

# MORE THAN WORDS Sunday, June 16 2013

## Unifying Topic: MEANINGLESS WORSHIP

### Lesson Text

#### I. A Deep Sleep (Isaiah 29:9-12)

#### II. Shock And Awe (Isaiah 29:13-14)

#### III. Going Through The Motions (Isaiah 29:15-16)

**The Main Thought:** Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: (Isaiah 29:13 KJV).

**Unifying Principle:** People sometimes ritualistically repeat word or phrases that have little or no meaning for them. What is the danger involved in speaking insincerely? Isaiah gives god's message that he will judge those who honor him with their lips but not their hearts.

**Lesson Aim:** To warn students of the dangers involved in meaningless words and empty worship.

**Life aim:** To promote authentic worship that is evidenced by the integrity and congruence of the words spoken from our mouths and the praise and honor offered from our hearts.

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- 29:9 Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink.
- 29:10 For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.
- 29:11 And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed:
- 29:12 And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.
- 29:13 Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:
- 29:14 Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.
- 29:15 Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?
- 29:16 Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?

### **HISTORY:**

#### Chapter 29:1-8

**29:1** *"Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt!..."* The first prophetic "Woe" was pronounced *"to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim"* in the 1st verse of Chapter 28. Now, here in 29:1, the next prophetic "Woe" is ascribed *"to Ariel, the city where David dwelt."* Ariel, Ariel (i.e., Jerusalem, Jerusalem). Now the exact meaning of the term Ariel is uncertain. The address is repeated out of great sorrow and compassion. Of the options mentioned for the term Ariel emphasizes the fact that it was the *"altar-hearth"* of God, i.e., the sacrificial center of Israel's worship where the brazen altar lay. And *"Jerusalem"* was the place where sacrifices were consumed by fire in order to alleviate divine wrath against sin. However, if Ariel means *"lion of God"* or *"hero"*, it is an ironic reminder of the city's former glory. Robinson (p.110) notes that David first inaugurated the true worship of Jehovah on Mount Zion. But now Jerusalem's worship had become a meaningless and heartless formality.

**29:1b** *"...all ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices."* Isaiah speaks with irony; his attitude is that empty religion, endlessly continuing its animal sacrifices year after year will not be able to stop the judgment of God. Because they refuse to heed the Lord's command to take warning, He now invites them to continue in their state of spiritual complacency for one more year; let them continue to observe the cycle of their religious feasts, all the while operating under their chosen false assumption that all is well with their soul.

**29:2** *"Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel."* God would distress Ariel. He will bring judgment upon Jerusalem through simultaneous invasions of the Assyrians who are too incidental to be named and Babylon. In other words, God will take this city that has been the pride and joy of His people and turn it into what in fact is a place of burnt sacrifice. And because of her sin, the city which was known for its burnt offerings unto the Lord shall in turn **become** a burnt offering laid on the *"altar-hearth"* unto the Lord.

**29:3** *"And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee."* The city does not stand a chance when God says *"He will camp against thee...lay siege against thee..."*

*and raise forts against thee.*" God's instruments to be used, is not named yet, first Assyria and then Babylon. God using them "*will camp...round about*" as a circle; that is, God would encompass or encircle the city. He would "*lay siege...with a mount*" thereby, raising up soldiers in a military post or garrison to scale the walls to siege them. And He would "*raise forts against thee*"; battle towers. There would be no way out when the Lord comes against them.

**29:4** *"And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust."* Isaiah continues to speak that Jerusalem will be brought down (brought low)...speaking out of the ground...low as the dust. I know you're saying how low can they go? Well, as low as a whisper. Her voice will come from the earth like that of a medium spirit, like the voice of the dead was supposed to be. This would be fitting for her sins of necromancy (communicating with the dead in foretelling the future). Their exultant festivals will be humbled to a pathetic whisper. And their enemy would be the Lord Himself. There would be no place to turn.

**29:5** *"Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly."* It spoke that Jerusalem's speech would be "*whisper out of the dust.*" Now, it's Jerusalem's enemies that shall be like fine dust; as chaff that scatters away. In God's time, after Jerusalem's punishment, those who fought against the city will themselves come under God's judgment. God's demolition of Israel's enemies will be very abrupt; now you see them, now you don't.

**29:6** *"Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire."* He will visit Jerusalem's enemies with the very Lord of host, the earth will quake, the storm and tempest will come with a great noise, and there will be a devouring flame of fire. It will be the presence of Almighty God now fighting for Jerusalem!

**29:7** *"And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision."* Here Isaiah warned all the enemies that fight against the defenses, the walls, and towers in which Jerusalem put her trust in, would be like a man that dreams, and fancies he is in the possession of what he craves, but, when he awakes, finds he has gotten nothing. It would melt away and disappear, as a night vision before the light of day - it would dissolve into nothing, vanish, leave no trace. They will be no match against God. To come against Jerusalem, or even the church, is to come against God. You cannot win.

**29:8** *"It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty; or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite; so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion."* Isaiah likens this as a man who is dreaming of eating or drinking, only to awaken hungry and thirsty. Jerusalem's attackers will frustrate themselves as a dreamer who has the illusion that he eats and drinks, but awakens to find himself still hungry and thirsty.

## LESSON:

### Isaiah 29:9-12 A Deep Sleep

**29:9** *"Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink."* God through Isaiah turns from the enemies of Jerusalem and now tells Jerusalem to "*stay yourselves*" meaning "*pause and wonder; linger*"; "*be ye amazed and you shall be amazed.*"<sup>1</sup> He warns them to be astonished at the great work of God on their behalf. They are not impressed at all with Isaiah's prophecies. "*Cry ye out and cry*" is translated *lament, as you will have reason to do.*" He continues to say "*they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink.*" They were morally, not physically, intoxicated. Their pride and self-trust rendered them as irrational. They are drunk on arrogance and belief that they can take care of themselves, without God.

**29:10** *"For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered."* Because Jerusalem refused to hear her true prophets initially, their ability to hear has been impaired. God gave them up to their own hardness of heart. Here "*God pours out upon the people the spirit of deep sleep*" meaning "*spiritual deadness and impassiveness*" - an inability to appreciate, or even to understand, spiritual warnings. They were in spiritual lethargy (drowsy dullness; sluggishness). When we are in this type of sleep, we are not producing for the Lord; we are vulnerable to the attacks of the enemy; and we are not sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading. Sleep caused the prophets and rulers eyes to be closed, meaning blindness; without understanding

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/isaiah/33.html>

<http://www.ipitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

and the seers covered. The words *"the seers hath he covered"* renders that <sup>2</sup>there may be an allusion to the covering of the head with a veil; an emblem of that veil of ignorance and infidelity. The prophets and seers were the knowledgeable ones who have walked with God. If they are in deadness so were the people; the blind leading the blind!

**29:11** *"And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed:"*— This is just saying that Isaiah's warnings are still not understood by the people. It's like having a book to read but can't open it because it's sealed. And the one that can read holds the book and says I can't read it because it's sealed. It's also like the drunken state and the deep-sleep state—can't get a handle on the words, grasping to open a sealed book in an incoherent state. The vision does them no good because it is irrelevant to them.

**29:12** *"And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned."* Now the words of the book are delivered to the uneducated; the unlearned, and they are asked to read it but cannot. This shows two things 1) the book was sealed and 2) they could not read it even if it were not sealed. The Spirit of God is able to unlock the bible and teach us all things of Jesus Christ if we so desire!

### **Isaiah 29:13-14 Shock And Awe**

**29:13** *"Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:"*— And the Lord said, <sup>3</sup>they kept up the forms of religion, but they withheld the affections of their hearts from me.' God will then proceed to inflict on them exemplary and deserved punishment. The prophet further notes that their fear (reverence for God) was merely an outward and intellectual accommodation taught by the precept of men instead of the precepts of God. They went by what was familiar—men's words. Even if a leader is righteous, people must be careful about placing too much trust in him. The point is that their accommodation of God is purely external, and therefore their worship is hypocritical. If it becomes mindless repetition, it becomes empty.

**29:14** *"Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."* Since the people will not do what is right toward God, then God must do what is right toward them. He says *"I will (still in spite of) proceed to do a marvelous work among the people."* <sup>4</sup>The good news is that God was going to do something about it. The shocking news is that what He is going to do is essentially obliterate human logic and wisdom. Well, a better word is that the wise men's wisdom will perish and the understanding of the prudent will be hid and be no more! So if they respected those words it would be meaningless to the hearers. Both human wisdom and prudent understanding will be taken away.

### **Isaiah 29:15-16 Going Through The Motions**

**29:15** *"Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?"* A third "Woe" is pronounced on those who seek to hide their counsel from the Lord. They think that their counsel and their works in the dark are hidden from the Almighty God. Nothing is hidden from God. We might not know all that God is doing until He reveals it, but God knows and sees and is well aware of everything we're doing, even before we do it.

**29:16** *"Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?"* The people had turned things upside down that inverted the relation in which they stood to God and God to them. We are the potter's clay and not the potter Himself. We are the ones to be molded into God's plan not God molded into our plans. God would not allow the wise men of Jerusalem to exalt themselves and pretend to have greater knowledge than their Creator! In their thinking God was to be passive to their hidden counsel and work done in the dark, and know not or do anything to what they're doing; saying, *"He has no understanding!"* The implication is that when we depend upon our own devices instead of surrendering to the Lord, we act as if God did not have the wisdom or the ability to help us.

### **SUMMARY:**

<sup>2</sup> <http://biblehub.com/isaiah/29-10.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Bible.show/sVerseID/18207/eVerseID/18207/RTD/Barnes>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.dabhand.org/Essays/OT569\\_Is29\\_knowledge\\_gap.htm](http://www.dabhand.org/Essays/OT569_Is29_knowledge_gap.htm)

This chapter <sup>5</sup>starts off with a pronouncement of "Woe" on "Ariel" which is a code name for Jerusalem. Even though this had been a city where festivals had honored God (v.1), it would be over run with fighting and bloodshed. God would bring judgment upon Jerusalem through the simultaneous invasions of Assyria and Babylon. In other words, God was to take this city which had been a place of pride and joy and turn it into a place of sacrifice.

The insensitivity of the people was in itself a judgment from God. The Lord caused a blindness to come over them (v. 10). The fact that the prophets and leaders did not see and understand what God was doing was a part of God's judgment. The prophet announces that this is all like a bad dream that shall come upon the people of Israel. He likens this to a man who is dreaming of eating or drinking only to awaken hungry and thirsty (vv 9-12). They are drunken with their own self-indulgence which has caused them not to hear the message of God.

<sup>6</sup>In this third "Woe" the Lord exposes the political tactics of the rulers of Judah. They were trying to turn things upside down and thought that God would not hold them accountable for what they were doing. The people professed to know God as they were formally involved in acts of worship but their hearts were far from Him (vv. 13-14). They were more concerned with man-made rules than with God's laws. They thought they could hide their plans from God by doing things at night (v. 15).

Isaiah asked the people to look ahead and consider what God had planned for them. Their formal, external, petty religion was inconsistent as far as God was concerned. As they depended on their own devices instead of surrendering to the Lord, it pointed to the fact that they did not think God had the wisdom or ability to help them (v. 16).

#### **APPLICATION:**

Our relationship and our worship is more than the words that come out of our mouths. It is a heart action or action of our hearts that keep us having Him dwelling with us and before us. It is a desire to draw near Him and to hear Him speak to us; not because we are in need, but because there is a love to want to be in His presence. If you are lukewarm, it is time to take time out for God, your Creator! He desires to be with you! Make Him a priority rather than an insincerity! God Bless!

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/woe-against-jerusalem/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/woe-against-the-schemers/>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>