

Isaiah 28 The Lord Contends against Arrogance

Because arrogance is an affront to His glory and a threat to His people, the LORD contends against arrogance.

1. Arrogance intoxicates so that people are insensible to their danger (vv. 1-4).
 - a. God's judgment against arrogance is certain.
 - i. "Woe" introduces an oracle of judgment.
 - ii. "The proud crown . . . on the head of the rich valley" (v. 1) refers to Samaria, the capital city of Ephraim. The rulers of Ephraim/Israel were judged for their arrogance, which should be a warning to the rulers of Judah (v. 14).
 - iii. "Proud crown" and "glorious beauty" indicates the pride of the rulers.
 - b. Arrogance is inebriating. "Drunkards . . . overcome with wine" may reflect the loose living of the rulers in Samaria, but stands as a metaphor for their complete lack of good judgment.
 - c. Inebriation leads to insensibility to God's judgment.
 - i. "The fading flower of its glorious beauty" compares Samaria's moral condition, and consequently, their social and political condition, to a floral wreath worn at a party. At the beginning of the party it is fresh cut and appears lively, but as the night wears on it wilts. Of course, the partiers don't notice because their senses have dulled due to excessive drinking. So they carry on, thinking they look glorious and beautiful. They are insensible to their poor condition.
 - ii. "Behold . . . one who is mighty and strong . . . a storm of hail, a de-stroying tempest . . ." (v. 2). One would normally see the storm clouds gathering and make preparations—unless he is drunk. The rulers of Samaria are so possessed of vain-confidence that they are insensible to their imminent destruction at the hands of the Assyrians. Blinded by their pride they will be devoured "like a first-ripe fig . . ." (v. 4) before they are sober enough to realize it.
2. Arrogance intoxicates so that people are intransigent to instruction (vv. 7-10, 14-15).
 - a. People of high office will be tempted to be so high-minded that they cannot learn.
 - i. "The priest and the prophet" (v. 7) are just as culpable as the rulers whom they counsel because their godless judgments are based on their high-minded rejection of God's Word.
 - ii. In their arrogance, they mock Isaiah as a preschool teacher who is trying out his lessons on learned scholars (vv. 9-10).
 - iii. The "rulers in Jerusalem" have the same attitude toward God's Word that was found in the rulers of Samaria (v. 14).
 - iv. "Scoffers" are eminently evil because they not only disregard God's Word, but they mock it and hold it in contempt.
 - v. They are trusting in their own 'wisdom' and devices, convinced that they are secured. "We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have an

- agreement” (v. 15a). They are relying on political and military deception, rather than on God’s truth for their defense (v. 15b).
- b. Such high-mindedness renders their plans unreliable. Their ‘ministry’ is as worthless as the ramblings of a drunk and as unreliable as his legs—they “reel . . . stagger . . . are swallowed by wine . . . stumble . . . vomit” (vv. 7-8).
3. The LORD humiliates the arrogant by leaving them to their devices (vv.2-4, 11-13, 18-22).
 - a. Israel thought they could outsmart Assyria. Did they realize they were trying to outsmart God? The Assyrians are God’s instrument of judgment (vv. 2-4).
 - b. God allows their schemes to play out.
 - i. Since they have rejected the plain teaching of the Word of God through Isaiah (v. 12), Ephraim will have to receive the same elementary instruction, but this time in a foreign language—namely, the Assyrian tongue (vv. 11, 13).
 - ii. Their devices will fail—“your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol will not stand” (v. 18). The bed they have made for themselves is too short and their covers too narrow to afford them any rest (v. 20).
 - iii. The Battle of Mount Perazim was a famous battle in which God burst through the Philistines with King David’s army (2 Sam. 5:17-21). Noteworthy is that “the Philistines left their idols there.” “Gibeon” may refer to the same campaign of David’s or to an even more ancient battle against the King of Jerusalem (still an Amorite city at the time) under Joshua (Josh. 10). Isaiah says that God’s judgment will now be against the arrogant of Judah, as it had been against their enemies in days past.
 - c. Isaiah gives a final warning not to scoff at God’s decree (v. 22).
 4. The LORD exalts the humble through faith in Christ (vv. 5-6, 16-17).
 - a. “In that day” (v. 5) may be a double entendre, pointing to a remnant, namely, Judah, after the destruction of Samaria, as well as to the eschatological fulfillment in Christ.
 - b. With the false and faded crown of glory removed (vv. 1-4), the LORD Himself will be true crown of glory and beauty upon His people (v. 5). This will be experienced especially in God’s (Spirit) just government over and through His people. This justice will be their strength (v. 6).
 - c. Through Christ, the Cornerstone, God has laid a sure foundation upon which Zion, His people, can build their lives by faith (vv. 16-17).
 5. The LORD contends against arrogance with perfect wisdom (vv. 23-29). Just as God has taught the farmer the right time for each step leading up to having bread on the table and the right tools to use for each type of grain, so God’s timing and methods are always just right.