

“Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads!”

“Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

The day will come when the estate of sin and misery will be exchanged
for an estate of redemption!

You can hear in chapter 35 language that foreshadows the coming of Jesus.

“The eyes of the blind shall be opened...
the lame shall leap like a deer.”

We are drawing near to the conclusion of the first part of Isaiah’s prophecy.

In chapters 38-39 the centrality of the Assyrian threat will be replaced by Babylon,
as prefigured already in chapters 13-14.

The Assyrian army is advancing on Jerusalem for the last time.

Hezekiah has made an alliance with Egypt,
and judgment draws near.

The six woes against the Egyptian alliance in chapters 28-35

set forth God’s purposes for all of redemptive history.

While the first five woes are directed against those who put their hope in Egypt,
the final woe is directed against Assyria itself.

The sixth woe is three chapters long,
but only 51 verses.

It has a chiastic structure

Title 33:1

1. Plea for grace and the salvation of Zion (33:2-6)
 2. Wasted highways/broken covenants; withering of Lebanon, Sharon, and Carmel (33:7-9)
 3. Yahweh exalted; Spirit, thorns, desolation, giving birth to stubble (33:10-16)
 4. The coming King and the feasts of Zion (33:17-24)
 5. The judgment of heaven and earth (34:1-4)
 - 4’. The coming of Yahweh and the feast of the sword (34:5-7)
 - 3’. Word of Yahweh; Spirit, thorns, desolation, wild animals (34:8-17)
 - 2’. Glory of Lebanon, Sharon and Carmel; Highway of holiness (35:1-9)
- 1’. Rejoicing in the salvation of Zion (35:10)

But we also see the same Trinitarian movement that we saw in 31-32:

Yahweh will arise and be exalted (33:5-16)

The King will come—a king identified as Yahweh (33:17-22)

And the Spirit will gather his people (34:16-17)

1. Plea for grace and the salvation of Zion (33:2-6)

*33 Ah, you destroyer,
who yourself have not been destroyed,
you traitor,
whom none has betrayed!
When you have ceased to destroy,
you will be destroyed;
and when you have finished betraying,
they will betray you.*

33:1 functions as the title of the final woe.

Woe to the destroyer and betrayer.

We have seen before that this is a description of Assyria (21:2; 24:16)

Assyria has betrayed and destroyed the nations.

Now in the same measure it has used, it will be judged.

But Isaiah lifts up his voice and pleads (verse 2)

² *O LORD, be gracious to us; we wait for you.*

*Be our arm every morning,
our salvation in the time of trouble.*

³ *At the tumultuous noise peoples flee;*

when you lift yourself up, nations are scattered,

⁴ *and your spoil is gathered as the caterpillar gathers;
as locusts leap, it is leapt upon.*

Our only hope is in the arm of the LORD.

He is our salvation.

But not only does Isaiah plead for salvation,
he also promises salvation (5-6).

⁵ *The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high;*

he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness,

⁶ *and he will be the stability of your times,*

abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge;

the fear of the LORD is Zion's^[a] treasure.

Zion—the city of God—will be filled with justice and righteousness.

All that God looked for will one day come to pass.

In the day that God himself brings abundance of salvation.

The second section then turns to Judah's present in 33:7-9.

2. Wasted highways/broken covenants; withering of Lebanon, Sharon, and Carmel (33:7-9)

⁷ *Behold, their heroes cry in the streets;
the envoys of peace weep bitterly.*

⁸ *The highways lie waste;
the traveler ceases.*

*Covenants are broken;
cities^[b] are despised;
there is no regard for man.*

⁹ *The land mourns and languishes;
Lebanon is confounded and withers away;
Sharon is like a desert,
and Bashan and Carmel shake off their leaves.*

The heroes cry in the streets.

The ambassadors weep bitterly, because Egypt has failed.

The highways lie waste; the traveler ceases.

The roads are cut. Egypt cannot come.

Covenants are broken, cities are despised; there is no regard for man.

The land itself mourns.

Lebanon is confounded and withers away.

Sharon is like a desert.

And Bashan and Carmel shake off their leaves.

Land and seed are desolate.

But the third section promises that God himself will arise (33:10-16)

3. Yahweh exalted; Spirit, thorns, desolation, giving birth to stubble (33:10-16)

¹⁰ *"Now I will arise," says the LORD,
"now I will lift myself up;
now I will be exalted.*

¹¹ *You conceive chaff; you give birth to stubble;
your breath is a fire that will consume you.*

¹² *And the peoples will be as if burned to lime,
like thorns cut down, that are burned in the fire."*

Verse 10 uses an eschatological "now" (Paul uses it this way regularly).

"Now I will arise"

"Now I will lift myself up"

"Now I will be exalted."

You can hear echoes of this in Jesus' words regarding the cross:

“When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself” (Jn 12:32)
Speaking to Assyria, God declares:
You conceive chaff; you give birth to stubble.
All of your vanity will turn to nothing.
Your own breath is a fire that will consume you.
Idolatry contains its own destruction within itself.
Sin is always self-destructive.
Recall 1:31, speaking of those who chased after the sacred oaks—
“The strong shall become tinder, and his work a spark,
and both of them shall burn together, with none to quench them.”

¹³ *Hear, you who are far off, what I have done;
and you who are near, acknowledge my might.*
¹⁴ *The sinners in Zion are afraid;
trembling has seized the godless:
“Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire?
Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?”*
¹⁵ *He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly,
who despises the gain of oppressions,
who shakes his hands, lest they hold a bribe,
who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed
and shuts his eyes from looking on evil,
¹⁶ he will dwell on the heights;
his place of defense will be the fortresses of rocks;
his bread will be given him; his water will be sure.*

Then God calls all from far and near to hear what he has done,
and acknowledge the might of Yahweh.
The holiness of the exalted Yahweh is not only a threat to the nations,
but it is also a threat to those “sinners in Zion.”
Zion—the city of the living God—has a mixed population.
The godly and the godless dwell in it.
But while the godly will rejoice in the judgment of God,
the godless will tremble.
“Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire?
Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?”
Remember that 29:1 spoke a woe to “Ariel”—the altar hearth,
to remind Jerusalem that it is indeed the hearth for God’s temple.
Those who dwell in the city of God dwell near to the consuming fire.
For those who trust in Yahweh, this is a great comfort;
but for the godless, this is a great terror.
Who can dwell with the consuming fire?
Isaiah answers this:
“He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly,

who despises the gain of oppressions,
who shakes his hands, lest they hold a bribe,
who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed
and shuts his eyes from looking on evil,
he will dwell on the heights;
his place of defense will be the fortress of the rocks;
his bread will be given him;
his water will be sure.”

Who can live in the city of God?

It is the same sort of question that Psalm 15 asks.

“Who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill?

He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart...”

Plainly this points us to the righteous one—our Lord Jesus Christ.

But it also reminds us of who we are to be in him.

Because you are in Christ, you dwell with the consuming fire.

Hebrews 12 speaks of the fact that we have come to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem,
and calls us to heed him who warns from heaven.

For if we do not trust in Christ,
what hope do we have?

We have been made citizens of a heavenly kingdom.

Those who dwell in Zion dwell in the presence of the consuming fire (Heb 12:29).

The fourth section (33:17-24) then points us to the King in his beauty.

4. The coming King and the feasts of Zion (33:17-24)

¹⁷ *Your eyes will behold the king in his beauty;
they will see a land that stretches afar.*

¹⁸ *Your heart will muse on the terror:
“Where is he who counted, where is he who weighed the tribute?
Where is he who counted the towers?”*

¹⁹ *You will see no more the insolent people,
the people of an obscure speech that you cannot comprehend,
stammering in a tongue that you cannot understand.*

²⁰ *Behold Zion, the city of our appointed feasts!
Your eyes will see Jerusalem,
an untroubled habitation, an immovable tent,*

*whose stakes will never be plucked up,
nor will any of its cords be broken.*

²¹ *But there the LORD in majesty will be for us
a place of broad rivers and streams,
where no galley with oars can go,
nor majestic ship can pass.*

²² *For the LORD is our judge; the LORD is our lawgiver;
the LORD is our king; he will save us.*

Egypt is no more (“where is he who weighed the tribute?”)
 Assyria is no more (“you will see no more the insolent people,
 the people of an obscure speech that you cannot comprehend”)
 The people of a foreign tongue by whom Yahweh spoke to this people (28:11)
 will be overthrown.
 What will you see?
 You will see the king (33:17)
 You will see Zion–Jerusalem–the city of our appointed feasts (33:20).
 Jerusalem will never be overthrown.
 Because Yahweh is our judge
 Yahweh is our lawgiver
 Yahweh is our king; he will save us!
 And the blessing of Yahweh will be upon his people,
 “The people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity.” (33:24)

²³ *Your cords hang loose;
 they cannot hold the mast firm in its place
 or keep the sail spread out.
 Then prey and spoil in abundance will be divided;
 even the lame will take the prey.*
²⁴ *And no inhabitant will say, “I am sick”;
 the people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity.*

The center of the chiasm is found in 34:1-4

5. The judgment of heaven and earth (34:1-4)

*34 Draw near, O nations, to hear,
 and give attention, O peoples!
 Let the earth hear, and all that fills it;
 the world, and all that comes from it.*
² *For the LORD is enraged against all the nations,
 and furious against all their host;
 he has devoted them to destruction,^[c] has given them over for slaughter.*
³ *Their slain shall be cast out,
 and the stench of their corpses shall rise;
 the mountains shall flow with their blood.*
⁴ *All the host of heaven shall rot away,
 and the skies roll up like a scroll.
 All their host shall fall,
 as leaves fall from the vine,
 like leaves falling from the fig tree.*

Isaiah calls the nations—indeed the earth itself is called as witness,

to hear what Yahweh has purposed for the nations.

(Read 34:2-4)

The judgment upon Assyria is a picture of the final judgment.

All the hosts of the nations are devoted to destruction,
and the mountains shall flow with their blood.

But the earthly hosts are not the only ones in view.

Even the host of heaven shall rot away,
and the skies will roll up like a scroll.

The judgment of God will come against the heavens and the earth.

You can hear the echo in Rev. 6:13-14—the sixth seal (and here it is the sixth woe)

“And the stars of the sky fell to the earth
as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.
The sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up.”

And as 33:17-24 spoke of the coming of the king and feasts of Zion,
so now 34:5-7 speaks of the coming of Yahweh to the feast of Edom!

4^o. The coming of Yahweh and the feast of the sword (34:5-7)

⁵ *For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens;
behold, it descends for judgment upon Edom,
upon the people I have devoted to destruction.*

⁶ *The LORD has a sword; it is sated with blood;
it is gorged with fat,
with the blood of lambs and goats,
with the fat of the kidneys of rams.*

*For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah,
a great slaughter in the land of Edom.*

⁷ *Wild oxen shall fall with them,
and young steers with the mighty bulls.
Their land shall drink its fill of blood,
and their soil shall be gorged with fat.*

The sword of the LORD has drunk its fill in the heavens,
and now it comes upon the earth,
feasting upon the flesh of lambs, goats, rams, and oxen.

As God said that he would lay waste the wicked (Assyria and the wicked in Zion) in 33:10-16,
so now in 34:8-17 he lays waste Edom.

3^o. Word of Yahweh; Spirit, thorns, desolation, wild animals (34:8-17)

⁸ *For the LORD has a day of vengeance,
a year of recompense for the cause of Zion.*

⁹ *And the streams of Edom^[d] shall be turned into pitch,
and her soil into sulfur;*

her land shall become burning pitch.
¹⁰ *Night and day it shall not be quenched;*
its smoke shall go up forever.
From generation to generation it shall lie waste;
none shall pass through it forever and ever.
¹¹ *But the hawk and the porcupine^[e] shall possess it,*
the owl and the raven shall dwell in it.
He shall stretch the line of confusion^[f] over it,
and the plumb line of emptiness.
¹² *Its nobles—there is no one there to call it a kingdom,*
and all its princes shall be nothing.

Why Edom?

This is Esau—the perfect contrast to Jacob.

Jacob have I loved, but Esau I hated.

Esau is representative of those who had the opportunity to trust in Yahweh,
but refused.

Edom is the reprobate—those whom God has cast aside,
the vessel prepared for destruction.

And so Yahweh has a day of vengeance—a year of recompense for the cause of Zion.
God will indeed deliver his city from the hand of those who hate her.

Edom will be cast down.

“Night and day it shall not be quenched;
its smoke shall go up forever.

From generation to generation it shall lie waste;
none shall pass through it forever and ever.”

It will become the abode of wild animals,

“He shall stretch the line of confusion over it,
and the plumb line of emptiness”—of bohu,
the primordial *tohu vbohu* is returning upon Edom.

It will be barren and empty.

As the thorns of Assyria were cut down and burned in the fire (33:12),
thorns are all that will grow in Edom—
in the city of man that rebels against God.

Wild animals will thrive there—but man will not.

Verse 17 even says that God has given the animals dominion over Edom,
the ultimate reversal of creation.

¹³ *Thorns shall grow over its strongholds,*
nettles and thistles in its fortresses.

It shall be the haunt of jackals,
an abode for ostriches.^[g]

¹⁴ *And wild animals shall meet with hyenas;*
the wild goat shall cry to his fellow;

indeed, there the night bird^[h] settles
 and finds for herself a resting place.
¹⁵ There the owl nests and lays
 and hatches and gathers her young in her shadow;
 indeed, there the hawks are gathered,
 each one with her mate.
¹⁶ Seek and read from the book of the LORD:
 Not one of these shall be missing;
 none shall be without her mate.
 For the mouth of the LORD has commanded,
 and his Spirit has gathered them.
¹⁷ He has cast the lot for them;
 his hand has portioned it out to them with the line;
 they shall possess it forever;
 from generation to generation they shall dwell in it.

I should point out to you that this prophecy against Edom echoes that of Babylon in 13:20
 It was said that Babylon would never again be inhabited.
 Here it is said that “none shall pass through it forever and ever.”
 Yet today the land of Edom *is* inhabited.

Two points:

1) Isaiah’s point about Edom is eschatological.

Edom is symbolic of the city of man.

2) this also suggests that Babylon is also symbolic.

Is it possible that someone will one day rebuild the city of Babylon?

God has thwarted all previous efforts,
 but if someone should rebuild Babylon,
 all it will prove is the hubris of man.

33:7-9 had spoken of the wasting of Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon.
 Now at the beginning of chapter 35,
 we hear that the wilderness shall be glad.

2'. Glory of Lebanon, Sharon and Carmel; Highway of holiness (35:1-9)

³⁵ The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
 the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus;
² it shall blossom abundantly
 and rejoice with joy and singing.
 The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
 the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
 They shall see the glory of the LORD,
 the majesty of our God.

The desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
This glory is none other than the glory and majesty of Yahweh himself.
God himself will deliver his people.
He will come with vengeance to save you.

³ *Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.*
⁴ *Say to those who have an anxious heart,
“Be strong; fear not!
Behold, your God
will come with vengeance,
with the recompense of God.
He will come and save you.”*

Once again Isaiah returns to the theme of chapter 6—his call.
He had been called to close eyes and stop up ears,
but in that day,
“the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.”

⁵ *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;*
⁶ *then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.*
*For waters break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;*
⁷ *the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.*

Do you wonder why Jesus came healing sick and giving sight to the blind?
This was part of the promise of what would happen in the Day of the LORD!
Waters would break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert;
the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.
And whereas the highways were laid waste in the Assyrian assault,
(Due to those who used the highway to ally with Egypt)
a new Highway shall be there:
“The Way of Holiness.”

⁸ *And a highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Way of Holiness;
the unclean shall not pass over it.*

*It shall belong to those who walk on the way;
even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.*^[1]

⁹ *No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.*

This highway will no longer be trodden by the wicked.

No longer will the people of God serve two masters.

The unclean shall not pass over it.

It shall belong to those who walk on the way.

(The next line may be translated, “if they are fools, they shall not wander in it”)

Either way, it works.

Either it means that fools (the wicked) will not walk in it,

or it means that even when we act like fools,

we are kept in the way by the sovereign grace of God.

Either way, this is the highway of the redeemed alone.

1¹. Rejoicing in the salvation of Zion (35:10)

¹⁰ *And the ransomed of the LORD shall return
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain gladness and joy,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

At the beginning of chapter 33,
at the beginning of this woe,
we were promised salvation.

Now we have it.

“The ransomed of Yahweh shall return and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain gladness and joy,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

At the end of history, when the sheep are separated from the goats,
and the wheat from the tares,
Zion shall be established in everlasting joy.

And the end of history has begun in our Lord Jesus Christ.