

Sermon Notes & References
The City and Its King
Isaiah 33:17-24
April 11, 2010

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^A 2 Kings 18:1-8, 11-15; Isaiah 33:7, 8
^B 2 Chronicles 32:22-23
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^D Isaiah 1:5-6
^E Revelation 21; Hebrews 11:9-10, 12:22-23, 28-29, 13:14
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^H John 1:12, Romans 10:9-10

A. The Historical Situation of Isaiah 33

1. Isaiah chapters 28-33 warn Judah against trusting in Egypt
 - a. Judah is rather to trust in the Lord, the Holy One of Israel
 - b. in these chapters 5 woes are pronounced
 - c. the first 4 are against the people in Jerusalem and Judah who would prefer to trust Egypt instead of God
 - d. the 5th begins this chapter 33 and is against Assyria
 - e. 33: 1: *Woe to you, O destroyer, While you were not destroyed; And he who is treacherous, while others did not deal treacherously with him. As soon as you finish destroying, you will be destroyed; As soon as you cease to deal treacherously, others will deal treacherously with you.*
 - f. this is a message of hope and assurance to the faithful Jews

2. it is now the 14th year of Hezekiah's reign
 - a. king Hezekiah is introduced in 2 Kings 18:1-8: *1 ¶ ... Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king. 2 He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem; ... 3 He did right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. 4 He removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan. 5 He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him. 6 For he clung to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses. 7 And the Lord was with him; wherever he went he prospered. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. 8 He defeated the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.*
 - b. but these years have been a rough ride for king Hezekiah
 - c. his early efforts at reform are now seem to be ill rewarded
 - d. in Hezekiah's sixth year, Assyria had taken what was left of the northern kingdom into captivity, 2 Kings 18:11-15: *'11 ... to Assyria, and put them in Halah and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, 12 because they did not obey the voice of the Lord their God, ... 13 Now in the*

fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them. 14 Then 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." So the king of Assyria required of Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. 15 Hezekiah gave him all the silver which was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasuries of the king's house.'

- e. all this silver and gold failed to bring peace: in Isaiah 33: 7 we are told, 'the ambassadors of peace weep bitterly'.
- f. it simply increases Assyria's greed, to march on Jerusalem with yet greater demands: Isaiah 33:8 says of Judah, 'the highways are desolate, the traveller has ceased' as enemy army overruns it, an enemy who 'has broken the « [peace] » covenant, ... despised the cities, ... has no regard for man.'

3. this is what faces king Hezekiah and Judah

- a. it is a low point in his reign, a time of great distress
- b. Isaiah brings this message of hope and assurance from God
- c. the message of the prophets always had an application for its immediate audience and here God is sending comfort to the faithful of His people and to king Hezekiah

B. The Message of Hope and Assurance in that Time

1. Hope & Assurance for the King and the Land 33:17

- a. **Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; They will behold a far-distant land.**
- b. Hezekiah was the anointed – Messianic – king of Judah, of the line of David and heir to God's promise to David; he had sought to follow God with a whole heart; yet the treachery of Assyria had humiliated him, causing the rulers of Judah to go scurrying away to Egypt for hopeless help
- c. the land of Judah had been reduced to a few strongholds of resistance, Jerusalem, and perhaps places as Lachish
- d. here is God's message for His people:
 - (A) you will see once again your Davidic King in his royal splendour ruling over the people of Judah
 - (B) what is more, whereas now you are restricted, unable to travel the roads of Judah, you will be able to see, to walk in, your land which will stretch afar.

e. let's get ahead of ourselves for just a moment, this was fulfilled after God defeated Assyria; 2 Chronicles 32:22-23: '22 So the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria and from the hand of all others, and guided them on every side. 23 And many were bringing gifts to the Lord at Jerusalem and choice presents to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations thereafter.'

2. Hope & Assurance of the Enemy's Removal 33:18-19

- a. 18 Your heart will meditate on terror: 'Where is he who counts? Where is he who weighs? Where is he who counts the towers?' 19 You will no longer see a fierce people, A people of unintelligible speech which no one comprehends, Of a stammering tongue which no one understands.
- b. 'You are going to look back,' says God to His king and His people, 'on this time of terror, and you will not longer be able to see any of the signs of the oppressing enemy'
- c. the one who counts – is also the term for a scribe, because scribes counted the words and letters when they were copying the scrolls – but here it more likely is the one who is counting the tribute due to the king of Assyria and making sure that it is received
- d. the one who weighs – is the one who receives the tribute and checks that it is accurate by weighing it
- e. the one who counts the towers – is, perhaps, those who assess the amount of wealth that can be extracted by going around to the various storehouses and granaries
- f. but, says God, the time is shortly coming when you will see neither hide nor hair of any of them, 'the fierce people'
- g. no longer will you be forced to listen to their harsh, foreign tones voicing their demands, reviling the Lord your God, on your highways, outside your walls, in your streets
- h. God is going to remove the enemy

3. Hope & Assurance in an Undisturbed City 33:20

- a. Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts; Your eyes will see Jerusalem, an undisturbed habitation, A tent which will not be folded; Its stakes will never be pulled up, Nor any of its cords be torn apart.
- b. no longer are the feasts of this city of Zion abominable to God as they were in Isaiah 1:14, 'I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing

them.'

- c. we shall see the reason why this change in a few verses
- d. consider the strange metaphor God uses to describe the new permanence of Jerusalem: it is described in terms of a tent or tabernacle – a tent by its very nature is meant to be transient, be struck, be moved about, be set up again
- e. the coming permanence of Jerusalem will not rest in itself
- f. it has nothing to do with its physical, mountain situation
- g. it will be the Presence of God that makes it permanent: ...

4. Hope & Assurance of God's Presence 33:21-22

- a. **21 But there the majestic One, the Lord, will be for us A place of rivers and wide canals On which no boat with oars will go, And on which no mighty ship will pass— 22 For the Lord is our judge, The Lord is our lawgiver, The Lord is our king; He will save us –**
- b. The great cities of that day – Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre on its island, No-Amon (Thebes) on the Nile – were built with water either partially or totally surrounding them, forming a natural defence against any enemy but those in ships
- c. but Jerusalem will have a better, a supernatural defence, that of the Lord God himself surrounding the city: across this broad river, no attacking ship can travel
- d. then there is a Triune acclamation to this Lord
 - (A) He is our lawgiver; He is our judge; He is our king
 - (B) terms that make references to three periods in Judah's history: that of Moses, the lawgiver; that of the various judges; that of the times of Saul, David and onward
 - (C) but each of these periods were marked by a unifying theme ... God was bringing deliverance to His people through these men
- e. But now, say Isaiah, it is God Himself who is the Saviour

5. Hope & Assurance of a Transformed People 33:23-24

- a. **23 Your tackle hangs slack; It cannot hold the base of its mast firmly, Nor spread out the sail. Then the prey of an abundant spoil will be divided; The lame will take the plunder. 24 And no resident will say, 'I am sick'; The people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity.**

- b. these verse present a contrast between the 'now' and the 'then' of the people of Judah
- c. now, says God,
 - (A) you are like a ship that has been driven in a storm; its sheets untied allowing the sails to flap loosely; its halyards hang useless, its burgee droops; its masts, booms and stays unshipped; this ship is going nowhere
 - (B) you are like a sick man, as describe in 1:5-6, '5 ... The whole head is sick And the whole heart is faint. 6 From the sole of the foot even to the head There is nothing sound in it, Only bruises, welts and raw wounds, Not pressed out or bandaged, Nor softened with oil.'
- d. but then, in the day to come,
 - (A) there will be no longer any talk of being sick
 - (B) and, this is the most important, because this is why the annual festivals will once more be acceptable to God, your iniquity will be forgiven: this last statement is key to the understanding of what Isaiah prophesies here
 - (C) there will come a time, when the people will return to God and, having seen His great work in defeating Assyria, will trust not in men, but only in God

C. The Message of Hope and Assurance for Our Time

- 1. That is what Isaiah's message meant to Hezekiah and Judah
 - a. but I am sure that even as we have been speaking on these things, what Isaiah's words meant in their historical setting, you have been relating them already to the words that we read earlier from Revelation 21 and Hebrews¹
 - b. Hebrews 12:28-29, echoes the words of Isaiah about that undisturbed city '28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; 29 for our God is a consuming fire.'
 - c. there is a further and fuller fulfilment of the words of this chapter to which we look forward in eager

¹ ^{11:9} By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; ¹⁰ for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ... ^{12:22} But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel, ... ^{13:14} For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking *the city* which is to come

anticipation.

- d. indeed, this is more clearly seen to be the case when we stop and consider the following:
 - (A) the repentance and return of the people Judah in the time of Hezekiah and later was always only temporary and superficial – they quickly returned to their ways
 - (B) Jerusalem was later destroyed more than once
 - (C) its permanence is yet in the future: the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven, as foreseen by John
- e. what is foretold and fulfilled in Judah in Hezekiah's time is but a type of what God is planning for His people with the return of Jesus Christ, Jesus Messiah to rule as King

2. for it is He, Jesus Christ the Lord, that will be king

- a. it is He, that we shall see as the King in His beauty
 - (A) a beauty of which the royal splendour of Hezekiah was but a dull shadow and pales in comparison
 - (B) Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. (Revelation 1:7)
 - (C) Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. (1 John 3:2)
 - (D) For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. (1 Corinthians 13:12)
 - (E) yes, we, His people, shall see Him and know Him
- b. we will no longer see the fierce people or our great enemy
 - (A) the enemies of God and of His Christ will be gone
 - (B) Satan and his hosts will have been sent eternally away
 - (C) we read in Revelation 21:27 of that new city that '... nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.'

3. and in that city of the King, we shall dwell in God's Presence

- a. a city of broad rivers and streams: '1 ¶ Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, 2 in the middle of its street. On either side of the river

was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; 4 they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.' (Revelation 22: 1-4)

D. How can you have His name on your forehead?

1. The answer is found in the last verse of Isaiah 33

a. ...The people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity. (Isaiah 33:24b)

b. the population of the King's City will consist solely of those who have cast their sins upon Jesus, who have drunk of the life-giving stream of the gospel, who have received Him as their own personal Saviour, who have confessed Him as Lord and believed in their heart that God has raised Him from the dead.

2. may there be no one present here this morning that will be absent from the City of the King in that day, seeing the king in His beauty; no one fears the day when Christ returns.

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