

Notes

The Woe of False Security (28:1–29)

- Isaiah 28–35 is often called 'The Book of Woes,' because it is built around 6 solemn pronouncements of "woe" (28:1; 29:1; 29:15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1). God exposes Judah's spiritual blindness, covenant unfaithfulness & misplaced trust in human wisdom. Yet His warnings are always accompanied by gracious promises of hope, ultimately pointing to the future Messianic Kingdom.
- The historical setting is primarily the reign of King Hezekiah during the Assyrian crisis. The Northern Kingdom had already fallen to Assyria in 722 BC because of persistent rebellion against God. Instead of learning from Israel's judgment, Judah sought security through political alliances, especially with Egypt (30:3; 31:1). Against this backdrop, Isaiah contrasts every false refuge with God's own provision—the sure Foundation He has laid in Zion, reminding His people that true security is found in Him alone.

1. False Security in Human Pride (28:1–6)

- Isaiah begins with a woe against Ephraim, whose capital was Samaria. The "*crown of pride*" (v1) refers both to Samaria's commanding hilltop location and to the arrogant confidence of its people. Although prosperous and secure in appearance, its glory was already "*a fading flower*." Their drunkenness reflected more than physical excess; it revealed spiritual blindness, pride, and indifference towards God's warnings.
- The LORD announced that He would send "*a mighty and strong one*" (v2), referring to Assyria, to execute His judgment. Like a hailstorm or an overflowing flood, Assyria would sweep away every false refuge. Samaria's proud crown would be trampled underfoot (v3), and the city would be consumed as quickly as the first ripe fig of summer (v4). Judah should not expect to escape judgment while committing the same sins as Ephraim.
- In the midst of judgment, however, God promised hope for "*the residue of his people*" (v5). Instead of boasting in earthly glory, the faithful remnant would find their wisdom & strength in the LORD Himself (vv5–6). Whether governing the nation or defending it in battle, God's people succeed only because the LORD supplies the wisdom & strength they need.

2. False Security in Human Wisdom (28:7–13)

- Isaiah exposes the spiritual failure of Israel's priests and prophets. Those appointed to teach God's Law and proclaim His Word had themselves

become intoxicated (vv7–8). Their drunkenness symbolised a deeper spiritual condition - they had lost all spiritual discernment and were no longer able to lead God's people faithfully. The nation's spiritual leaders had become examples of uncleanness and disgrace.

- The mocking question, "*Whom shall he teach knowledge?*" (v9) reflects Judah's leaders ridiculing Isaiah himself. They caricatured his teaching as childish repetition - "*precept upon precept, line upon line*" (v10). Yet spiritual maturity comes through patiently learning, obeying, and building upon God's Word, one truth at a time. Their problem was not a lack of intelligence but hearts filled with pride and unbelief.
- Because Judah rejected God's clear voice, the LORD declared that He would speak through "*stammering lips and another tongue*" (v11). Historically, this referred to the foreign language of foreign invaders (Assyria and later, Babylon). God graciously offered His people "*rest*" and "*refreshing*", but "*they would not hear*" (v12). Paul quoted vv11-12 in 1 Corinthians 14:21, showing that the miraculous gift of tongues likewise served as a sign of God's judgment upon unbelieving Israel. Consequently, the very Word that could have brought them rest became the means of their judgment & stumbling (v13).

3. True Security in God's Cornerstone (28:14–22)

- Isaiah now directly addresses the rulers of Jerusalem. Although Samaria's destruction should have warned them, they continued trusting in political alliances and human wisdom. These rulers were not merely unbelieving; they were scoffers who openly despised God's Word (v14). Isaiah exposes their false confidence as making "*a covenant with death*" and an agreement with hell (v15). They believed that their alliance with Egypt could protect them from the coming Assyrian invasion, but every refuge apart from God is ultimately a refuge of lies.
- In striking contrast, the LORD declared, "*Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone....*" (v16). Salvation begins with God's gracious provision, not man's effort. The NT identifies this Cornerstone as the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 21:42; Acts 4:11; Rom 9:33; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:6–8). Isaiah highlights 3 remarkable qualities of the Cornerstone:
 - A tried Stone — tested & proven trustworthy. Throughout His earthly ministry, Christ was tempted, opposed, rejected & ultimately crucified, yet He remained perfectly obedient to the Father's will (Heb 4:15).

- A precious Cornerstone — infinitely valuable to all who believe. Though rejected by the world, Christ is God's chosen Saviour and the believer's greatest treasure (1 Pet 2:7).
- A sure Foundation — firm & unchanging. Christ alone provides a sure and lasting foundation for all who trust Him (Matt 7:24–27).

The promise concludes, "*He that believeth shall not make haste.*" Those who trust God's Cornerstone need not panic or live in fear when difficulties arise, for their confidence rests in God's unfailing promises.

- God declared that He would measure everything by His perfect standard of righteousness and justice (v17). Judah's refuge of lies would be swept away, and their "*covenant with death*" would not stand (v18). V19 describes the certainty of that judgment as the overflowing scourge repeatedly passed through the land. Their political schemes would prove as useless as a bed too short and a blanket too narrow (v20). Isaiah reminds them that the God who once fought for Israel at Mount Perazim (2 Sam 5:20) & Gibeon (Josh 10:10–14) would now rise against His own people because of their persistent unbelief (v21). The leaders still had opportunity to repent, but continued unbelief would only bring heavier judgment (v22).

4. True Security in God's Wisdom (28:23–29)

- Isaiah calls the people to listen carefully to God's Word (v23). A wise farmer knows when to plough, when to sow, and how to thresh each crop according to its nature (vv24–28). His skill comes from God, "*for his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him*" (v26). If God gives ordinary farmers wisdom to cultivate their fields, how much more should His people trust His wisdom in governing their lives. Just as the farmer applies the right method at the right time, God's dealings with His people are always wise, measured, and purposeful. His discipline is never arbitrary or excessive, but is perfectly suited to accomplish His righteous and gracious purposes.
- Isaiah concludes by lifting our eyes from the farmer to God (v29). His purposes are always righteous & His plans can never fail. Ephraim trusted in pride & self-confidence, while Judah relied upon political alliances & human wisdom, and both discovered that every false refuge ultimately fails. In contrast, God provided a sure Foundation in the Cornerstone He laid in Zion, fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Those who humbly receive His Word, build upon His Cornerstone & trust His wise dealings find lasting security.