

ISAIAH 33

1 ¶ Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.

This passage is about the enemies of Judah, the Assyrians. After they finish their “spoiling” God will punish them as we shall see later. It can also be taken as pertaining to the enemies of the church. God will punish them as he punished the Assyrians.

2 O LORD, have mercy upon us; for we have trusted in thee: be thou our (not their) arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble. 3 At the noise of thy fear the people fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered.

This is a prayer for mercy like we say always in the liturgy “Lord have mercy” *At the noise of thy fear the people fled at the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered.* This refers to the armies of the Assyrians when the angel came and slew 185 thousand of them. The Vulgate version has *at the noise of thy angel*

And your spoil shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar: as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them. 5 The LORD is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness. 6 And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure.

Instead of them spoiling the land of Judah, they themselves will be spoiled by the Lord and will fall like locusts (grasshoppers) They will fall and the Lord shall be exalted. The next verse actually pertains to the church which is symbolically called Zion, she will be filled with *judgment and righteousness... wisdom and knowledge and the fear of the LORD*

Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without: the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly. 8 The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man.

The strong ones of Assyria will be defeated by the angel of the Lord. They will even send *ambassadors of peace* asking Judah for mercy. The highways will be wasted and no one uses them because most of them were slain by the angel.

9 The earth mourneth and languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down: Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits.

This verse describes the spiritual state of the gentiles before the coming of Christ

Now will I rise, saith the LORD; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself. Now you shall see, now you shall hear.

This is about the coming of the Messiah *Now you shall see* is a veiled prophecy about the Lord who will be seen on earth and who will converse with men as the prophet Baruch says.

The strength of your breath shall be in vain, as fire, it shall devour you. 12 And the nations shall be burnt up: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.

This is directed towards the Jews who persisted in their disbelief, their hatred will consume them as fire consumes thorns. The nations or the gentiles who will not accept the message of the Gospel will also be burnt up with the unbelieving Jews.

¶ They that are far off, shall hear what I have done; and, they that draw near, shall acknowledge my might.

The gentiles who are far off shall hear about my miracles which I did in Israel, and those who draw near me and believe what they heard will believe in my strength.

14 The sinners in Zion shall tremble; fear will surprised the ungodly.

The sinners among the Jews will tremble and the ungodly or unbelievers will be astonished.

Who shall tell you that a fire is kindled? And who will tell you about the everlasting places?

The prophet here is talking about the disciples who will tell those in the church be they Jews or gentiles about the fire that is kindled, the fire that our Lord spoke of in Luke 12:49

I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I if it be already kindled? It is the apostles that will tell them about the *everlasting places*. Paradise and the Heavenly Jerusalem... Hades and the lake of fire are also everlasting places.

15 He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; 16 He shall dwell on high cave of a strong rock: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be faithful.

Here the prophet is giving us a lesson about the proper use of the senses : upright speech, eyes and ears that refrain from seeing violence, hands that do not take bribes, and feet that walk in unrighteousness. Such a man will be secure because he will live under the protection of the strong rock who is Christ. Bread will be given him, not this ordinary bread but the bread of life, and his water will be faithful, the water that the Lord promised to give that leads to eternal life, as He told the Samaritan woman.

You shall see the king in his glory: your eyes shall behold the land that is very far off.

Who shall see the king in his glory? He is the one who keeps his eyes from watching bad things and his ears from hearing gossip and bad music, his mouth from uttering lies and swearing. Who keeps his hands from taking what does not belong to him and his feet shall always walk in the ways of righteousness. This is the one that shall see the king coming on the clouds in his glory. The same one shall behold the land that is very far off, for according to 2 Cor 4:18 we look not at

the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Your soul shall meditate fear. Where are the scribes? where are the counsellors? where is he that counted the towers?

The person who is virtuous has the fear of God always in his heart and soul. Then Isaiah the prophet gives us a similar statement to that in 1Co 1:20 *Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?* People who fear God and put their bodies under subjection are not those who are wise according to the world, they are not cool according to worldly wisdom, but God has made the wisdom of this world foolishness!

Even the small and great people with whom he took no counsel, neither did he understand them of deep speech, so that a despised people should not hear and there is no understanding in him that hears.

This is a very difficult passage but here is what the fathers tell us about it: all kinds of people small and great will not hear the Gospel preaching from people with strange speech that they cannot understand, since the Holy Spirit will give them the gift of tongues so that all people will hear the Gospel preached in a tongue they can understand. On the contrary, those who reject the message of the Gospel will be a despised people that will not understand what they hear.

Behold Zion, the city of our salvation: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem the city of richness, a tabernacle that shall not be shaken; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.

This Zion is the Church that the disciples will start through there preaching, and those who believe will see her. He calls her the city of our salvation because you cannot be saved outside the church. He simulates her to a tent, that shall not be shaken, The tent is held by cords tied to stakes or pegs fastened to the ground. Neither the stakes shall be removed nor will the cords will be ever broken. The fathers tell us that this is exactly what the Lord told us in Matt 16:18 *upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* The stakes are the Apostles and martyrs, and as the stakes that are buried in the ground keep the tent secure, so the Apostles and the martyrs who are buried will keep the church secure through their blood that was shed. The cords that link the tent to the cords are their teachings.