

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 65

May 17, 2020



The Transfiguration by Raphael, c. 1500

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah
Message Sixty-Five
THE NATURE OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS
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Isaiah 28:23–29

²³Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. ²⁴Doth he that ploweth to sow plow continually? doth he continually open and harrow his ground? ²⁵When he hath levelled the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and put in the wheat in rows, and the barley in the appointed place, and the spelt in the border thereof? ²⁶For his God doth instruct him aright, and doth teach him. ²⁷For the fitches are not threshed with a sharp threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. ²⁸Bread grain is ground; for he will not be always threshing it: and though the wheel of his cart and his horses scatter it, he doth not grind it. ²⁹This also cometh forth from Jehovah of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom (ASV, 1901).

INTRODUCTION

Isaiah is now providing a message to comfort. He is first calling the people to listen to what he has to say. He will go on to say six aspects of the Lord's judgment as they relate to farming. They are divided into two sections Planting or sowing and harvesting or reaping.

1. Planting
2. Plowing and Planting
3. God's Instructions
4. Harvesting
5. Threshing Various Grains
6. God's Instructions

This is a parable from God using the imagery of farming to explain the way God inflicts correction on His children. The methods of threshing the various species are directly from God. This parable is very appropriate and filled with a lot of wisdom. The moral of the parable is: God's admonitions are likened to plowing, and His punishments to sowing. Just as a farmer will not plow continuously without planting, so God will not warn endlessly until He is ready to carry out His threats. However, the purpose of His punishment is to prompt sinners to realize their sins, and repent. The degree of punishment varies according to the people's receptivity. Some sinners are like cumin and caraway seeds; they require a minimum of "threshing," i.e., punishment, to achieve the desired result. Others are like wheat, and require more "threshing to make them repent. But even wheat is not threshed out endlessly in order to produce flour, for constant over threshing can damage the grain without producing flour. Therefore, the threshing must have reasonable limits. So, too, even though God may punish His children harshly His purpose is to improve, not to destroy. This parable is shifting to what a farmer would do to prepare

for the crops to what God is doing in our lives to bring us into belief and production according to His Word. The skill that the farmer has is given from God, as is every good and perfect gift.

PAY ATTENTION

Isaiah 28:23

²³Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech (ASV, 1901).

The prophet now begins to alert the nation Israel by asking them cordially in four direct requests. Isaiah strongly emphasizes and repeats this call by using four independent statements. His emphasis comes from the fact that the scoffers have been mocking continuously at his prophetic message directly from God's Word.

1. Give ear
2. Hear his voice
3. Hearken (give respectful attention)
4. Hear his speech

A preface like this in a kind manner requiring special attention and thought, was appropriate when instruction was to be presented in a parabolic form. There are at least three other examples of how this request for the people to pay attention is voiced. It is mostly found in the wisdom literature and the prophets. Similarly, in the New Testament Jesus declares to the seven Churches of Asia; *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches (Revelation 2:28).*

Psalm 49:1–4

¹Hear this, all ye peoples; Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world, ²Both low and high, Rich and poor together. ³My mouth shall speak wisdom; And the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. ⁴I will incline mine ear to a parable (ASV, 1901).

Psalm 78:1–4

¹Give ear, O my people, to my law: Incline your ears to the words of my mouth. ²I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, ³Which we have heard and known, And, our fathers have told us. ⁴We will not hide them from their children, Telling, to the generation to come the praises of Jehovah, And, his strength, and his wondrous works that he hath done (ASV, 1901).

Hosea 5:1

¹Hear this, O ye priests, and hearken, O house of Israel, and give ear, O house of the king; for unto you pertaineth the judgment; for ye have been a snare at Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor (ASV, 1901).

PLOWING DOES NOT LAST FOREVER

Isaiah 28:24

²⁴Doth he that ploweth to sow plow continually? doth he continually open and harrow his ground (ASV, 1901)?

Every day the farmer ploughs the fields in preparation to sow his crops. Through the ploughing he is preparing the ground for planting. Which, is the whole reason for ploughing. Sometimes he may plow for a whole day, but he does not plough every day in the year. He has other work to do besides ploughing which will be mentioned; such as breaking of dirt clods, sowing seed, and threshing the corn after it is ripe, and reaped, and gathered. This is a process with several stages.

Isaiah uses this as an illustration that the Lord, like a ploughman, has different sorts of work too. He is not always doing one and the same thing, and particularly, that he would not be always admonishing and threatening men, and making preparation for his judgments. Sooner or later He will execute the judgments of which He has been warning (*plowing*). Isaiah is trying to teach, hopefully that the ears of sinners may be opened to receive instruction, and it may be applied to the work of the Spirit of God upon men's hearts, by the ministry of the word. The heart of man is like the *fallow ground*, hard and obdurate, barren and unfruitful; the ministry of the word is the *plough*, and ministers are the *ploughmen*; but it is the spirit of God that makes their words convicting to the mind, and the pricking of the conscience.

First, the Lord breaks up His ground by cutting into it, and upheaving it with His forceful effort. God does this by His Word. He also does not continually do it endlessly. That is because the breaking of the surface is not the end desired, and so the farmer further breaks up the clods of soil into finer pieces. He breaks and breaks, for it is by this that His land is made fertile, as you and I, by a corresponding painful process, ever making us smaller in our own eyes, more submissive, and so, finally aware of our sinful condition so we can then be fruitful for Him and His kingdom. God too will not warn forever. He has a limit as to when He will stop warning and act in Divine judgment.

This is a common theme throughout the Scripture. Other examples where a prophet has described the hard heart are Jeremiah. 4:3 and 23:29. Consider our Lord's agricultural description of the receptivity of receiving God's word.

Matthew 13:1-9

¹The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. ²And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. ³And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; ⁴and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: ⁵some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: ⁶and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had not root, they withered away. ⁷And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: ⁸but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. ⁹Who hath ears to hear, let him hear (KJV).

PLOWING COMES TO AN END

Isaiah 28:25

²⁵When he hath levelled the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and put in the wheat in rows, and the barley in the appointed place, and the spelt in the border thereof (ASV, 1901)?

The farmer has broken up the soil; He will also show care and concern over it. Then on the broken levelled surface He scatters the various seeds from which He will produce His harvest. *doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin.* They, are all carefully sown in rows, and not scattered or just broadcast. Then the barley, and finally the coarse spelt, or rye. The farmer does His work carefully and according to plan, with proper regard to place and method and the different crops to be grown. Likewise, through various blessings and punishments God is preparing human hearts to be receptive to the seed of the Word. The act of sowing requires knowledge and skill because of the variety of seeds, and each seed requires its own specific treatment and appropriate place. All must be planned beforehand and then worked out accurately, diligently, and neatly. As such the parable gives a picture of an attractive and well-cared-for garden with various plants, colors, and all in perfect arrangement.

Likewise, the kingdom of God is like a beautiful garden, in which a great variety of nations, faiths, and cultures reflect the glory of the Lord. Salvation is not the specific privilege of the chosen nation Israel. In fact, it is promised and prepared for all nations, even to Egypt and Assyria (Genesis 12:3; Isaiah 19:19–25), through pruning and fruit bearing, through punishment and blessing. God's mandate has been given to mankind, that is, to dominate and cultivate the earth (Genesis 1:27–29). He teaches humanity how to till the ground and to preserve the garden in the right way. Therefore, all people must humble themselves before God and praise Him. The leaders in this instance of Jerusalem have to realize their foolishness and stop scoffing.

GOD IS OUR INSTRUCTOR

Isaiah 28:26

²⁶For his God doth instruct him aright, and doth teach him (ASV, 1901).

This view of man is that He is God's only species who sows seeds. No other creature on the earth does this. That is because it is God who has taught him and the wheat as an example grows nowhere without human care. It never appears spontaneously and if it is left alone, it dies out. The continuous care of it continues to its harvest. This is a general statement that man's knowledge of agriculture is a gift given to him of God. Man does not proceed in his work on his own, for unaided he would not know what to do.

The farmer knows what he is doing. He is not hoping vainly that the attempted procedures he follows will result in a good crop. He knows from God what he should do, and therefore acts accordingly. Scoffers who ridiculed Isaiah and God's Word might think that there was no rhyme or reason to what God was doing. They would be far wiser if, instead of questioning what Isaiah taught them, they were to acknowledge their own ignorance of God's ways and would submit to His just judgments. They by acknowledging them to be ways of righteousness and judgment would be on the path to salvation.

All the prophet is emphasizing is that God teaches people “the right way” (Hebrew *mishpat*) to do things. Although this term often carries the judicial meaning of “judgment, or justice,” here it is used in a non-judicial context to refer to the *proper way* of doing things in life. What has God’s word through the prophet been teaching his people to do in the right way?

The conclusion that explains all this activity is that God taught the farmer and us how to do these things the right way so that he would have a good crop. The central principle is simple and straightforward, that makes God the farmer who is plowing, smoothing out the soil, or planting various crops providing just behavior, goodness, love, kindness and humility.

Micah 6:8

⁸He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God (ASV, 1901).

THE LORD HATES FALSE PIETY.

Amos 5:21–27

²¹I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. ²²Yea, though ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. ²³Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. ²⁴But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

²⁵Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? ²⁶Yea, ye have borne the tabernacle of your king and the shrine of your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. ²⁷Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith Jehovah, whose name is the God of hosts (ASV, 1901).

God gave a strong denunciation of Israel’s religious hypocrisy by reminding them that their sacrifices and rituals had been an affront to Him throughout their history. From the very beginning their worship had been falsely directed. It was often not to Him, but to a golden calf, to the sun, moon, and stars, and to Molech and other false gods that many of them brought sacrifices and offerings during their forty years of wandering in the desert. Many of them and mostly the leaders were just pretending to serve God thinking the sins they perpetuated would not be noticed by them. The same holds true today. Many just can’t imagine that God sees the sins we do in our minds and out of other’s views.

GOD’S CHASTISEMENTS ARE PROPORTIONATE

Isaiah 28:27

²⁷For the fitches are not threshed with a sharp threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod (ASV, 1901).

A wooden sledge or a cart, drawn on wheels was used for threshing. From its bottom extended long iron teeth, and the top of the cart was filled with stones, to weigh it down. It was then drawn by

horses, or oxen, to and fro, over the sheaves of corn, that had been laid in proper order. The result was that the grain was separated from the husk. Since the grain of the fitches were more easily separated, such a heavy instrument was not used in threshing them: *neither is a cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin*; the cart-wheel of the above instrument was not turned upon the cummin, that being also more easily threshed, or beaten out, and therefore another method was used with these. Isaiah explains as follows: *but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod*; in like manner as corn is with us threshed out with a flail. So, the Lord proportions the chastisements and corrections of his people to the grace and strength that He gives them. He afflicts them either more gently, or more severely, as they are able to bear it. It is with some that He uses His staff and rod, and with others his threshing-instrument and cart-wheel; some being easier and others harder to be wrought upon by the afflictive dispensations of His Providence. This may point out the difference between the punishment of wicked men and the corrective chastisement of the saints.

THE LORD'S TENDERNESS IN AFFICTION

Isaiah 28:28–29

²⁸Bread grain is ground; for he will not be always threshing it: and though the wheel of his cart and his horses scatter it, he doth not grind it. ²⁹This also cometh forth from Jehovah of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom (ASV, 1901).

The *Bread grain is ground* and is bruised and ground in a mill: *because, or therefore, he will not ever be threshing it*; for there is another way of bringing it to flour, that so it may be made into bread, namely, by grinding it in a mill. Similarly, the farmer uses his discretion in threshing it; he won't thresh it too much, nor too long, no more than what is necessary to get out the grain, but will take care that he does not bruise and break it. So, it is as follows: *nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen*; though he makes use of the above threshing-instrument, drawn upon wheels by horses, or oxen, for the threshing out of wheat, barley, or rye, corn of which bread is made. He will take care that it is not crushed and spoiled by the wheels of the cart, or the feet of the horses, or oxen, going over it too often. These are all means by which it may be shown the tender regard of God in afflicting his own people. He will not always be chiding, striving, and contending with them, or be always angry, and ever afflicting, and, when he does afflict, it is in a tender and careful manner,

The Lord corrects and develops but he never ruins by excessive crushing. Mankind is not wiser than God. We act with the intelligence God gave us, in dealing with the fruit of our own work. So, to then God who gave us intelligence to act in a manner will teach of His higher purposes.

So, He will, for He is the Source of all true intelligence, wonderful in counsel, excellent wisdom. So, He prepares the ground of man's heart by trouble, conviction of sin, and sorrow, and then the good seed falls and fruit follows. But then follows the threshing, the tribulation or flail, has to be used to refine and prepare us so we can enter the kingdom of God. But in this the wise saint rejoices.

Romans 5:3–5

³And not only so, but we also rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh steadfastness; ⁴and steadfastness, approvedness; and approvedness, hope: ⁵and hope putteth

not to shame; because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us (ASV, 1901).

God knows that the end result of His divine farming is that He may bring forth much good fruit from His children.

NEXT MESSAGE: THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE PROPHECIED

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