbandman, a farmer

a. whose crop is His people – then, Judah; now, the church

b. He, too, has different ways of working, at different stages in the bringing of His people to His desired product

c. He, too, uses different instruments, according to the differing situation and attitudes of His people

d. but in all these things, it is being carried out consistent to the teaching of right that He has given in His word: 'This also comes from the Lord of hosts, Who has made His counsel wonderful and His wisdom great.' (Isaiah 28:29)

G. In conclusion I want to make two applications this morning

1. the first is the overwhelming generosity of God to all mankind

a. the farmer in this parable describe not only the born-again, Bible-believing, fundamental baptist farmer, but also the pagan, idol-worshipping, disbelieving farmer

b. to both, God in His grace has given the knowledge that he needs to raise and harvest his crops so that he may live

c. it is an aspect of God's goodness, which is sometimes called common grace, that is common to all mankind; even as Jesus said, 'so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.' (Matthew 5:45)

d. so everyone here this morning have received knowledge and abilities as gifts from God – now I am not speaking here of the spiritual gifts that we receive upon regeneration for the purposes of ministry of the church – but gifts simply out of His tenderness and goodness, whereby we may enjoy all the good things of life

e. a realization of this truth should bring the unsaved and lost in gratitude and repentance to a kind, giving God

f. and believers should never compartmentalize their lives into the sacred and the profane; the secular and

religious.

- g. We can never, ever say, 'well I earned this with my own efforts, so it is my right to have it and to enjoy it'
- h. we need to realize that our every ability came from God, and we owe everything to Him

2. the second is the purpose of God's teaching of mankind

- a. to the person who has never accepted the free gift of salvation: how lovingly the Lord, the Teacher sends His message: 'Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and . For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.' (Matthew 11:28-30). 'For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.' (Luke 19:10)
- b. to the believer, how can you or I withhold our service or our possessions or our life from '... God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.' (1 Timothy 6:17) What is He seeking to teach us this day? What difficulty or pain has He brought into our lives, to achieve His plans? 'For this is the will of God, your sanctification; ...' (1 Thessalonians 4:3)
- c. will you not think upon these things as we prayerfully sing our closing hymn, 'Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord'?



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2. K&D – *in loc*