

Wednesday, November 22, 2023 • Read Isaiah 29:15–24

Questions from the Scripture text: Upon whom is the third woe pronounced—what do they seek to hide from Whom (v15)? What have they done to the truth (v16)? What is it like, for them to speak or think about God this way? In the picture in v17, what will the Lord transform into what? And how will they come to see their own previous work (v17c)? Who will be enabled to observe and enjoy this (v18–19)? What three types of people will be removed to foster this culture-wide revival of true worship (v20)? What harm had the “watchers for iniquity” specifically done (v21)? How does v22 remind us of how far back the Lord’s commitment to do this goes? What will be the effect upon Jacob (corporately) of seeing this reformation, revival, and redemption (v23)? What change will this mean for individuals (v24)?

What transformations will come, in the great work of the Lord? Isaiah 29:15–24 prepares us for the first serial reading in public worship on the Lord’s Day. In these ten verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **in the great work of the Lord, His transformation of the creation will correspond to His transformation of His people.**

Pre-transformation blindness, v15–16. It is an insanity of blindness for man to attempt to manipulate God. But whenever we are deceptive with others or even with ourselves, we are greatly mistaking just Who it is that we are actually dealing with. YHWH is. He simply is. Therefore, He is everywhere, sees everything, knows everything, and is almighty. When we attempt to appear better than we are, we are the ones asking the questions at the end of v15: “Who sees us?” and “Who knows us?” But this ignorance turns reality upside down, inside out, and backwards (v16).

O, dear reader, let us not give in to the desire to appear better before others than we are, or the delusion that appearing so makes it so!

Re-formation, v17–18. The One Who created and formed all things (v16) now declares that He will soon re-created and re-form. Lebanon was a great and wild forest, but it is has nothing for Him in His power to cultivate it (v17b). Man’s own carefully cultivated work (“fruitful field,” v17c), will itself be considered wild by comparison.

But, praise God, the re-creation that He is describing here in terms of plant life will be surpassed by what He does in those whose spiritual deafness and blindness were exposed in v15–16 (cf. v10–12). Now, the deaf will hear, and the blind shall see—specifically with respect to “the words of the book” (v18). Those who deserved to be destroyed in God’s wrath will instead be changed by God’s redemptive mercy.

Has this happened with you? Have you been given eyes to see your bankruptcy of spirit, and the divine riches that are offered you in Christ? Have you come to count as worthless any “good” intentions or works that came from you apart from Christ, and to marvel that He Who is your righteousness before God has begun producing true good in your heart and your life?

Revival, v19–21. v19a literally says that “the lowly increase/add to joy in YHWH.” The idea here is that the Lord takes those who are lowly and uses them to create a multitude of worshippers. These may be those who are lowly in the eyes of men (cf. 1Cor 1:26), those who are lowly now before God thanks to the eye-opening in v18 (or, likely, both). The rejoicing is not only multiplied but purified. It is “in the Holy One of Israel” (v19c).

And the Lord is eliminating many who have hindered the purity and unity of His people: bullies (v20a), mockers (v20b), and gossips (v20c). Gossips (“watchers for iniquity”) are especially described as doing harm by their words:

- they can turn, instantly, non-offenders into offenders (v21a),
- they short-circuit due process (v21b),
- their useless words keep those who would obtain justice from getting it (v21c).

Let us seek from the Lord to multiply and purify His church—and particularly that neither we, nor anyone else in her, would be bullies, mockers, or especially gossips!

Completion/consummation, v22–24. God’s intent to redeem must come to its fulfillment. It began with His redeeming Abraham and His promising Abraham the salvation of all who are in his Seed (v22a). Despite all of the wickedness and blindness and pride in Jacob, God has committed Himself to saving. Which will win out between their wickedness and God’s determination to save? God’s determination (v22b–c)! Not only will the Lord bring the reformation and revival prophesied in v17–21, but His gathering other sinners into Israel (v23a–b) will provoke even Israel to believe (v23c–e, cf. Rom 11:11–12).

All Israel (from the nations and from Jacob) will be saved, not by their works, but by the Lord’s conversion (v24). God has determined to save, and He will bring His purpose to pass. Let us do whatever He has given us to do in the hope and confidence that He Who has given us the privilege of serving will be sure to employ that service in bringing to pass all of His redeeming will and promise!

What, about yourself, are you afraid others might learn? Who already knows those things? But what are His intentions toward you? Where, in history/Scripture, can you most see these intentions toward you? What are some evidences, in your life, of His bringing you into Christ? Why can you be sure that He will complete what He began there? What role(s) has He given you in your home? What role(s) has He given you in His church? What can you be sure that your small role will ultimately participate in?

Sample prayer: Lord, we thank You that You do not do to us as we deserve or leave us as we are. But forgive us for how we have thought that we were making a pretty good show of ourselves—as if we could deceive You, along with deceiving others and ourselves. Forgive us for being proud of our fruitful fields that were really just wild forests. Forgive us for being self-impressed. Forgive us for how our desire for reformation and revival do not reflect Yours in the Scripture—if we desire them at all. Forgive us for whatever manipulation, mocking, and gossip we have participated in, we think that a word here, and a word there, are a small thing—but we read in Your word that Your people must be delivered from such behavior. Forgive us that we have not loved You or Your church enough to devote ourselves to its good. O, forgive us and reform us and revive us, by Your grace, we ask, through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP32AB “What Blessedness” or TPH51C “God, Be Merciful to Me”

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Isaiah 29:15 through 24. These are God's words. Whoa, to those who seek deep to hide their council far from yahoo. And their works are in the dark. They say who sees us?

And who knows us? Surely you have things turned round. So, the potter be esteemed as the clay. For all the thing made say of him who made it, he did not make me or saw the thing formed, say of him who formed it, he has no understanding is it not yet to very little while to lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field?

And the fruitful field to be esteemed as a forest. And that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness. The humble also shall increase. Their joy in your way. And the poor among men shall rejoice.

And the holy one of israel. For the terrible one has brought to nothing. The scornful one is consumed. And all who watch for iniquity are cut off. Who make a man, an offender by a word. And lay a snare for him who reproves in the gate. And turn aside to the just by empty words.

Therefore, thus says, you always who redeemed, Abraham concerning the house of jacob. Jacob shall not now be ashamed. Nor shall his face. Now grow pale. But when he sees his children, The work of my hands in his midst. They will hallow my name. And hallow the, holy one of jacob.

And fear the god of Israel. These also who aired in spirit will come to understanding. And those who complained. We'll learn doctrine. So far, the reading of gods

inspired. And inherent twerk. As we come to the. Third. Of the six woes. In this section in the book of isaiah, we come to one.

That. And it's continually applicable to us. Because we are forgetful that we deal with the lord. And we tend to think too much in terms of what other people see of what other people think. And this is what leads us into the insanity of trying to appear better than we are.

Uh, we may Uh, we may buy Hiding our secret thoughts and How sinful? Uh, we are not that we should. Let everyone continually know what our secret thoughts are. Uh, but we may Become invested in trying to get people to think that we are better than we are. And actually starts to feel like we are better than we are.

We may actually tell ourselves. When we see that, which comes out of our flesh, Um, And we rationalize it to ourselves rather than mortifying it. I don't know if you have experienced that but it's a real danger for christians. As we have, sinful thoughts and sinful desires sinful inclinations, some of which will actually get to by the end of this passage.

That is right now before us But there's a danger force of trying to rationalize those. Come up with biblical arguments, why it's really not so bad. And so, we Uh, we deceive others and we deceive ourselves. But whom can we never trick? Whom can we never deceive? We can't trick god.

And so, if we are asking ourselves this question, who sees us, who knows us? Or to put it more personally for each of you my dear children, who sees me, who knows me? And to have the To be emotionally invested in the the what other people see being different than what we truly are.

Is to forget the one with whom, we primarily interact in all of our existence and all of our life. This is one of the ways that worship is helpful for us. Our family worship times, if you are worshipping god from the heart and these times, your private worship times, which you ought to have.

I ought to be. Uh, more. Um, intentional about asking after and helping you have. Our public worship times. In those times, we have dealings with god and we pray that the holy spirit and has mercy would carry those dealings with god into our work times as well and to our thought, life and heart life.

Even in the rest of life. So that we will have this realization that we are always before the creator. Because if we ask the question, at the end of verse 15, Who sees me and who knows me? Then we are esteeming the potter as if he is like the clay.

We can deceive the clay. But we cannot to see if the potter. And if we ask that question, if we actually start to live in this investment of appearing, good, Then we are. Not deceiving, not only deceiving others and deceiving ourselves. But worst of all, forgetting god. And to forget god is to live life upside down inside out and backwards.

A human above all things, as someone who has created to be in the image of god, and to know and have relationship with god, And so, This really attacks the same. Um, the same pride. As the the second woe did in the first half of chapter 29. But it teaches us, it tells us That if we live in this proud way, Of wanting to appear.

Good, even to ourselves. Then, we're not just. Deceived about ourselves. We have a much more dread for a problem, dreadful problem. We're living according to a deception about god. That the potter is the same as the clay, that the creator. Is the same as. The creature. And so he asks those rhetorical questions to show the ridiculousness of thinking and living this way.

So the thing made say of him who made it, he did not make me. So the thing formed say of him who formed it, he has no understanding And then, He moves from creation. The formation of the world to recreation, which he describes as not yet a very little while.

And yet, for us. It's actually kind of a trick question. Because to us, it seems like quite a long while. It has after all been 2,500 years since this was written. That seems like a long time to us. But as he not there, by exposing the difference between god and demand, Yeah.

A few months is a very long time. For a five-year-old. To a 47 year old. It's A tiny little blip on the radar. Now, how about? The god who is from all eternity. And who knows the end from the beginning. And who is planned the glorious work that this passage actually concludes with and is moving everything towards there.

In his redeeming purpose that comes out of electing love. Like we've been hearing in the the roman's passages 2500 years. It's not a long time. For such a god. For us. Because years are on average 70. Or if i strength 80, we should probably learn to number our days so that we can get a heart of wisdom.

Not just the wisdom that says, Let me make the most of the time that god has assigned to me and given to me in this world. But the wisdom that says, The everlasting and eternal god. He must be the one with whom i interact and the one about whom Um, and unto whose glory all things are.

And so he he even asked us, is it not yet a very little while? To lebanon and here, lebanon is Um, Is the greatest forest that That they know about on on the earth and To them. It would be this wild untamed place. Uh, where you would send hearty men to go to cut down.

Great, big trees. When you need the sort of lumber that cannot be found in civilization to bring it back and build a palace. Or to build a temple or something like that. And so he says, to Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field. A cultivated garden. And so he takes something that to to them seems like this wild untameable Uh, giant place.

Those kind of stuff that would be an epic tales for us. He says. You know. God. We'll just cultivate it like a garden. Uh, he'll turn it into a fruitful field. And when god does his great works in the recreation, And this is really looking forward to. To new creation, even Even as we We're thinking about in psalm 104 last week and the lord sending forth his spirit and renewing the face of the earth.

There's a wonderful parallel in God's providence To psalm 104. And and this here. Um when the new creation comes, we'll marvel at the great work of god and we'll look at all of our works. And think of them as wild and unrefined. And that's the second part of verse 17 or the third part of verse 17 there.

Um, The fruitful field will be esteemed as a forest. When we see the work of god, a new creation. We'll look back. And we'll say, man has made in the image of god. And, and certainly, there were many things, many, many ways in which, he, he displayed creativity, and, and he showed Ability to do some things but man's fruitful field.

Man's cultivated garden in hindsight on at the last will be esteemed as a forest as untamed and unrefined and emphasize. And rough. And so, Uh, god is proclaiming the greatness of his work in creation. And in providence, in light of how it will all be known to have been when it comes time for new creation.

That's what he's That's what he's doing in verse 17. But praise god, new creation is not reserved just for the face of the earth. New creation is, especially seen. Somebody run out and help your mother. For somebody's.

Freshwater or never mind. Thank you. Come back.

New creation is, especially seen. In those who are new creatures, those who are in price, Those who were death but have been given ears to hear. Those who were blind, but have been given eyes to see Those to whom the book has been opened. Now in verse 18, when he says the death shall hear the words of the book, he's taking us back to when the lord had blinded them in judgment as we all deserve.

Uh, in verse 9, and not only blinded them in their own hearts, but kept from them, the the prophets and given their profits. Also to, to be fools. Verse 10. And verse. Uh, so that verse 11 and verse 12, the whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed.

So the book is sealed, but you bring it and you bring it to a little literate. One, he can't open it to read. And then, Even if it were unsealed, it would be delivered verse 12 to an illiterate one. You can't read it, even if it's open. And there are people like that people who don't have the bible at all, and then people who in the blindness and deafness of their hearts, they have the bible, but all they read is their own spiritual ideas.

And so, the lord When he describes this new creation, work and turn in terms of forests versus Uh, versus gardens. He then describes the the greatness of the new creation work especially in regeneration, that is given to sinners. Rebirth. So generation is that has given to sinners. So that they can hear so that they can see in verse 18.

And so god uses those who are blind and those who are deaf and those who are poor, and this is probably poor in spirit, but also poor in the eyes of the world. As he says in the end of first corinthians 1, you know, look at you. It's not many impressive people in the church, He uses them as the pool from which He multiplies worshipers.

And so there's this marvelous picture of what god is doing in the gospel age and what god is bringing. To fulfillment and to climax by means of the gospel age in this worldwide, revival In which the worshipers. Of of the lord of the holy, one of israel are increased and they rejoice in him.

Verse 19. And as the lord does this, there are Uh, three types of people then who must be eliminated along the way. And three types of people that we may find ourselves being in various ways. That we will want him to have eliminated from us. So that we will have a proper place.

Just as he says, seek peace with all men. And the holiness without which you will not see the lord. In hebrews chapter 12, following upon how one of the things that he does with his disciplining us is to produce an us, the peaceful fruit of righteousness. And so there is this work of god that is, that is coming to the last day and sometimes he does that work by means of discipline, first, half of Hebrews, 12 and often, praise god.

He does that work by means of preaching second half of Hebrews 12 and what he does in the assembly at Zion by the voice of christ, from heaven, addressing people on earth as he prepares for us that unshakable kingdom. Talking about the same thing. And now, here in isaiah 29, talking about the same thing.

The terrible one is brought to nothing. That we eliminate bullies. Those who use fear to control others. You know, whether that's Physical terror or fear, or intimidation or manipulation, or verbal or social. Um, you know, those who are trying to impose their will upon others He's gonna eliminate them.

In order that Uh, that the church walks instead according to the fear of the lord. Not manipulated by men, but according to the word, Of the lord. So the terrible one is brought to nothing. The scornful one is consumed. The one who is a mocker, the one who continually belittles, Uh, not just others generally speaking.

But belittles, the glory of god, belittles, the grace of god, and the work that god is doing in others. The kind of person who, Only has sarcastic, and negative things to think. And to say about That also must be removed from among god's people as revival comes. So that the the people will be a people who are obsessed with the greatness of God's work, as we rejoice in the god, who did that work.

So as the deaf and the blind, and the humble are being, uh, are the pool from which god is giving those who can hear. And those who can see and those who are lifted up and to our rich in the lord and says they have their rejoicing in the holy one of Israel here removes bullies.

He removes mockers. And then the ones for whom he was reserves the most words here. Here, removes gossips. The watchers for iniquity. And you think at first these these might have been good people but they're not. Um, They're not a pointed by god to watch for real sin. They are self-appointed people.

To talk about how bad. Others are. And you can see that by the description of what these watchers for iniquity, these discernment people. They, you know, they always present themselves as discerning. They make a man, an offender by a word. He wasn't an offender before they made him an offender.

And they just, In their word choice in their vocabulary. They adjust an offhand comment. The conversation wasn't about it, they didn't come and, you know, full-blown, Um, The trash, the guy. No, they are way more skilled than that. One turn of phrase.

Uh, Uh, one word of emphasis in a sentence erased eyebrow. Unknowing. Uh drawing of the face together as they say something and then they just go on to something else, but what if they've done With just one word, they turned that person. Whoever it was implied about. Into an offender.

In the eyes of the one to whom they're talking gossips are Very, Very, Harmful. They lay a snare for him who reproves in the gate. Gossip's especially like to bring down. Those whom god has Appointed as authorities and given to households, or gossip about one of the parents and the mom or the dad or in congregations, the gossip about the elder or in the civil sphere, those are gossip of that magistrates.

Remember authority and all of the institutions that god has ordained is from god and for the good of the people. And it's extremely damaging when someone who's job, it is to reprove others. Is. Is entangled. Unable to do the work unable to provide the good for which god has provided them.

Why? Because a gossip laid a snare. And if the reprovor in the gate is missing, In this particular case in the context with these poor and humble whom god as gathering into his people, there are the ones who depend it.

They are the ones who dependent.

They are the ones who depended upon the reprovor in the gate. To give them justice to defend their cause And so, those who undermine, Uh, Legitimate authorities. Who have been provided by god, do much harm, they need to be removed if you're going to have this, revival and reformation that is being described here.

And of course, The ultimate revive of hondreformation when god gathered the full congregation from all the ages. In the new heavens, in the new earth, there are going to be no bullies Then there are going to be no mockers and they're going to be no gossips at all. They turn aside, the just By empty words, i think we've said enough there but you can see the harm there and it's not all there for us to think to ourselves of all those whom we know to be gossips.

Although that's not a wrong application, it's just a secondary application. It's good for us to recognize those who do such things that we may both guard. Our Um, How much we interact with them? But also, so that we may remind our hearts not to give weight to their words.

Let us have our opinions of others, incorrectly and unjustly. Um, Changed. But the first application of course, is for us to guard our speech. And the way we speak about others, And especially the way we speak about authorities. And that we don't. Give our opinions. On. Um, who is to blame in various situations last week, turn aside the just By empty words.

Now, how will it be that? Uh, deafblind. And slowly. Uh, become this glorious assembly, but I got by in the new creation. And the answer, of course, is by the work of god. By the work of god, he Uh, y'all way redeemed. Abraham. And so you have the character.

Of the house of Jacob on one side. Which by the time we've gotten to this point in Isaiah. Uh, we're not. Um, You know, we have no illusions remaining that. Israel is a particularly righteous people. But we have the intention of God and the promise of God and the other hand.

And that's what? That's what rules, what wins out. Between what the people are like. And, and how can they come to this conclusion? That's being described here. It's because the determination of the God who says concerning the house of Jacob. Jacob shall not now be ashamed nor shall his face.

Now, grow pale. Now, his he is about to be ashamed of his face is growing pale in the attack of Assyria and later on. In the exile of the southern kingdom. Um, To Babylon. But here, it's in light of. The last day. And that. God's judgments and discipline and chastening and time.

Uh, not being a final word. When it comes to his people. But, but part of a work that is aiming. At saving them. And it describes something in verses, 23 and 24. Um, That we are coming in coming soon to in Romans 11. 11 and 12 and how God saving deaf-blind and lowly.

Uh, which is really going to mean. You know, for us includes includes the gentiles and the gathering into the nations and Jacob looking around and seeing. Uh, those worshipping God, who the only explanation for it, is that they are the work of God's hands. And responding to that. Uh, by Coming to the Lord themselves.

And this idea that by saving the nation's, the Lord would provoke his people to jealousy. And save. A multitude also from among them. It says Jacob when he sees his children. Uh, verse 22 into verse 23. Jacob when he sees his children. The work of my hands in his midst.

So when he sees that living God is of such grace and such power As. As to save to make children for Jacob from the nations instead. They will. Hello. My name. And hallow the. Holy one of Jacob and fear the God of Israel. These also who ailed in spirit.

So, Jacob himself, then. Will come to understanding. Those who complained? Which is. Uh, you know, if you are writing a Historic memoir of the nation of Israel. You like title it that those who complained But praise God. The conclusion. Will learn doctrine. We'll learn the teaching of God. Because that's not just the story of Israel, that's the story of everything.

God, save sinners. By his. Grace. That is not only over against what they deserve. But his almighty power. Over against their deafness. They're blindness. They're loneliness. He takes those who are wild untamed. And he does a recreating work. And makes them as it work. Cultivated worshippers of God and rejoiceers, and God.

So, let us to already. Rejoice in God and worship him. Desiring that he would be glorified as the God who has done this by his grace. And even. That others would see what God has done. And that he would use that as part of his work and of grace.

In them as well. And let's pray. Our gracious. God and our heavenly father. We pray that you would keep us from the Insanity of a practical atheism, in which We think that what we are like is hidden from you. But help us to have our whole life as an interacting with you.

So that we Would not. Be self-deceived about. The fleshliness that remains. In us, but we would also have have eyes to see Not only your power. Sanctify us. And to finish the work that you started. Um, but Will your purpose your loving intention To bring that work to completion.

And so we look to you, oh God. Not only for the work that you are doing. And each one of our lives. But we pray o Lord for your churches. And our day. For revival and reformation. And we pray for the great. Reviving and reforming work that you are doing in history as a whole.

We pray for the coming of Christ. We pray for the resurrection. Of the redeemed for their appearing glorious. In soul and body. With him and you being glorified and enjoyed. Among them forever. Help us o Lord with the specifics of manipulating and mocking and gossiping. That we would mortify these from ourselves.

Even as you are eliminating them, ultimately. From among your people. Help us in all these things, by your spirit who gave us. This portion of your word, And now for his work, we ask in our hearts in our lives. To write this portion of your word upon our hearts.

For, we ask it in Jesus name. Amen.