

**CALVARY PANDAN
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 29

ISAIAH

CHAPTER 29

Theme: "No Respector of City!"

THEME VERSE

Isaiah 29:22-23 (KJV) "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. 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."

INTRODUCTION

There is no city like Jerusalem on the earth. It is the city designed by God for eternity. In the new heaven and new earth of Revelation 21, the only thing that is called to remembrance of the old earth and old heaven is the name Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem will be the name of the capital city of God's eternal kingdom. It is vividly described for us in Revelation 21 as the glorious and greatest city the world has ever known. The scale of it is stupendous as the length and breadth and height are exactly the same and it measures about half the

length of the present United States of America (about 2,200 kilometres in distance)!

Not only is the city great and grand in the foreseeable future, it is also great and grand today! It may not appear so based upon its outward appearance, but Jerusalem is the only city with spiritual significance. This spiritual significance is that the LORD has placed His "home" (i.e. the Temple) in this great city. This home of God means that Judah is under the protection of God from all her enemies. It also means that Judah is a spiritual nation with a spiritual duty to the whole world that is in spiritual darkness. Israel has a spiritual; duty and responsibility to manifest the glory and attributes of God by the way she lived her life. When the capital city fails, it is Judah that fails too.

Jerusalem has failed the LORD very badly as Isaiah 29 reveals. Isaiah had to rebuke and warn her of the LORD's impending chastisement if she does not repent soon. This privilege of bearing God's Name comes with the price of a holy testimony. When idolatry and the fruits of idolatry have replaced holiness, the LORD will not stand idly by and do nothing. As a loving heavenly Father to Judah, He must intervene to put a stop to Judah's atrocious and many sins. This was the purpose of Isaiah's rebuke. We do not know for sure the precise period when Isaiah spoke these words. It was probably before the Assyrians came and before Hezekiah's reign as Hezekiah was a good king who brought much reform to Judah. Of the four kings that Isaiah ministered during

(see Isaiah 1:1), Ahaz was the only bad king. He ruled Judah for 16 years.

OUTLINE

1. God will humble Ariel (vv.1-8);
2. The deep sleep (vv. 9-12);
3. Hypocrisy Exposed and Condemned (vv. 13-17);
4. Ariel will return (vv. 18-24).

COMMENTARY

God Will Humble Ariel

“Woe” is a frightening word that one would not expect God to use against His own city, Jerusalem, the city of God! Yet in Isaiah 29, the next city to be judged by God is none other than Jerusalem. It is deliberately called Ariel here to highlight her might and power that God gave to her as a living testimony to the world. Ariel means “the lion of God.” Jerusalem has never been called Ariel before or after except in Isaiah 29. It refers to Jerusalem because it is described as “the city where David dwelt!” A city with the greatest potential to succeed is now placed under the crucible of God’s judgement and sadly Jerusalem has fallen very short of God’s prescribed standard.

Jerusalem had been adding to her woes year to year. There seemed to be no change to her sinful ways. Time was given to Jerusalem to repent and turn from her sins but she did not. The form of killing sacrifices remained year after year. The Jews did not abandon the outward form of religiosity according to the teaching of God in the

Old Testament. As far as the external forms of worship and service were concerned, Judah did them year by year. They kept their holy-days religiously and brought their many sacrifices and offered them unto the LORD. However all was not well with the soul of Ariel!

The LORD will distress Ariel. The word for distress means “to compress.” It is to box Ariel in so that she will have to turn back to God and no one else. Ariel was God’s city from the very beginning when King David made it the spiritual capital of the whole world. To distress her by God is like a loving heavenly Father distressing His child who has gone wayward. Ariel must be brought back to the right path. Ariel will have to experience heaviness and sorrow. This comes when the enemies of Judah enter Jerusalem and ransack it to their heart’s content. Jerusalem will be at the mercy of her enemies. This is the only way back to the LORD! It is the way of repentance, for repentance does not come naturally or easily to unbelievers, even to many believers. The phrase “it shall be unto me as Ariel” means that the city of Jerusalem will be like one gigantic crucible of sorrow and heaviness. There is no escape for Ariel unless she repents and turns back to the LORD.

In Old Testament as well as the early period of the New Testament cities were built on mountain or hill tops. The weapons of war dictate and control the capture of cities on a hill. These cities would be asked to surrender. If they refused to surrender and the enemies do not wish to charge

up the hill as many of their men might die, they would wait patiently and starve the people in the cities. No one is allowed to exist or enter the cities. This will be done by way of “laying siege with a mount.” The phrase means to lay siege using military posts to ensure security so that enemies cannot escape. Another way was to build forts i.e. ramparts from ground level to the top of the city wall. From there the soldiers will fight against their enemies. These were all the steps the LORD will use against Ariel because of its recalcitrant sinful behaviour (v.3).

All boasting will be stopped by force. God will bring down Ariel. She will not be allowed to boast of her greatness and preferential treatment as if she could do whatever she wanted just because she was called the city of David! She will speak out of the ground i.e. the lowest point of the earth. Using a similar picture, God said that her speech shall be low and out of the dust! The voice of Ariel shall be “as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground.” This phrase is a simile and it means that Ariel will speak like one in a trance that is not understandable, and will be out of the ground, and there will be no loud talking but only whispers like one who is ashamed and has been badly humbled into dust (v. 4).

These enemies of Ariel will perform the above as described. Here in verse 5 they are called strangers. They will come in the multitudes like small dust. They are called the multitude of terrible ones by God here. This is to highlight their cruelty and ferocious nature in punishing Ariel.

They will come swiftly like chaff (very light and blown very easily by the wind) that passeth away instantly and suddenly.

Ariel will be visited by the LORD of hosts. Note that this is the first time the name of the LORD is mentioned in this chapter. He will come with thunder and with an earthquake and with great noise, with storm and tempest (i.e. hurricane and the flames of devouring fire.) The fierceness of the LORD is emphasized here against Ariel. The sins of Ariel must have been so terrible that the LORD has to describe Himself using such frightening descriptions. He will not come as a merciful heavenly father but as a holy and awesome God of hosts and might and power (v 6).

Suddenly the LORD shifts His attention from Ariel to the enemies of Ariel. Here the Bible describes the “. . . multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision.” Munition refers to “bulwark.” These enemies will come so fast and the destruction so devastating that it will be to them like a dream of a night vision. Their bulwarks will be against Ariel. Ariel will be distressed (i.e. compressed by her enemies). It will come either through the hands of the Babylonians (586 B.C.) or the Romans (70 A.D.). (v 7)

More illustrations are used to describe the dream in detail. The enemies of Ariel will respond to their destruction of Ariel. Isaiah 29:8 says, “It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth;

but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion." Ariel's destruction will be like a man who eats and drinks and in his dream he thinks he has eaten and was filled and has drunk and his thirst was quenched but when he awakens he is still hungry and thirsty. This means that after the enemies have destroyed Ariel they feel as if they have not destroyed her sufficiently. They want to destroy her even more! The complete and utter devastation of Judah is described here by the LORD!

The Deep Sleep!

The focus is not in the city per se but on the people who lived inside Ariel. This phrase aptly describes the mindset of the Jews when calamity strikes. "Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry:" literally means "delay yourselves and be amazed; take delight and be blinded." The meaning of this phrase comes from Isaiah as he describes the Jews. No matter how they try to ponder and figure out what is happening to them in their state of impending destruction they will not be able to understand and explain their state and condition. They hesitate and ponder in great amazement perhaps with the stunned notion that Ariel could really be devastated and destroyed from the face of the earth! This was an unthinkable concept for a nation that had been existence since the time of King David and with the promises of

God on her perpetuity the Jews could not fathom that Ariel could be destroyed like the cities of the world! Yet it was happening! They cry out and continue to cry like one who was blind. (Note: The verb for both "cry ye out" and "cry" are exactly the same only different in stem.)

Why could they not understand what was happening to them? Verse 9b explained. "They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink." If a person is drunk with wine then he has an excuse and knows the reason for his drunkenness. If he becomes sober, the drunken stupor is cured. But when he does not know why he is in a drunken stupor he cannot get cured! He staggers around like a drunk but when tested, he is not filled with strong drink! What a sad state to be in, to behave like drunk but not actually be drunk!

The LORD declares that He was the One who had blinded their eyes. The LORD had poured out the spirit of deep sleep and had closed their eyes. The word "deep sleep" first occurred in Genesis 2:21 when Adam was put to sleep and a rib was taken out of him to create Eve. The second occurrence was when God put Abram to sleep so that Abram could not walk through the pieces of animals with God to teach Abraham that the keeping of God's promises of the promised Messiah depends entirely on God's faithfulness and not Abraham's. This was a supernatural sleep that causes the person to fall into but his senses are still alert and clear. He is conscious of his surroundings. In this

instance the Jews were alive physically but totally asleep to the spiritual realm around her. Their physical eyes were opened but they could not see at all. The target people that the LORD afflicted this deep sleep were the prophets, the rulers of Judah and the seers. Prophets refer to inspired men and seers refer to beholders of visions. The difference between them is slight. The former receives the word from God and the latter is supposed to know how to interpret the present circumstances. All these leaders of men who are blinded by God and thus the people are led with men with no spiritual sight (v.10)!

The vision (i.e. the revelation or word from God) is not understood at all by the Jews. The Bible described this state of the Jews very vividly. Isaiah 29:11, "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed." The visions of God will be to them like a book that is sealed. It is like someone delivering a book to one who is learned but he replies that he could see it not because the book was sealed. The book is only sealed to those who are not born again. If the child of God is born again he has his eyes opened. There is no reason that he is not able to see. They might think that they are learned but the I.Q. of a person is not the basis for spiritual sight. Spiritual sight comes from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. These Jews who consider themselves learned but when they see the Word of God it is to them alike a sealed book

which means that they are not born again (v.11)!

To those who do not consider themselves as learned, the Word of God is closed to them as well. The Word of God is offered to them and they have only one reply, "I am not learned." They used their ignorance as an excuse not to know the Word of God. They are satisfied with their state of ignorance and could not be bothered to find out and know what the Word of God means. The Word of God was offered to them to read and find out but they excused themselves and remained in their ignorance by saying that they are not interested in theology! How could people who are called by the Name of God (Ariel) not be interested in the Word of God (v.12)!

Hypocrisy Exposed and Condemned!

The Jews did not stop their worship of God or loose their religiosity. They continued in their daily and yearly observances of the special feasts and brought their regular offerings but their heart was far from God! What an indictment on the people of God in Isaiah's time! They had all the form of a godly nation but not one ounce of genuine spiritual reality that was pleasing to God. The words that came out of their mouths were praising the LORD but their praises were not received by the LORD. They said that they fear God but their fear was based upon the precept (i.e. the teaching of man!) Such deceptions were very delusional. To possess fear in one's heart and sincerely believing that it is the fear of

God when in fact it is the fear of man is delusion of the highest order. As long as the Word of God is not preached biblically, all the words of praise from hymns that we loved and the fear of man constrains us to live holy lives are futile before God. The fear of man today is like a cancer that has consumed many hearts whereby we are more desirous in pleasing man and what man thinks of us is more important than what the LORD thinks of us!

The response of the LORD is abundantly clear! The LORD says in Isaiah 29:14 “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.” The LORD will begin to do a marvellous work among this people, the Jews! The meaning of “marvellous work” means a work that will cause wonder and minds would be shocked. The LORD said that the wisdom of these wise men shall perish (i.e. destroyed.) These men considered themselves wise even though they could not understand the Word of God and were spiritually blind. The LORD will destroy them! The understanding of their prudent men (i.e. men who claimed to have discernment will be concealed by God.) (v14).

Passages like these remind all of us that the understanding of God’s Word comes from the LORD. There is no basis at all for pride or arrogance. It is not because we are cleverer but

only by God’s grace that He has saved us and opened our eyes to see! If we are able to understand the Word of God and teach the Word of God to bless others, humility must be the main stay in our hearts to keep us in the right frame of mind and heart to ensure that we do not sin against God.

“Woe” is used again to highlight the dire condition of Ariel’s so called wisdom. The LORD targets the foolish arrogant hypocrites who think that they could hide from God. They seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD! It is not the depth of lower ground like one who hides underneath a basement, but the pretentious false façade of spirituality where the dressing and behaviour resembles that of a spiritual person. He talks holiness and walks in godliness. But in reality is a devil in disguise! They speak the right words using the right Christian jargon! However their works are hidden from the eyes of those whom they deceive. They put up a good show week after week in front of the Temple performing the sacrifices and keep diligently the holy days. But they say, “Who seeth us? And who knoweth us?” They could hide from man but they could never hide from the all-seeing eyes of God. The LORD sees through their outward show of spirituality. The hidden deeds that they do behind closed doors are all known to the LORD and He condemns them for their hypocrisy (v. 15)!

The LORD pointed out to the men of Ariel that their “turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter’s clay.” The phrase has to refer

to these people who say that right is wrong and wrong is right, black is white and white is black, who are compared by the LORD as the potter's clay! "Shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not?" Can the pot say to the potter that the potter did not make it! It is utterly nonsensical to even think such a thought! Yet this was exactly what the Jews were saying and doing by their hypocrisy! The LORD sees into their hearts and they think that they could hide from Him. The LORD brought Judah into existence and gave her the Land of promise for her to live in and enjoy. Now they turned around and said that the LORD did not give birth to them and they came out of their own strength! Another comparison is that Judah is likened to "shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?" The word for "frame" means "to design." How could the pot that has been carefully designed by the potter say that the potter did not design it for he has no ability to do it! The evidence that the potter has the ability to design is in the image of the designed pot! How could Judah say that the LORD is not able to make her into a nation for the evidence is the existence of Judah as a nation (v.16).

In a little while the LORD will expose the hypocrisy and arrogance of the Jews in Ariel! The picture is that "Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest." The Hebrew word for fruitful field is "Carmel. Carmel is fruitful and cultivated whereas Lebanon is uncultivated and

barren. For these evil Jews to reject God and deny His existence by the way they lived, the LORD will show that He can turn barrenness into fruitfulness and fruitfulness into barrenness. This interpretation is right in light of Isaiah 32:15. "Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." Judah is a nation that depends entirely upon God for her existence. Judah is what it is today and in the past because of the LORD's grace and mercy. In times of plenty and greatness, it is easy for nations like Judah to feel that they had arrived because of their own strength and strategies. No nation has been blessed by God and owed its existence more to the LORD than Judah and Israel. For Judah to spurn the LORD and behave the way she did is unconscionable to say the least! The LORD has to teach Judah a lesson so that she will stop sinning and turn back to Him (v.17).

Ariel Will Return!

The phrase "in that day" refers to the time of Judah's chastisement. The deaf will hear the words of the book (i.e. the Word of God.) The eyes of the blind will see out of obscurity (i.e. deep darkness) as if the sun has set and out of darkness (i.e. sorrow and misery.) When the Jews humbled themselves then the deaf will hear and the blind will see. The LORD will use chastisement in the form of invading nations to humble Judah. In that day Judah will return to the LORD.

The meek will increase their joy in the LORD. There is no other way

except the way of humility to return to the LORD. The poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. This is not poverty in the material sense but the spiritual. Once the humble returned back to the LORD in repentance, their sins are forgiven. They have peace with God. They desire to study and obey the Word of God. Their relationship and fellowship with their LORD has been restored. The rejoicing in the Holy One of Israel is the spontaneous outcome. This comes from the heart and not a matter of show (v.19).

The recalcitrant ones like the terrible ones (i.e. the oppressor and tyrannical will be brought to nought.) The scorner will be consumed. All that watch for iniquity (i.e. the sleepless ones for iniquity will be cut off.) The sleepless ones for iniquity are those who will not rest until they have committed iniquity first. The LORD will destroy them. These evil men are described by the LORD in detail. Isaiah 29:21. "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." They make a man an offender for a word. By their teaching and speaking they cause others to fall into sin! There are many of these people today, pastors, elders and professors in seminaries and Bible Colleges. They turned them into sinners by their devious teaching. They lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate. The ones who sit at the gate of cities are leaders or governors. These evil men would corrupt them and use them to do their evil deeds. They would

probably bribe or blackmail them into submission and to do their evil bidding. They would also turn aside the just for a thing of nought. The righteous will be turned from the pathway of righteousness into sin for nought. The things that are considered nought in Scriptures are material things such as mammon or the accolades of man (vv. 20-21).

The evil are destroyed and the humble blessed. Therefore the LORD who redeemed Abraham concerning the house of Jacob, shall say that Jacob shall not now be ashamed neither shall his face now wax pale. These are two strong prohibitions that have the same force as the Ten Commandments. The ones who are meek will no longer be ashamed (i.e. confounded or be dismayed.) They shall not be afraid any more as well for the LORD will protect and comfort them. No enemy will ever be able to harass or defeat them. There will be no famine or drought to kill their crops. Judah will be whole and blessed of God again (v. 22).

The restoration will be complete as the people of God praise Him. Then outsiders the Gentiles, see children of God, the work of God's hands, in the midst of Him they shall sanctify God's Name and the Holy One of Israel. They shall fear the God of Israel too. This means that they will become believers and embrace the LORD as their God. The testimonies of Judah's obedience will accomplish what the LORD had intended Judah to be from the beginning. By the way they lived, served and worshipped the LORD, the

Gentiles see Christ and become believers themselves (v.23).

The ones who erred in spirit shall come to understanding and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. This is exactly what becomes of sinners saved by God's grace through the Word of God and the testimony of God's people. What a wonderful day that would be. This is exactly what the LORD wants for His local churches too today (v.24).

PRACTICAL VALUE

Why Would God Chastise?

Chastisement is not delightful for any parent to do. But it is most needful when the child has strayed away into sin. Judah was such a wayward child to the LORD. There is no joy in chastising the wayward child especially when the chastisement hurts the child grievously. In the case of Ariel many had to pay for it with their lives. The slaughter and destruction of Ariel was painful and devastating. It was extreme but necessary because the sins of Judah were deep. The hearts of many Jews were hardened. Their testimony of the LORD's character was absent. Instead they reflected idolatry and wickedness conveying to the world the false message that the LORD was an idol and His character was one of wickedness and sin.

Local churches today are no different. The world looks at many of these local churches as if the LORD is an idol. The character of the LORD is likened to sin and wickedness. Christ is married to Belial and they are like

Siamese twins when local churches are dissected and carefully observed. Will the LORD allow such travesty of holiness to remain unanswered and will He chastise with the same degree of ferocity? Local churches will be destroyed by fire on the day of Judgement when the LORD returns!

Eyes Blinded and Ears Deafened!

Spiritual sight is the greatest sight on earth. It enables one to see into a realm that is sealed to the naked eyes. No matter how sinful man may try to penetrate he will not succeed. It is easier for him to fly to the moon on a Cessna plane with a two-year old child as his pilot than for him to see into the spiritual realm. Evil men who live in their own pride and sin are blind. They might think that they have sight but they are the blindest of them all on the earth.

Pastors and teachers of God's Word who do not elevate the Word of God in their teaching and preaching belong to this group. Pastors and teachers who undermine and devalue the Word of God also belong to this group. The ones who do not belong to this group are those who have the highest regard for the Word of God and point all who hear the Word of God to Christ. He decreases and the LORD increases in his life and teaching. He realizes that the ability to see and understand the Word of God comes from the LORD. He gives God the glory.

What the LORD Wants!

When the LORD chastises His people all He wants is that His people return back to Him. He loves them and

he always will. He will expose their hypocrisy because he loves them. He hates to see His people in sin and reflect a false picture of God. He will do whatever it takes to stop His people from sinning. If exile is what was needed he would do it! This is love.

The moment Judah returns to the LORD in humility the LORD will bless immediately. There is no delay in the blessing from the LORD. His people will begin to reflect a true picture of Christ. Then unbelievers will be able to see the powerful impact Christ has done in their lives. When the gospel is preached to them they will believe and accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour. This is what salvation and a life of service and testimony is all about! What an honour bestowed by the LORD upon sinners saved by grace. AMEN.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Isaiah 29:1-12

TUESDAY: Isaiah 29:13-24

WEDNESDAY: Isaiah 29:1-24

THURSDAY: Isaiah 29:1-24

FRIDAY: Isaiah 29:1-24.

Discussion Questions

1. Are present day believers prone to have form only without substance in their worship and service of the LORD? Please explain.

2. When calamities strike your life, do you blame others first and not even look into your own soul that perhaps the faults lies in yourself and not others? Please explain your answer.

3. Will God ever pour out His spirit of deep sleep upon you and in Pandan church? Please explain your answer by citing examples.

4. If the leaders of the church are spiritually blind, can the members of that church see? Which condition is worse, the one who thinks he sees but does not or the ones who knows he cannot see but not interested in wanting to see? Please elaborate.

5. Are these words a description of you, "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"? Please explain what it means.

6. If a person does not give God the glory, can he be compared as one who is like "the work say of him that made it, He made me not? And thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no

understanding?" Please explain your answer.

7. What lessons can you learn from this chapter about God's Word and about yourself?
