

# OFFERING HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

DEVOTIONAL READING: Jeremiah 29:10-14

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 29

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 29:13-24

## I. Unfaithful Worship

### Isaiah 29:13-14

**13 Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:**

**14 Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.**

13. The failure to heed the contents of the scroll in Isaiah 29:11-12 results in the characterization we see here: insincere piety. The people's worship was little more than "going through the motions." *With their mouth, and with their lips* the people professed loyalty and devotion to God, but their hearts weren't in it.

Isaiah had confessed his own and his people's unclean lips when he was called by God (Isaiah 6:5). Centuries later, Jesus would apply these very words to the teachers of the law and Pharisees in His day (Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:5-8). There, Jesus adds His own characterization: *hypocrites*.

14. The Lord's response is to shatter the apathy with *a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a*

*wonder*. Literally the promise is, "I will treat this people wonderfully, wonderfully and with wonder." This is something wonderful beyond description! But what is this wonderfully wonderful wonder? The second half of the verse before us is cited by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:19 as justification for his statement "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1:18). Paul goes on to comment on how God has "made foolish the wisdom of this world" and brought it down to nothing by means of the cross (1:19-25).

The cross of Christ should move us to humble worship. No "precept of men" (Isaiah 29:13), no matter what it may be, can produce the degree of worship that the wonder of the cross can. May we never lose our sense of wonder at that which so-called intellectual people of the world ridicule!

## II. Unfaithful Plans

### Isaiah 29:15-22

**15 Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?**

**16 Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall**

**the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?**

**17 Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?**

**18 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.**

**19 The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.**

**20 For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off:**

**21 That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.**

**22 Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale.**

15. Those who fancy themselves to be wise and intelligent are frequently those who *seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord*. This means that they stop at nothing to conceal their sinful plans from God. If only they would exert similar efforts to discover the truth that God has gone to great depths to reveal to humanity!

The wayward seem to believe that God is subject to the same limitations that restrict humans. Supposedly, He cannot know or see what is planned or done *in the dark*. But as David rightly observes, “Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee” (Psalm 139:12).

16. The reason that the plotters and schemers of Isaiah 29:15 think and act as they do is that they have a faulty view of God. They have turned His authority structure *upside down*. Such is the outcome when humans refuse to acknowledge that they are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). They think of themselves as the potter, as if they were in charge.

But *the potter's clay* has no right to command the potter, and it is utter foolishness for the clay to deny that the potter made him or her (Romans 9:21). The Hebrew word translated *framed* in this verse is a variation of the word used to describe how “the Lord God *formed* man of the dust of the ground” in Genesis 2:7.

17. *Lebanon* was known for its forests. To take a majestic forest and create a *fruitful field* from it isn't a comment on the quality of the forest or the field as much as it is that of massive reversal. Likewise, fields that had already proven themselves fertile would become instead *forest*. Isaiah used these upheaval images as metaphors for the massive changes Israel would undergo when God renewed them in ways they never expected.

18. Isaiah 29:11-12 described *the words of the book* as being incomprehensible and/or inaccessible. These go hand in hand with spiritual deafness and blindness. But in the future, God's *words* will be so accessible to the people that even *the deaf* and *blind* would hear and read the words of the book.

19. Those who find themselves oppressed by the mighty and wealthy will rejoice over how God acts on their behalf. A key phrase here is *the Holy One of Israel*. The *joy* of which this verse speaks is to be found in Him (Isaiah 12:6), not in pagan nations (10:20; 31:1). He is the Maker (17:7; 45:11), the Lord God (30:15), the Redeemer (41:14; 43:14; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5), the Lord hosts (47:4).

The unholy spirits of the demonic realm correctly recognized the Holy One in the person of Jesus (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34). Some humans correctly came to recognize Him that way as well.

20-21. The purveyors of injustice will receive exactly the opposite of what is promised in Isaiah 29:19. God intended judges to uphold the concerns of the poor, and He reserves fierce anger for those who use their position to harm them.

22. God assured the nation by invoking the names of two patriarchs with whom God had established His covenant centuries before (Exodus 2:24; etc.). But the record of Scripture is that God's people proved themselves incapable and unwilling to maintain a holy status before God. Moses had introduced God's perfect law to the people (Exodus 20; etc.) but they did not obey it. Their restoration was not precipitated by renewed effort on their part, but in God's unilateral act of mercy.

### III. Faithful Worship

#### Isaiah 29:23-24

**23 But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel.**

**24 They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.**

If at the time of restoration, Jacob were to observe *Israel*, the nation bearing his name as changed by God (Genesis 32:28), he would see renewed devotion to God. In spite of the Israelites' unfaithfulness, they will remain as God's creative *work*. As such, God has remained committed to them until He finishes what He started in them. Human unfaithfulness does not deter God (see 2 Timothy 2:13).

To *sanctify* God's *name* is to acknowledge God's inherent holiness. We cannot add to God's holiness. But we can add to the number of those who know His holiness and also worship Him. Israel would come to worship and obey God with a sense of awe and reverence (Isaiah 29:17).

To *fear the God of Israel* is a parallel statement to *sanctify my name*. To do one is to do the other. The result is to be appropriate reverence for the Lord as He allows people the opportunity to marvel at His holiness. Since Jacob's name was changed to Israel, *the Holy One of Jacob* and *the God of Israel* are parallels. Calling God by either or both titles is to acknowledge that He chose Jacob/Israel, loved him from before he wrestled with God (Genesis 32:22-30), and proved that love by settling Jacob's descendants in the land of promise that would belong to his descendants (Psalm 136:21; compare Jeremiah 33:11; Hosea 2:23).

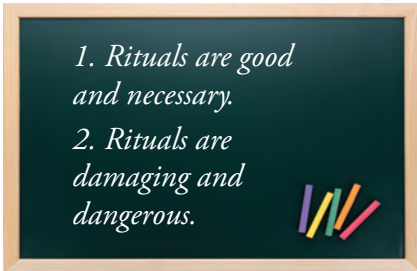
But that settlement and resettlement were only shadows of God's act of mercy ultimately accomplished through the work of Christ on the cross. Paul wrote, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). We come to Christ admitting that we depend on His generous gift of salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9) and the rest in our eternal home that is to follow (Hebrews 4).

24. This future time of renewal is to be marked by increased sensitivity to God's Word. The Hebrew word translated *murmured* occurs in six other places in the Old Testament; in two of those, it is used of the wilderness wanderers who griped about their situation (Deuteronomy 1:27; Psalm 106:25). When the time of revival came to pass, the people would do the opposite as they value *doctrine* (Deuteronomy 32:2; Psalm 119).

# INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

## OFFERING HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

### Into the Lesson



Make a list of reasons in favor of Proposal 1 while the other half of the class makes a list supporting Proposal 2.

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### Into the Word

Read Isaiah 29:14-24. Create a list titled “Sins of God’s People” as you work through the text.

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Create a list titled “How God Will Respond” as you see promised in the lesson text.

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### Into Life

Definition(s):

*Ritual: a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order.*

*Ritualism: the regular observance or practice of ritual, especially when excessive or without regard to its function.*

Contrast these two definitions to ensure that you do not see the word *ritual* as an inherently negative word.

#### *Rituals*

List as many rituals of Christian worship as you can.

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#### *Meaningless*

Jot down one or more ways that each of the rituals can become meaningless.

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#### *Meaningful*

Suggest what must happen in the Christian’s heart for each of these rituals to become or remain meaningful to self and to God.

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### THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

God is able and willing to renew our hearts.