

**CALVARY PANDAN
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 33

ISAIAH

CHAPTER 33

Theme: "For the LORD is our Judge and Lawgiver!"

THEME VERSE

Isaiah 33:21-22 (KJV) "But there the glorious LORD *will be* unto us a place of broad rivers *and* streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. **22** For the LORD *is* our judge, the LORD *is* our lawgiver, the LORD *is* our king; he will save us."

INTRODUCTION

The Assyrians attacked Judah in 714 BC after they had defeated Israel in 722 BC. There was no provocation on the part of Judah (where Hezekiah was king) to warrant this attack. The Assyrians were actually paid by Judah (king Ahaz – see 2Kings 16:1-9) as mercenaries to attack Israel because Israel had ganged up with Syria to attack Judah.

After destroying both Syria and Israel, the Assyrian kings targeted Judah. They sought to continue their path of conquest because the bridge between the continent of Africa and

Europe was that narrow strip of land called Palestine.

Such arrogance! Their plans to destroy Judah, the spiritual witness of God to a world that was in spiritual darkness, would be crushed by the LORD. The damage was spiritual in nature. The people of God were the victims. They did not sin against God to warrant such attacks from the aggressors. They did not provoke the Assyrians. All they did was to pay them to help fight against Israel and the Syrians.

This chapter records the prayer as well as the cry of the Jews to the LORD for help and deliverance.

The lessons from this chapter include how to pray and cry out to God for help when we are in trouble, especially when we are being persecuted for Christ's sake. Judah was in such a situation.

OUTLINE

This chapter is without an outline as it is interspersed with exchanges that focused on Assyria, Judah, and the LORD.

COMMENTARY

As with Isaiah 31 and 32 where the LORD prophesied of the destruction of Assyria, Isaiah 33 focuses on the same theme.

Verse 1 (focuses on the Assyrians) -- Woe to the ones who spoiled especially when there was no just cause. The Jews did not do anything to hurt the Assyrians so why did they attack Judah? The Jews did not deal treacherously with the

Assyrians so why did they deal treacherously with the Jews? The LORD's judgment against them was "woe" which means that calamity would befall the enemies of Judah.

When the Assyrians stopped attacking Judah, they would find themselves being attacked. When they stopped dealing treacherously with Judah, they would find themselves being dealt treacherously with. These prophecies would be fulfilled in the near future.

The Assyrians lost their might and power after their foray against Judah because the LORD killed 185,000 of their soldiers in one night (cf. 2Kings 19:35). The Babylonians would rise to superpower status and decimate the Assyrians. Sennacherib would be murdered by his two sons while he was worshipping in the house of his god, Nisroch (cf. Isaiah 37:38).

Verse 2 (focuses on the Jews)

– The Jews cried out to the LORD, their covenantal God, for help in their time of need. They asked Him for grace (that is, blessings) rather than mercy (that is, no punishment). They knew that they had not done anything to deserve the actions of the Assyrians. The Jews declared that they had waited for the LORD.

The Lord's timing is always perfect. Trials are sent to test His people so that they may be strengthened in their faith!

The second part of this verse uses the second person whereas the first part of the verse uses the first person plural. Isaiah cried out to the LORD to be the arm of the Jews every morning. The arm represented

strength. Then Isaiah shifted to the first person in the conclusion of the verse when he said that the LORD was "our" salvation in the time of trouble. The Jews would look to no one but the LORD for help. This is faith! It is during times of calamities that the believer's faith is revealed!

Verse 3-4 (focus on the LORD)

– The LORD responded to the cry of the Jews. The two verses described what the LORD would do to the Assyrians. At the noise of the tumult, the people fled. The tumult could be the death cries or the noise made by the LORD when He killed the 185,000 soldiers. When the LORD lifted Himself up, the nations would be scattered. This is the norm whenever the LORD rises to act against His enemies.

The spoils of the Assyrians, obtained through the conquests of other nations, would be lost. They would be gathered by the Jews like how the caterpillars and the locusts gathered. Caterpillars patiently devour what they consume while locusts come in great swarms and consume everything before them. These two imageries illustrate the total loss of the Assyrians' spoils to the Jews when they were forced to flee.

Verses 5-6 (focus on the Jews)

– The Jews praised the LORD for His deliverance and help. They declared that the LORD be exalted for He dwelleth on high. He is all powerful and sits in judgment as the Judge of all judges. All, including the mighty Assyrians, are in His sovereign control. The LORD had filled Zion with judgment and righteousness – in other

words, the justice of God would prevail in His dealings with His people in Zion. His righteousness would be the basis of His judgment over Zion. The entire city would be protected by God based upon His judgment and righteousness. In other words, if Zion sinned the LORD would deal similarly with Zion.

Wisdom (the application of knowledge) and knowledge underlined the reign of Hezekiah, the king of Judah. He brought peace and stability to Judah because of His obedience to God's Word. Many turned to Christ. Enemies that attacked Judah would, like the Assyrians, experience the heavy hand of God. The LORD took care of Judah because of Hezekiah's obedience. Hezekiah's fear of the LORD was his greatest treasure, more precious than all the gold in Judah. The fear of God kept him from sinning against God. When the king obeyed God, the people would enjoy the blessings of God.

Verses 7-9 (focus on despair of the Jews) – The valiant ones of Judah, who were likely sent as ambassadors of peace to Assyria, cried when they were captured. Their mission was a failure. The Assyrian king sent Rabshakeh and more than 185,000 men to attack Judah. The Assyrians attacked the outlying cities and towns until they finally reached Jerusalem. There, they taunted the people inside the city to surrender.

The highways in Judah lay wasted; destroyed and deserted. Highways were the lifeline and main artery of every country. They linked all the major cities together for ease of travel. When they were destroyed,

allies could not come to help those under siege. This was a tactical move on the part of the Assyrians to destroy Judah, one city at a time. There was no movement from one city to another for all purposes including trade, pleasure and worship. The Assyrians broke the covenant -- likely the agreement made with Ahaz. They despised the cities, that is, ignored the strength and defences of the cities of Judah. They marched against Judah with impunity. They would listen to no one. They were determined to attack Judah and destroy her at all costs!

The earth, devastated by the Assyrians, mourned for the deaths of her citizens. The fruitfulness of the land was destroyed. Lebanon was shamed and hewn down - the beautiful cedars of Lebanon were probably plundered by the Assyrians. Sharon which was a place of great beauty and fertility stretching from the south of Mount Carmel to Joppa along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea (nearly 80 km long) had become a wilderness. The plains of Sharon were stripped bare by the Assyrian marauders. Bashan and Carmel famous for their good fertile pastures lay in ruins, bankrupted of all fruits. The Assyrians probably took all the harvests of the Jews to feed their huge armies.

Verses 10-13 (focus on the LORD) – The LORD would rise to the aid of His people, the Jews, with perfect timing. Not too early that His people might not see His hand of deliverance nor too late that His people would be crushed by the weight of the trial. The LORD would glorify Himself by His works and deliverance

of the Jews. What a tremendous revelation!

This is not arrogance but blessed truthfulness and reality. The LORD is the Creator of heaven and earth and all that dwell therein! He has the right to glorify Himself above all things. That is why sinful men, including believers, must never rob God of His glory. If we need to glory, let it be in our infirmities as declared by the Apostle Paul in 2Corinthians. The people of God will see the glory of God through His deliverance and give Him all the praise and glory that God alone deserves.

The wrath of God was definitely against the Assyrians. What the Assyrians thought to be the spoils of war, with their devious and secretive plotting to enlarge their territories against Judah, were nothing but chaff to God. Chaff is the husk of the grain of wheat. It is light and worthless. Instead of reaping the rewards of their plunder, the Assyrians would reap nothing but stubble (dry straw). It was completely futile for the Assyrians to fight against the Jews. The breaths of the Assyrians were like fire but they would burn themselves instead. Their breath of threat and anger against the Jews would boomerang. Their very words and wrath would be used by the LORD to punish them.

The Assyrians would be like the burnings of lime, that is, they would be destroyed like the chalk stone burned inside the furnace to make powdery lime. They would be turned into powdery lime! The next illustration described the destruction of the Assyrians, like a man cutting off the

thorns in his field and casting them into the fire to be burned as useless thrash! Thorny bushes are harmful to mankind and they are to be destroyed with impunity! The Assyrians would be treated as such by the LORD. It is true that of all the superpowers that ruled Israel, the worst was the nation of Assyria. They were known for their atrocities and methods of torture.

Let all from afar hear what the LORD had done to the Assyrians. Let those within reach acknowledge the might and power of God. The focus is on the LORD who is able to succour His people who cry out to Him for deliverance.

Verses 14-19 (focus on the Jews) – Those who did not have faith and had sinned were afraid. In every city, including Jerusalem, there were both believers and sinners. The believers exercised faith, trusted in the LORD and had no fear. The sinners did not know the LORD and were sorely afraid. The hypocrites pretended to have faith and a deep sense of religion but were, in fact, bankrupt in their soul for they never really walked with or knew God. The calamity brought on by the invading Assyrians would expose their hypocrisy. They were the ones who would join the Assyrians in their fate! Therefore two rhetorical questions were posed to them in verse 14: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

The contrast between the sinners and the saints is captured in **Isaiah 33:15-16**: "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: his place of defence *shall be* the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters *shall be* sure." The saints are the ones who have walked righteously and spoken uprightly. The lives of the righteous are beyond reproach even when the enemies examine their lives from inside out. The speech of the righteous is upright for their yea is yea and their nay is nay! They are the opposite of the hypocrites in their lives and their speech. The righteous despise the gain of the oppressions. Those who obtain their wealth through devious and wicked means are hated by the righteous. The righteous will have nothing to do with such evil men and their spoils. The righteous will not accept bribes. They make sure that their hands are always clean in the sight of God. They shake their hands from holding bribes. As long as their hands shake (shake something off), no bribes will stick to their hands. The righteous will not hear of blood (how to kill and murder). They will not participate in the plans of murderers. They will guard their eyes to ensure that they do not see evil. They will not allow their eyes to cause them to sin, for example, pornography.

Such a righteous one will surely dwell on high and not with the Assyrians in everlasting burnings. On high means safety and he will be untouchable. He will be secure. His place of defence shall be the munitions

(stronghold of the rocks). The righteous is safe, sure and surrounded all round by the fortress of rocks. There will be no lack of food for bread will be given to him. There will be ample supply of water so that he will never be thirsty.

At the end of his life, his eyes will see the king in his beauty, that is, the believer will surely be in heaven and in the presence of God. The far off land that the righteous will see is a reference to heaven. The believer will go home to be with the LORD. He will meditate terror, that is, recall the times when the LORD has delivered him from all the terrors faced.

The Assyrian scribe, who recorded the victories of the Assyrians, was nowhere to be found. The receiver, who probably counted the spoils of war after receiving them, would have nothing to receive since the Assyrians had been soundly defeated. The one who counted towers (planned, plotted and strategized before a battle) was also gone as the defeat of the Assyrians had turned their plans into nothing.

The Jews would not see the fierce Assyrians again. The Assyrians were a people of deeper speech, that is, they spoke in the Syrian tongue that the Jews did not understand. They would become a mere memory after their sound defeat by the LORD.

Verses 20-24 (focus on Jerusalem) – The city of God was located in Zion. It was called the city of solemnities. It was where the solemn feasts were celebrated since the day that Solomon built the Temple for the LORD. It was the spiritual focus of the

whole world. It was where the LORD had made His home. The inhabitants would see for themselves the safety of Jerusalem. It was a city of quietness where the inhabitants could live in peace. It was a tabernacle that would not be taken down by the Assyrians. Not one stake shall be removed. Not one cord shall be broken. The city would be kept intact. The inhabitants of Zion need not fear but trust in the LORD.

The city of Zion, where the Temple was located, would be to the inhabitants a place of broad rivers and streams. In it was safety and security. No galley or oars or gallant ship shall pass by, that is, no enemy ships shall come in and disturb the peace in Zion. Water was the life source for cities so cities were often built near or over a water source. At the same time, rivers and streams were often how enemies would creep in after blockading the harbours, or sail in unaware to capture strong cities. But this would not be the case in Zion for the LORD would keep it safe.

The LORD would be the judge and lawgiver of Zion. In other words, the righteousness of the LORD would prevail. If Judah remained faithful to the LORD, she would be kept safe. The LORD would punish Judah Himself if Judah were to sin against the LORD and refuse to repent of her sins.

The LORD is no respecter of person. The LORD is the King of the Jews and He would save Zion from its enemies.

Zion was the capital city of the LORD for He ruled and reigned in

Zion. Judah was the nation of the LORD where the LORD was King.

The Assyrians would not succeed in their destruction of Zion. Their tacklings (ropes) were loose so they could not strengthen their mast to sail the ships. They could not bring in more soldiers or more supplies to feed the soldiers. Their sail could not be used at all. The support for their troops would not be forthcoming. The Assyrians would become helpless prey. Even the lame would be able to defeat them. This showed how the LORD would decimate and render the Assyrians utterly helpless. Their pride and arrogant boasting would be nothing before the LORD.

The inhabitants of Zion shall not say that they were sick. They would soundly defeat the mighty Assyrians. The LORD would strengthen them. The LORD would forgive their iniquity, as evidenced by the LORD's defeat of the mighty Assyrians. AMEN.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Isaiah 33:1-24

TUESDAY: Isaiah 33:1-24

WEDNESDAY: Isaiah 33:1-24

THURSDAY: Isaiah 33:1-24

FRIDAY: Isaiah 33:1-24.

Discussion Questions

1. Are you fearful of what may happen when evil men try to destroy you because you stand up for Christ? Please explain.

2. If you lose your job because of your witness for Christ or if a believer dies in prison alone because of his work for Christ, would you say that the LORD has failed to protect you and him? Please explain.

3. Do you agree that when the Board of Elders is godly, then the church is godly, and when the BOE is carnal and sinful, then the people are carnal and sinful? Please explain.

4. What would be your response if you seek peace with a party but the party seeks war and desires to destroy you, your work and your ministry?

5. How do you feel about the impending judgment that will befall the enemies of Christ who are, at this time, making your life miserable? Please elaborate.

6. Do you agree with the following statement: like the city of Jerusalem, every church is made up of saints and sinners? Can you tell which group you belong to? Please explain.

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