

The Millennium Forecast

The Book of Isaiah

Text
Isaiah 28:1-29

Topic
Israel's leaders are drunkards who act hastily, trusting the world rather than the LORD.

Title
"Hasting Away Again In Drunken Leaderville"

"Don't be hasty" is the motto of what fantasy character?



In the world of *The Lord of the Rings*, Ents were a race of beings who are best described as shepherds of the trees, or tree-herds, who manage the forests of Middle Earth.

Ents acted slowly, deliberately. When they met for Entmoot, it took all day for them to greet each other. The Hobbits were anxious to enlist their help in the conflict with Saruman. Treebeard famously said to them, "Don't be hasty."

Look at verse sixteen in our text: "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; Whoever believes will not act **hastily.**" Your Bible version may translate it a different way, but the root word is *to hurry*.

God says to His people, "Don't be hasty!"

God is the Master Builder. He has laid the "cornerstone," the "foundation."

In God's building projects, our haste, wastes opportunities, responsibilities, and privileges to partner with Him. Worse, in our haste we look to the world for help instead of waiting on the Lord.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Don't Let Haste Interfere With The Lord Building You**, and **#2 Don't Let Haste Interfere With You Building With The Lord**.

#1 - Don't Let Haste Interfere With The Lord Building You (v1-13)

Israel had a history of looking to Egypt for help:

- Abraham was hasty when there was a famine in Bethel. Against the LORD's leading, he skipped town, going to Egypt. It was a spiritual setback.
- In the Exodus, at the border of the Promised Land, the people feared going in. "So they said to one another, 'Let us select a leader and return to Egypt' " (Numbers 14:4).

The Jews were in grave danger from the Assyrian Empire. Rather than repent and wait for God's deliverance, they hastily made a mutual aid pact with Egypt.

Commentators are nearly unanimous in saying that Egypt represents the world. In the Bible, the term "world" can refer to the Earth and physical universe, but it most often refers to the humanistic, materialistic system put in motion by Satan that is at odds with God.

Christians should be *in* the world, but not *of* the world. When a believer backslides, he or she is described as being worldly.

Isaiah exposes the worldliness of the Jews.

Isa 28:1 Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim...

The nation of Israel was bitterly divided:

- The northern kingdom was called Israel, or sometimes, Ephraim, the name of one of the tribes.
- The southern kingdom consisted of two tribes, Judah and Benjamin. It was called Judah.

Isa 28:1 ...Whose glorious beauty is a fading flower Which is at the head of the verdant valleys, To those who are overcome with wine!

Ken Burns produced a documentary titled, *Prohibition - A Nation of Drunkards*. One researcher said, "We have oftentimes been a nation of drunks."

Ephraim had become a nation of drunkards. Isaiah mentions "wine" (v1), "drunkards" (v3), then "wine" and "intoxicating drink" multiple times in verse seven.

Ephraim didn't need a temperance movement, they needed a remembrance movement to see how far they had fallen away from the LORD.

Today the apostle Paul says we can either be "drunk with wine," or we can be "filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). "Drunk with wine" is the most obvious contrast with being "filled with the Spirit," but the idea is that you want to be influenced by the Spirit and not by any of the powerful enticements of the world.

Ask yourself, "Am I filled with the Spirit?" "Am I yielding to the indwelling Holy Spirit?"

Isa 28:2 Behold, the Lord has a mighty and strong one, Like a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, Like a flood of mighty waters overflowing, Who will bring *them* down to the earth with *His* hand.

God would utilize "mighty and strong" Assyria as His "hand" to discipline Ephraim. They were likened to a massive hail storm.

The mention of the "flood" may be prophetic. In the future Time of Jacob's Trouble that we call the Great Tribulation, we read that Satan will "[spew] water out of his

mouth like a flood after" the Jews (Revelation 12:15). One of the many names of the antichrist is "The Assyrian" (Micah 5:5-6).

Isaiah never missed an opportunity to share future hope with those struggling in the present.

Isa 28:3 The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, Will be trampled underfoot;

Isa 28:4 And the glorious beauty is a fading flower Which is at the head of the verdant valley, Like the first fruit before the summer, Which an observer sees; He eats it up while it is still in his hand.

The "fig" was "the first fruit before summer." The Assyrians would be "observers," i.e., *strangers*, who would devour Ephraim like a ripe fig.

Isa 28:5 In that day the LORD of hosts will be For a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty To the remnant of His people,

Isa 28:6 For a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, And for strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.

God always preserves a remnant in Israel. These verses promise her restoration. One day the Jews will sit in "justice" and "judgment," with strength to "turn back" her enemies. Jesus will wear the crown.

Isa 28:7 But they also have erred through wine, And through intoxicating drink are out of the way; The priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink, They are swallowed up by wine, They are out of the way through intoxicating drink; They err in vision, they stumble *in* judgment.

The "priest and the prophet" were the spiritual guides for the nation. They were "out of the way," meaning that Satan neutralized them. They became blind leaders of the blind.

Isa 28:8 For all tables are full of vomit *and* filth; No place *is* clean.

They were so drunk... That they vomited on themselves. "Filth" means they soiled themselves, losing control of their bowels.

I said this wasn't about alcohol, but that doesn't mean alcohol is not a problem. It can be. *Crown Royal* put forward the slogan, "Drink responsibly." The apostle Paul, whom

we quoted earlier, might say, "Drink *spiritually*." That is, if you drink, do not get drunk, do not stumble others, and be cautious overall.

Isa 28:9 "Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those *just* weaned from milk? Those *just* drawn from the breasts?

Ephraim was talking, saying, "Does the LORD think He is dealing with babies and toddlers, teaching them with monosyllables?"

I think Isaiah went to them and *did* talk in simple monosyllables, as if they were babies or toddlers.

Isa 28:10 For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little."

This is not a compliment. It isn't a suggestion on how to study God's Word. It is a meaningless repetition of monosyllabic words. It is as if Isaiah went around babbling, saying "Line, line, line, line... Little, little."

Isa 28:11 For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people,

What if I came up here and started talking to you in baby talk? "Stammering" (i.e., stuttering like Porky Pig), and occasionally breaking out in a foreign language you don't know?

This is a prediction of their coming captivity. They would become subjects of Assyria, and be spoken to in a language they did not understand.

Isa 28:12 To whom He said, "This *is* the rest *with which* You may cause the weary to rest," And, "This *is* the refreshing"; Yet they would not hear.

If they had sought the Lord, they would have had rest and refreshment. But, like Abraham and the Exodus, they preferred Egypt over the LORD.

Let's call it *Garlic over Grace*.

Isa 28:13 But the word of the LORD was to them, "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little," That they might go and fall backward, and be broken And snared and caught.

More baby talk. When God is speaking, but in a way that is unintelligible, you'd better repent before you are taken captive by foreigners.

There is something here we need to pause and discuss. You might recognize that the apostle Paul quoted from this passage when he was correcting the church in Corinth about their misuse & abuse of the Gift of Tongues in their meetings. Apparently they were all speaking in tongues simultaneously. They thought of it as a sign they were spiritual, and that God was present among them. They assumed that unbelievers would be awed at the moving of the Holy Spirit.

Paul quoted Isaiah to show them that the opposite was true. When unintelligible words are being spoken to you, it means God is displeased with you, disciplining you.

Paul wrote, "tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers..." A "sign" of what? That you are nuts. "If the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those who are* uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?" (First Corinthians 14:22-23).

Here is a one-minute overview of Speaking in Tongues in public:

On the Day of Pentecost the believers received the Holy Spirit, praising God with unlearned, known foreign languages. That was not the Gift of Tongues. The apostle Paul said "he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries."

Speaking to God in an unknown, mystery 'language' that no one understands is a gift some believers will receive, but not all. If it is exercised publicly, it is useless - unless accompanied by an interpretation, rendering the utterance edifying to the entire church. Interpretation is also a gift. The speaker in tongues may have the interpretation, or someone else may.

When tongues is exercised with interpretation, it is as edifying as any other speaking gift.

All the gifts are under your control. The Holy Spirit does not come upon you & take over your movements. Gifts are to be exercised in the order Paul laid down.

If anyone had a right to be hasty, it was Jesus. Think about it:

- God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit planned from eternity to send Jesus, the Son, as the God-man who would be Savior of the whole world, especially those who believe.
- God the Son waited 4000 years of human history before being conceived in Mary's womb.
- He waited 9 months in her womb.
- He waited 30+ years in relative obscurity before being baptized to begin His ministry.
- He would minister for another 3½ years.
- He would wait a week after He made His entry into Jerusalem hailed as King.
- Six hours on the Cross, three days in the tomb.
- Another 40 days until His ascension.
- It's been over 2,000 years that His return has been imminent.
- The Lord will resurrect & rapture us, then wait the 7 years of the Great Tribulation before His Second Coming.
- It is followed by 1000 years ruling a still unruly Earth.
- Finally, eternity will be ushered in.

Jesus knows waiting, has out-waited you, and won't be rushed by you.

What is being built on the foundation of Jesus laid down by the apostles and prophets? You are; we are. Individual believers, and the church corporately, are the Lord's building project.

#2 - Don't Let Haste Interfere With You Building With The Lord (v14-29)

If you didn't know better, you might think that the apostle Peter was a builder, not a fisherman.

In his first letter he tells believers, "you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (2:5). Then he quotes from our passage in Isaiah three times. Bottom line: We are God's building project, and are enlisted to help Him build both us and His church.

Isa 28:14 Therefore hear the word of the LORD, you scornful men, Who rule this people who *are* in Jerusalem,

Isa 28:15 Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, And with Sheol we are in agreement. When the overflowing scourge passes through, It will not come to us, For we have made lies our refuge, And under falsehood we have hidden ourselves."

Treaties get cool names. Most recently, we have the Abraham Accords in the Middle East.

Ephraim's treaty with Egypt was *not* called, The Covenant with Death, or The Sheol Agreement. Not by them, anyway - but by the LORD.

Isa 28:16 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; Whoever believes will not act hastily.

The NT applies these words to Jesus Christ. Suggesting that the church is a household of faith, the apostle Paul says He and other apostles and prophets laid the foundation. We are to build upon it, and upon nothing else.

(Geno taught on this two weeks ago, at Midweek. You should listen).

We can't spend time talking about every hasty thing. Instead, we need a constant vigilance against methods and practices that resemble those of the world. In terms of the church, the ends don't justify means

Isa 28:17 Also I will make justice the measuring line, And righteousness the plummet; The hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, And the waters will overflow the hiding place.

Isa 28:18 Your covenant with death will be annulled, And your agreement with Sheol will not stand; When the overflowing scourge passes through, Then you will be trampled down by it.

No matter how faithless the rulers of Ephraim, God remained faithful. His plan for redeeming mankind and restoring Creation cannot fail. Upon Him is built the household of God the LORD promised His people.

Isa 28:19 As often as it goes out it will take you; For morning by morning it will pass over, And by day and by night; It will be a terror just to understand the report."

Whether Assyria, Babylon, or the future Assyrian, the antichrist, the LORD will deal with His elect nation in discipline, in order that He might bless them. The point of discipline is restoration.

Isa 28:20 For the bed is too short to stretch out *on*, And the covering so narrow that one cannot wrap himself *in it*.

You're at a luxury hotel. Your blanket is the size of a towel, and the bed is the size of a coffee table. Are you going to be comfortable and able to rest?

Ephraim and Judah would not find rest by aligning themselves with the world. It's like the old adage, "You made your bed, now lie in it."

Isa 28:21 For the LORD will rise up as at Mount Perazim, He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon - That He may do His work, His awesome work, And bring to pass His act, His unusual act.

These are two places in their history where God had given Moses and Joshua tremendous victories.

We want so badly to see God "work," to see God "act," that we try to manufacture it.

Church building projects, for example. If you are manipulated, shamed, coerced into giving, or helping with building, then how can you say it was the Lord?

Jesus doesn't want credit for what we do in the energy of the flesh. He wants to do something "awesome," something "unusual."

Isa 28:22 Now therefore, do not be mockers, Lest your bonds be made strong; For I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts, A destruction determined even upon the whole earth.

Some restraints, if you struggle against them, get tighter. Once the LORD announced His discipline upon the Jews, they ought submit to it.

Isaiah takes another giant leap forward, to the future Time of Jacob's Trouble, when he says, "A destruction determined even upon the whole Earth."

Isa 28:23 Give ear and hear my voice, Listen and hear my speech.

Isa 28:24 Does the plowman keep plowing all day to sow? Does he keep turning his soil and breaking the clods?

Isa 28:25 When he has leveled its surface, Does he not sow the black cummin And scatter the cummin, Plant the wheat in rows, The barley in the appointed place, And the spelt in its place?

Isa 28:26 For He instructs him in right judgment, His God teaches him.

Isa 28:27 For the black cummin is not threshed with a threshing sledge, Nor is a cartwheel rolled over the cummin; But the black cummin is beaten out with a stick, And the cummin with a rod.

Isa 28:28 Bread *flour* must be ground; Therefore he does not thresh it forever, Break *it with* his cartwheel, Or crush it *with* his horsemen.

These all picture one thing: God's discipline upon Ephraim, then Judah, then the nation in the future seven year Tribulation, will be *measured* and *merciful*.

The Lord is like a good farmer. A farmer doesn't *only* plow; he knows when to stop plowing and when to level the ground, when to plant, and what to plant where. He uses different tools at different times and works them all together to produce crops.

You may be in a time of plowing, or of leveling; of planting, or of harvesting. Let Him work.

Isa 28:29 This also comes from the LORD of hosts, *Who* is wonderful in counsel *and* excellent in guidance.

First, a quick disclaimer. We are not telling you all professional help is wrong. Our desire is to see believers unburdened, not further weighed down.

Let's insert question marks in verse twenty-nine.

Who is wonderful in counsel? Who is excellent in guidance? Jesus!

Why would we seek counsel & guidance from any other source? Jesus anticipated our need for immediate counsel & guidance. He told us that it was good that He ascend into Heaven so that we each could receive the promise of God the Holy Spirit living in us:

- The Holy Spirit is in our individual human bodies.
- The Holy Spirit is in our corporate church body.

One commentator said, *"Where do you run for help? When you are in trouble, what is your first instinct? Do you run to others or to God? Is it usually the counsel of another rather than the counsel found in waiting upon God in prayer? Why is this the way it is? Why do we run to man before we run to God?"*

Treebeard said, *"You must understand, young Hobbit, it takes a long time to say anything in Old Entish. And we never say anything unless it is worth taking a long time to say."*

It can seem like it is taking too long for Jesus to say anything. Or that what He has said is taking too long.

That is never true, because He is God, and He loves you.