Session 11 The Forerunner Message in Isaiah 32-33

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Isaiah 32-33 was an especially important prophetic message to the leaders of Jerusalem. Given within two years of Assyria laying siege to Jerusalem in 701 BC (32:10), the historical events mentioned here occurred around 704-701 BC.

B. Outline for Isaiah 32-33

32:1-20 The coming King will rule in righteousness
   - 32:1-8 The coming King will rule in righteousness
   - 32:9-14 An urgent exhortation to the complacent women
   - 32:15-20 The transforming power of the Spirit

33:1-24 The certain victory of God’s King and kingdom
   - 33:1 The certain destruction of Assyria
   - 33:2-4 Isaiah’s prayer for help in the crisis with Assyria
   - 33:5-6 Strengthened by the knowledge of God’s victorious plan
   - 33:7-9 The crisis of Assyria’s betrayal of Jerusalem
   - 33:10-12 God’s judgment of Assyria
   - 33:13-16 Isaiah called all the nations to pay attention to His judgments
   - 33:17-24 The beauty of King Jesus

C. What happens in fullness when Jesus returns occurs in part now and in an increasing way.

D. Shakespeare said “history is a prologue.” God’s activity and leadership manifested in history is like an ancient mirror of what He will do in the end times in Israel and the nations.

II. THE COMING KING WILL RULE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS (ISA. 32:1-8)

A. In the millennial kingdom, Jesus will establish righteous leaders over society (32:1-4).

1. **King**: Isaiah saw the King when he was commissioned (Isa. 6). He is the beautiful king of 33:17 (cf. 6:1, 5; 24:23; 33:22) who rules in righteousness (1:26; 9:7; 11:4-5; 32:1-2, etc.).

In Isaiah’s day, the spiritual and political leadership of Jerusalem was characterized by compromise, confusion, deception, and incompetence. Isaiah’s prophetic decree was that, “A King is coming who will rule in righteousness!”
2. **Princes**: Jesus will impart His values (justice, etc.) and power through His godly leaders. These godly princes will provide “understanding” that helps the people under them to overcome fear, offense, and deception in the times of trouble (32:2). Such “understanding” will strengthen, stabilize, and protect the people—as a shelter protects from a storm and as water and shade strengthen in a desert (32:2). The Lord promised to raise up shepherds “after His own heart” like David—they will feed people on understanding of God’s heart and ways.

15“Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding.” (Jer. 3:15)

3. **Cover**: These godly princes will be a source of provision and blessing to the people of God. Godly leaders use their understanding and resources to strengthen others—to provide shelter from the storm and to be like water and shade in a desert (32:2). We gain insight and inspiration from this millennial promise that strengthens our work in the Forerunner Research Group. God is raising up leaders who will be part of the answer instead adding to the problem of people being overwhelmed with fear, offense, deception, and compromise.

4. **Eyes will not be dim**: Scripture speaks of spiritual blindness being on the children of Israel since Isaiah’s generation. Yet he prophesied of a future time when it will be lifted entirely. Under the influence of godly leadership, they will gain insight—physically and spiritually (32:3-4; cf. 29:10-11,18; 35:5; 42:18).

5. **Make their heart dull**: The Lord gave Isaiah a challenging prophetic assignment—to speak the truth so consistently, clearly, and boldly though it would result in making their heart more and more dull since they would not faithfully respond to the it (Isa. 6:9-10).

9 And He said, “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand…’

10 Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart…” (Isa. 6:9-10)

6. **Truth is not neutral**: When we hear truth, we either become more tender and responsive or we do not respond and a small measure of spiritual dullness or hardness sets in. Hearing the truth either tenderizes or hardens. We become a little more responsive or a little more dulled.

7. The spiritual blindness related to Isaiah’s calling was still operating on the nation of Israel over 700 years later—in the time of Jesus and Paul. Paul made reference to God’s promise that the spiritual blindness on Israel will be healed when Jesus returns (Rom. 11:25-26).

25I do not desire…that you should be ignorant…that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so all Israel will be saved… “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” (Rom. 11:25-26)

8. **Speak plainly**: These godly princes will help people to understand and thus to plainly communicate God’s truth instead of speaking in a way that distorts it (32:4). The Lord will raise His messengers up so that they speak the truth with clarity without distorting it.
B. Isaiah described the current foolish leadership in Jerusalem—they were easy to recognize (32:5-8). Such leaders will be openly seen as fools and will lose credibility “when God arises” in judgment.

C. Isaiah called the women to rise up and see the reality of the crisis that was coming soon to their nation (32:9-11; cf. 3:16-26). Great trouble was coming to their nation within two years (32:10). These women assumed that the ease which they currently enjoyed would continue uninterrupted. Isaiah challenged the ladies to listen, tremble, and be troubled because a crisis was coming soon.

9 Rise up, you women who are at ease, hear my voice; you complacent daughters, give ear to my speech. 10 In a year and some days you will be troubled, you complacent women; for the vintage will fail, the gathering will not come. 11 Tremble, you women who are at ease; be troubled, you complacent ones; strip yourselves…and gird sackcloth on your waists. (Isa. 32:9-11)

1. **Complacent:** The leaders in Jerusalem had made a political covenant with Assyria and assured the public and its leading women that the “Assyrian crisis” was over, and thus they did not need to listen to Isaiah’s warnings. Their complacency was in thinking that a crisis was not coming to their cities and that Isaiah was wrong to alarm the people about it. They were complacent because they trusted the optimistic words of the political leaders which assured them that their covenant with Assyria would hold up (33:8). These women assumed that the ease which they currently enjoyed would continue uninterrupted as it always had.

2. These women were familiar with the Scripture. They accepted the narrative of the culture which mocked Isaiah’s prophetic messages and thought things would go on business as usual.

3. Many of the leaders in Jerusalem mocked Isaiah. It is commonly accepted that Isaiah was killed by them. Various ancient texts report that King Manasseh commanded Isaiah to be sawn in two; they include the Babylonian Talmud and the Jerusalem Talmud (both written after AD 200). Many assume that Hebrews 11:37 is a reference to Isaiah’s martyrdom.

37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. (Heb. 11:37)

4. **Vintage will fail:** The crops will fail because an invading army would destroy them.

5. **Be troubled:** There is a paradox in the grace of God. Believers living in a time of judgment were to be troubled yet also have confidence in who they are as citizens of the kingdom. We can be troubled by what is happening in society yet confident in our relationship to our beauty King. Isaiah motivated them by God’s kindness (32:1-4) and judgement (32:12-14).

22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God… (Rom. 11:22)

6. **Seven exhortations:** Isaiah gave 7 action-oriented exhortations of how to respond (33:9-11). Isaiah called the complacent women them to “rise up” in action to seek the Lord (30:18-17), to “hear his voice” by giving special attention to gain understanding of the coming crisis (32:12-14), to “give ear” by applying the truth to their life, to “tremble” in light of the crisis coming within two years (32:10), to “be troubled” by implications of military invasion (32:12-14), to “strip themselves” of anything that hindered their spiritual preparation, and to “gird themselves” with sackcloth in fasting (Joel 2:12-13).
D. The land of Judah was soon to suffer a great crisis. An Assyrian military invasion resulted in the harvest being devastated (mourn for the pleasant fields), the land being deserted (thorns coming up), and the homes of even the wealthy (palaces) being forsaken, as 200,000 people were taken captive by Assyria. The agricultural and economic crisis resulted in significant food shortages.

12 People shall mourn upon their breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. 13 On the land of my people [Judah] will come up thorns and briers, yes, on all the happy homes in the joyous city; 14 because the palaces will be forsaken, the bustling city [Jerusalem] will be deserted… (Isa. 32:12-14)

1. **Thorns and briers:** These will grow in the land, implying that the cities would be destroyed.

2. **Forsaken:** Various cities were deserted as Assyria marched through the land of Judah. The cities were deserted because many were taken captive, killed or fled out of fear.

3. Destruction began by Assyria (701 BC) was completed 115 years later by Babylon (586 BC).

E. Trouble in Israel was to continue “until” a time when the Spirit would be poured out in fullness at the coming of the King (32:1) who would rule in righteousness, heal the land, and bring world peace. When Jesus returns, even the wilderness will become fruit fields (33:15; cf. 30:23-26).

15 Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field… 16 Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness…in the fruitful field. 17 The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. (Isa. 32:15-17)

1. Justice and righteousness will be established throughout all of society, even in the wilderness. The source of the transformation will be a King, anointed with the Spirit (32:1, 15; 11:1-3).

2. Quietness and assurance are the opposite of fear and anxiety (32:17; cf. 30:15).

15 In returning and rest…in quietness and confidence shall be your strength. (Isa. 30:15)

F. Joel prophesied of an end-time outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh—meaning on all nations.

28 "...I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy… 29 Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth: blood, fire, and columns of smoke." 31 The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. 32 …whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered…in Jerusalem there will be those who escape…even among the survivors whom the LORD calls. (Joel 2:28-32)

1. **All mankind:** Acts 2 was only a “down payment” of Joel’s prophetic promise of a global outpouring of the Holy Spirit. What happened on the day of Pentecost did not fulfill the promise of the Spirit being poured out on “all mankind” or “all flesh.” In Acts 2, the Spirit only rested on 120 Jewish believers in Jerusalem, and then again on 3,000. The fullness of Joel’s prophecy requires a global dimension where the Spirit empowers believers from all over the world so that they prophesy and see visions.
2. **Sun and moon:** The outpouring of the Spirit that Joel prophesied was not *completely* fulfilled in Peter’s generation. This is evidenced by significant differences between Joel 2 and Acts 2. Only a portion of it was fulfilled in Peter’s day. Joel said the Spirit would touch all mankind and that the sun and the moon would grow dark and signs as blood and smoke would be seen. Blood is associated with three trumpet and two bowl judgments (Rev. 8:7-10; 16:3-4).

3. **Before the day of the Lord:** The end-time outpouring of the Spirit will happen before the day of the LORD (Joel 2:31). The outpouring of the spirit of prophecy is in context of the end-time drama, thus enabling the saints to discern the deception of the Antichrist.

4. **Delivered:** Whoever calls on the LORD in Jerusalem will be delivered or protected—escaping to survive the Great Tribulation (Joel 2:32). Jerusalem will be one of the most violent cities on earth at that time. Yet, those who call on His name will receive His protection.

G. In the Millennium, the children of Israel will in peace without fear of military threats (32:18-20). Even though hail comes down and Jerusalem is brought low (32:12-14), God’s promises will surely come to all the land of the Israel in the Lord’s appointed time.

18 My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places, though hail comes down on the forest, and the city is brought low in humiliation. 20 Blessed are you who sow beside all waters, who send out freely the feet of the ox and the donkey. (Isa. 32:18-20)

1. **Peaceful habitation:** The inhabitants of the land will be blessed after the Lord returns and will enjoy a peaceful life with abundant waters and crops described in pastoral language.

2. **Hail:** Hail represents the attack on Judah by Assyria in Isaiah’s generation (32:12-14) and it can apply to the difficulties that will occur in Israel and many other places in the end times. God’s judgments are often compared to hail (Ex. 9:18-34; Josh. 10:11; Ps. 78:47-48; Isa. 18:2, 17; 28:2, 17; 30:30; Ezek. 13:11, 13; 38:22; Hag. 2:17; Rev. 8:7; 11:19: 16:21).

2 Behold, the Lord has a mighty and strong one [the Assyrian army], like a tempest of hail and a destroying storm...who will bring them down to the earth with His hand. (Isa. 28:2)

30 The LORD will...show the descent of His arm [judgment], with the indignation of His anger...with scattering, tempest, and hailstones. (Isa. 30:30)

21 And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail...[it] was exceedingly great. (Rev. 16:21)

3. **Blessed are you:** It will be common for the people to plant their crops by one of the many sources of water resulting in abundant crops. This parallels God’s promise in 30:23-25, where cattle range free in large pastures and rivers will be found on “every” high mountain and hill.

23 ...in that day your cattle will feed in large pastures...25 There will be on every high mountain and on every high hill rivers and streams of waters... (Isa. 30:23-25)
4. **Send out freely:** The crops will be so abundant that they will even let their livestock roam freely eating to eat. The oxen and donkeys pulled the plow over the land.

## III. THE CERTAIN VICTORY OF GOD’S KING AND KINGDOM (ISA. 33:1-24)

### A. The certain destruction of Assyria (33:1): Isaiah 33 continues the theme from Isaiah 32. Isaiah shifted from prophesying trouble coming to Judah to speaking of God’s judgment on Assyria. God has no partiality. He was troubled by the lack of response to Him of those in Judah and in Assyria.

_1Woe to you who plunder…and you who deal treacherously [Assyria]…! When you cease plundering, you will be plundered…they will deal treacherously with you._ (Isa. 33:1)

1. **Deal treacherously:** The Assyrian empire is referred to as the “treacherous one who plunders” (33:1). They were treacherous in breaking the covenant with the leaders in Jerusalem (33:8). The Assyrians were identified as a nation speaking with a stammering tongue (33:19; 28:11).

2. The Assyrians’ treachery and betrayal of Israel in Isaiah’s generation is a foreshadowing of the end-time betrayal of Israel by the Antichrist. The Antichrist will betray a covenant he made with Israel seven years before Jesus returns (Isa. 28:14-18; Dan. 9:27; cf. Dan. 11:45; 14; 39:26; Zech. 11:16; Lk. 19:11-28; Jn. 5:43; 1 Thes. 5:3). He will probably monetize the covenant.

### B. King Hezekiah made a political covenant with the Assyrian King Sennacherib that required Judah to pay much gold and silver as tribute to Assyria (2 Kgs. 18:14-17).

_14Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, “I have done wrong; turn away from me; whatever you impose on me I will pay.” And the king of Assyria assessed Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. _15So Hezekiah gave him all the silver… in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king’s house…_ 17Then the king of Assyria sent…a great army against Jerusalem… (2 Kgs. 18:14-17)

1. **300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold:** Today, this is worth almost $50 million. A talent in that day was approximately 75 pounds. In today’s market, 300 talents of silver are worth just over $5 million and 30 talents of gold are worth just over $40 million. Imagine a small nation the size of New Jersey paying this amount of money for protection!

### C. Isaiah’s prayer for help in the crisis with Assyria is a model prayer for the end times (33:2-4). This is a prayer that Israel may use when being attacked by the Antichrist.

_2O LORD, be gracious to us; we have waited for You. Be…our salvation also in the time of trouble. _3At the noise of the tumult the people [Assyrians] shall flee; when You lift Yourself up, the nations shall be scattered; _4And Your plunder shall be gathered…_ (Isa. 33:2-4)

1. **Waited for You:** He assured them that God was waiting to hear their cry (30:18-19).

_18…the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious…blessed are all those who wait for Him… _19He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you._ (Isa. 30:18-19)
2. **The people:** The words “people” and “nations” in the prophets usually indicate the Gentile nations (33:3, 12; 34:1); here it is speaks directly of the Assyrians.

3. **You lift Yourself up:** When Isaiah speaks of God “lifting Himself up,” “being exalted,” or “arising,” it often speaks of the times when He intervenes in history in decisive way to save His people and destroy His enemies.

4. **At the noise of the tumult:** The loud noise made by a violent thunderstorm or by a multitude of people fleeing in fear from danger. This refers to the loud noise made in the Assyrian camp, when the angel of the Lord killed 185,000 soldiers and the rest fled in fear.

5. Hezekiah’s prayer is also a model prayer in a time of crisis (2 Kg. 19).

6. **Your plunder:** Judah will gather the plunder of the defeated armies of the Antichrist.

D. The Lord’s commitment to fill Jerusalem with justice instead of Jewish victims of war (33:6): God’s people are strengthened by the knowledge of God’s victorious plan (33:6).

5. **The Lord is exalted, for He dwells on high, He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness.**

6. **Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, and the strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is His treasure**…17. **Your eyes will see the King in His beauty**… (Isa. 33:5-6, 17)

1. **Stability and strength:** Strength comes from knowledge—knowing the biblical narrative of the end times strengthens people with confidence and brings stability. Those who know God’s biblical end-time plans will walk in stability instead of being overwhelmed with fear, offense, or deception in context to the end-time troubles and pressures. By knowledge of God’s end-time plans, His people will have power to have a calm heart in the storm.

2. **Knowledge:** There is power in knowledge. If you know what the Lord is doing, it will give stability in a time of increasing crisis and darkness. Understanding will bring strength and stability. Isaiah urged them to take the necessary steps to gain understating. We care about the knowing the biblical end-time narrative because it is so dear to His heart that Scripture describes the generation of the Lord’s returns more than any other time frame in history.
3. **Fear of the Lord:** One gift of God to His people in the time of crisis is the assurance that He sees everything and that even our small choices to obey and trust Him matter deeply to Him.

   13 ...but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account...  
   16 Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace...

   (Heb. 4:13, 16)

4. **Filled with justice:** Jerusalem was filled with compromise in Isaiah’s day, but the Lord will intervene with His judgment and grace, resulting in Israel being filled with righteousness.

E. The crisis of Assyria’s betrayal of Jerusalem (33:7-9): Isaiah described the anguish of the Jewish people after the Assyrian King Sennacherib broke his peace treaty with them (2 Kgs. 18:14-17).

   7 Surely their valiant ones shall cry outside; the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.  
   8 The highways lie waste, the traveling man ceases. He [Assyrian king] has broken the covenant, he has despised the cities, he regards no man.  
   9 The earth mourns and languishes, Lebanon is shamed...Sharon is like a wilderness, and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits. (Isa. 33:7-9)

1. **Weep bitterly:** Even the valiant soldiers of Jerusalem would cry openly, and the ambassadors returning from peace talks with the Assyrians wept bitterly.

2. **Covenant:** Things seemed hopeless after Assyria broke the peace agreement with Jerusalem.

3. **Earth mourns:** Lebanon, Sharon, Carmel, and Bashan were known for wealth and beauty.

F. God’s judgment of Assyria (33:10-12): Jerusalem suffered for a season, but in His perfect timing God arose in answer to Isaiah’s prayer for Him to save them from Assyria (33:10-4). We see this as the Assyrians because the word “people” speaks of Gentiles as it does in 33:2

   10 “Now I will rise,” says the LORD. “Now I will be exalted; now I will lift Myself up.  
   11 You shall conceive chaff, you shall bring forth stubble...  
   12 And the people [Assyrians] shall be like the burnings of lime; like thorns cut up they shall be burned in the fire.” (Isa. 33:10-12)

1. **Now:** Isaiah repeated “now” three times—“now I will arise,” “now I will be exalted,” and “now I will lift Myself up.” This spoke of the Lord’s dramatic intervention into the situation in ancient history where He burned the Assyrians like dry thorn bushes.

2. **I will arise:** When God “rises up,” “lifts Himself up” (33:3), or “exalts Himself” (33:5), it speaks the times that He manifests His power to save His people and confront His enemies.

3. **Burn:** The nations making up the Assyrian army will burn quickly like dry thorn bushes. This burning of Assyria included an angel killing 185,000 soldiers in one night (37:36).

4. **The people:** The words “people” and “nations” indicate the Gentile nations (33:3; 34:1).

G. Isaiah called all the nations to pay attention to His judgments (33:13-16): He called them to acknowledge what God did to His people Judah (33:7-9) and to His enemy Assyria (33:10-12). Isaiah describes how different people will respond God in times when His judgments increase—sinnners will be terrified (33:14) and those living godly will dwell in His presence (33:15-16).
Forerunner Study Track: The Forerunner Message in Isaiah 1-45 - MIKE BICKLE
Session 11 The Forerunner Message in Isaiah 32-33

13“Hear, you who are afar off, what I have done; and you who are near, acknowledge My might.”

14The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”

15He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly... 16He will dwell on high... (Isa. 33:13-16)

1. **Hear and acknowledge My might**: Pay attention, you nations who are both far and near! They were called to acknowledge God’s judgments of Judah (33:7-9) and Assyria (33:10-12).

2. **Afar off and near**: The Lord wants people who are “far away” in foreign nations and those who are “near” in Judah to see His judgment of both Judah (33:7-9) and Assyria (33:10-12).

3. **Sinners in Zion**: Those who grew up in Jerusalem and thus were familiar with the Scripture but who refused to embrace God’s leadership are referred to here as “sinners in Zion.”

4. **Afraid**: Sinners and hypocrites in Zion are terrified in seeing God’s zeal in confronting sin. They tremble as they come face to face with their own danger in recognizing God’s zeal in judging both Judah and Assyria. They are terrified because they saw God’s discipline of Judah using the military invasion of the Assyrian army. They reasoned that, “If God zealously intervened with severity when His people cast off His leadership, then where do I stand?”

   a. The nations will learn righteousness from God's judgments—this includes both believers and unbelievers.

   9For when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. (Isa. 26:9)

   b. Isaiah’s message is that even this cynical group will be terrified when they see that God is zealous about confronting rebellion against His leadership. In the end times, He will zealously intervene in history to save His people and destroy His enemies.

   c. His end-time judgments will strike terror into the hearts of people—especially those who are familiar with the Scripture and the things of God. Often those who are the slowest to respond to God’s judgments are “the sinners in Zion.”

   d. Many of them are cynical and are not easily moved to repentance, but some of them will learn righteousness in the time of God’s judgments.

5. **Dwell with fire**: Who can dwell in the manifest presence of God? —He is a consuming fire. Who can live in the presence of a God who is zealous for love and holiness?

24For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. (Deut. 4:24)

6. **Who shall dwell with devouring fire**: Isaiah asked “Who can dwell in God’s presence?” Who can live close to a God who will destroys Assyria and disciplines His nation with severity? The message was clear—all who persist in rebelling against the “God who is a consuming fire” will be burned. Those who live in agreement with His leadership will dwell on high with Him (33:16) and will experience joy and safety in His presence.
7. **He who walks righteously**: Isaiah answered the question in 33:14 by giving six responses of a person who chooses righteousness (33:15). The principle is that the pure in heart will see God (Mt. 5:8). David asked a similar question and gave a similar answer (Ps. 15:1-2; 24:3-4).

8. **Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (Mt. 5:8)**

1. **LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?** 2. **He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart… (Ps. 15:1-2)**

3. **Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?**... 4. **He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. (Ps. 24:3-4)**

8. **He will dwell on high**: A person choosing righteousness will find grace to “dwell on high” (33:16) or to live in the presence of God who Himself dwells on high (33:5).

H. The beauty of the King (33:17-24): God’s people gain strength by encountering Jesus’ beauty (33:6). One of the Spirit’s emphases at the end of the age is on revealing the beauty of God.

17. **Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; they will see the land that is very far off.** 18. **Your heart will meditate on terror: “Where is the scribe? Where is he who weighs? Where is he who counts the towers?”** 19. **You will not see a fierce people, a people of obscure speech… (Isa. 33:17-19)**

1. **Your eyes**: Isaiah is addressing those who choose to live in righteousness (33:15-16)—these are the ones who will see the King’s beauty. The beauty of Jesus will be openly displayed in the end-time storyline (33:17). The body of Christ is to look for the beauty displayed in His leadership. Our beautiful King leads His people as His Bride. Thus, we can joyfully trust His leadership. I do not want to wait for God’s judgment to wake me up to the King’s beauty.

   a. Many will not see God’s beauty but only what seems like “random chaos” when interpreting the escalating pressures that Jesus referred to as the “distress of the nations” (Lk. 21:25).

   25. **And there will be signs in the sun…and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 men’s hearts failing them from fear… (Lk. 21:25-26)**

   b. Many who only see random chaos will be deeply perplexed and overcome with fear.

2. **Land that is very far off**: lit. “land of far distances.” Jesus’ rule extends to the whole earth. The open manifestation of Jesus’ beautiful leadership will fill the earth in the millennial kingdom! His glory and beauty will eventually fill the whole earth.

3. **Your heart will meditate on terror**: The redeemed are to meditate on terror by thinking on the implications of both His past judgments in history and His future judgments against the Antichrist’s empire. There are dimensions of the King’s beauty that are seen in context to His judgments. We are to “meditate on terror” by thinking on God’s judgments that are necessary in accomplishing His glorious plans and in teaching the nations righteousness (26:9).
4. Meditating on judgment in Isaiah’s day included both God’s judgment on Judah (33:7-9) and Assyria (33:10-12). In Isaiah’s day, the people of Judah were to remember the terrifying way in which God’s disciplined them and how He destroyed the 185,000 Assyrian soldiers.

5. **The scribe and he who weighs:** The Assyrian officials occupying Judah in Isaiah’s day included bookkeepers, auditors, tax officials, and accountants who kept meticulous records of the activities occurring under that authority. For example, they weighed out the silver and gold that was paid as tribute to Assyria and took a census of the population, etc. They wrote things down, weighed things out (related to taxes), and counted towers (for military reasons).

6. **Where is the scribe?** Isaiah asked where the Assyrian officials were. They were gone! The result of God’s judgment is that the enemies of His kingdom were removed from the land.

7. **Not see a fierce people:** The Lord promised that the Assyrians and all other foreign powers will be removed forever from the land of Israel when Jesus sits on His throne in Jerusalem.

8. Isaiah’s point was that the time is coming when the Assyrian officials would no longer be in the land of Judah. The Lord was going to deliver Judah from the Assyrians.

I. Isaiah urges the redeemed to look or meditate on the future of Jerusalem or Zion (33:20). Jerusalem will be a city of peace that will never again be defeated.

**Look upon Zion…your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet home, a tabernacle that will not be taken down…**
But there the majestic LORD will be for us a place of broad rivers and streams, in which no galley [small ship] with oars will sail, nor majestic [mighty] ships pass by. **(For the LORD is our Judge, the LORD is our Lawgiver, the LORD is our King; He will save us);**

**23** your [Assyria’s] tackle is loosed, they could not strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail [flag]. Then the prey of great plunder is divided; the lame take the prey. **24** And the inhabitant will not say, “I am sick;” the people who dwell in it will be forgiven their iniquity. (Isa. 33:20-24)

1. **Look at Zion:** Look at the big picture of God’s glorious future for Zion or Jerusalem. In seeing the prophetic destiny of Jerusalem, we gain insight into the glory that will fill the whole earth flowing from Jerusalem (Num. 14:21; Isa. 2:4; 11:9; Hab. 2:14)

2. **Not be taken down:** Jerusalem will be a quiet home compared to a tabernacle that will never be taken down. In other words, Jerusalem will never be defeated again. The Antichrist’s siege against Jerusalem will not succeed because the majestic Lord will be there “for us” or for the people living in Jerusalem (33:21). He will rescue them from all their enemies.

3. **Broad rivers:** Since there are no rivers in Jerusalem, the mention of ships challenges interpreters. I see this as a river of living water flowing out of the millennial temple in Jerusalem (Ezek. 47:1-12; Zech. 14:8). Some see this verse as comparing God to a “river of supply” that blesses His people.

**In that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea [Dead Sea] and half of them toward the western sea [Mediterranean Sea] …** (Zech. 14:8)
...there was water flowing from...the temple...the water was too deep...a river that could not be crossed...This water flows...and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed. (Ezek. 47:1-8)

a. The Psalmist saw a river with streams flowing in Jerusalem (Ps. 46:4).

4 There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God [Jerusalem]... (Ps. 46:4)

b. The Psalmist saw a the “river of God” enriching the earth (Ps. 65:9).

9 You visit the earth...You greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water... (Ps. 65:9)

4. No galley nor majestic ships: No military ship will sail on the river on living water in millennial Jerusalem. A galley was a single-decked ship with oars used in ancient times.

5. Judge, Lawgiver, and King: The reason for Jerusalem’s peace, security, prosperity, and her permanent victory is because Jesus is their Judge (over all the courts), the Lawgiver (over all the legal systems), and the King (the head of the worldwide government). The reason for Jerusalem’s great blessing is that Jesus will live in Jerusalem as their Judge, Lawgiver, and King. In 1620, in the first governing document of the Plymouth Colony called the Mayflower Compact, the Pilgrims made a covenant with God using Isaiah 33:22.

6. Your tackle is loosed: Some see an application of this in ancient history. Isaiah described a disabled and deserted ship of the defeated Assyrian army after an angel killed 185,000 of its soldiers. The tackle in that day included a system of ropes used on a ship to raise and control the sails and to hold the mast in place. The mast is a pole used on a ship to support its sails. The tackle or the ropes being loosed implied that the ship was disabled and its crew killed.

23 ...your [Assyria’s] tackle is loosed, they could not strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail [flag]. Then the prey of great plunder is divided; the lame take the prey. (Isa. 33:32)

7. Great plunder: The ropes that held up the sail or literally “the flag” of the Assyrian ship were loose because the soldiers responsible for their maintenance were killed. When the Judahites saw the sail or flag not flying, they approached the ship to take the great plunder left by the dead soldiers.

8. Lame: The victory would be so great that the lame would take the spoils of the Assyrians.

J. No one is sick, and all are forgiven: There shall be no sickness in the millennial Jerusalem, and all who are permitted to live there are forgiven and walk strong in the grace of God (33:24).

24 And the inhabitant will not say, “I am sick;” the people who dwell in it will be forgiven their iniquity. (Isa. 33:24)

IV. SUMMARY: ISAIAH’S EXHORTATIONS TO THE REMNANT TO GAIN UNDERSTANDING

A. Isaiah exhorted the redeemed to meditate on the truths in Isaiah 33 to get anchored in the biblical storyline and to see the King’s beauty to avoid being overwhelmed by fear, offense, and deception.
1. We need the Holy Spirit’s help to grasp the Bible information on which we meditate.

2. We care about knowing the biblical end-time narrative because it is so dear to His heart that Scripture describes the generation of His return more than any other time frame in history.

3. I am stuck by the fact that though the greatest loss of life in history thus far occurred in World War II when over 50 million people died in six years (1939-45), yet this period was not mentioned one time in a direct way in Scripture. The 150 chapters focus on the end-time narrative.

B. **Knowledge** (33:6): The redeemed are to take time to gain knowledge the of biblical end-time narrative. They will gain strength and stability by the knowledge of God’s victorious plan.

   *Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, and the strength of salvation… (Isa. 33:6)*

1. Strength comes from knowledge: Knowing the biblical narrative of the end times strengthens God’s people with confidence and strength even in a time when darkness and trouble increases. Those who know God’s will walk in stability instead of being overwhelmed with fear, offense, or deception in context to the end-time troubles and pressures.

2. By “knowledge” His people will have power to have a calm heart in the storm. We intentionally engage our mind in this biblical storyline because it will change how we interpret difficult events. In the secular world, those with “big data” or analytics use quantum computing to manipulate data to get an advantage in the time of crisis. The same in kingdom of God, those with “data” of the end-time narrative will be in a place to gain strength. Our paradigm of life and the future is shaped by the biblical narrative of the future.

C. **See the King’s beauty** (33:17): The redeem will see more of the King’s beauty in context to the biblical end-time narrative. We can see His beauty all around us—in creation, but also in His end-time storyline. We pray, “Show us Your beauty in Your end-time story.”

   *Your eyes will see the King in His beauty… (Isa. 33:17)*

D. **Mediate on terror** (33:18): The redeemed are to remember the way the Lord throughout history has destroyed His enemies and disciplined His people out of His love.

   *Your heart will meditate on terror… (Isa. 33:17-19)*

1. Meditating on terror is sandwiched between the exhortation to see the King’s beauty (33:17) and to look on the glorious prophetic destiny of Jerusalem and, thus, the nations (33:20).

2. It is important to grasp the negative aspects of the coming pressure and judgments before they occur. It is more difficult to assimilate crisis events while suffering in them.
E. **Look at Zion** (33:20): The redeemed are to look at the prophetic destiny of Jerusalem knowing that God’s glory being manifest in Jerusalem is the precursor to the whole earth being filled with the glory of God (Hab. 2:14). In Steven Covey’s best-selling book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, in habit #2, he emphasized the value of “beginning with the end in mind.”

20 *Look upon Zion…your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet home, a tabernacle that will not be taken down…* (Isa. 33:20)

F. **Shepherds**: The Lord promised to raise up shepherds “after His own heart” like David—they will feed people on understanding of God’s heart and ways (Jer. 3:15).

15 “*Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding.*” (Jer. 3:15)

1. These shepherds will strengthen others compared to being a shade to the weary, water to the thirsty, and a shelter in the storm (32:2). These shepherds will be part of the “solution” instead adding to the “problem” in an hour when multitudes will be overwhelmed with fear, offense, deception, and compromise.

2 *A man [godly leaders] will be as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.* (Isa. 32:2)

2. I assume the two witnesses will speak the prophetic messages related to the truths in Isaiah.