

Wednesday, September 18

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Isaiah 28:14 - 30:11

28 14 Therefore, listen to this message from the LORD, you scoffing rulers in Jerusalem. **15** You boast, “We have struck a bargain to cheat death and have made a deal to dodge the grave. The coming destruction can never touch us, for we have built a strong refuge made of lies and deception.” **16** Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: “Look! I am placing a foundation stone in Jerusalem, a firm and tested stone. It is a precious cornerstone that is safe to build on. Whoever believes need never be shaken. **17** I will test you with the measuring line of justice and the plumb line of righteousness. Since your refuge is made of lies, a hailstorm will knock it down. Since it is made of deception, a flood will sweep it away. **18** I will cancel the bargain you made to cheat death, and I will overturn your deal to dodge the grave. When the terrible enemy sweeps through, you will be trampled into the ground. **19** Again and again that flood will come, morning after morning, day and night, until you are carried away.” This message will bring terror to your people. **20** The bed you have made is too short to lie on. The blankets are too narrow to cover you. **21** The LORD will come as he did against the Philistines at Mount Perazim and against the Amorites at Gibeon. He will come to do a strange thing; he will come to do an unusual deed: **22** For the Lord, the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, has plainly said that he is determined to crush the whole land. So scoff no more, or your punishment will be even greater. **23** Listen to me; listen, and pay close attention. **24** Does a farmer always plow and never sow? Is he forever cultivating the soil and never planting? **25** Does he not finally plant his seeds— black cumin, cumin, wheat, barley, and emmer wheat— each in its proper way, and each in its proper place? **26** The farmer knows just what to do, for God has given him understanding. **27** A heavy sledge is never used to thresh black cumin; rather, it is beaten with a light stick. A threshing wheel is never rolled on cumin; instead, it is beaten lightly with a flail. **28** Grain for bread is easily crushed, so he doesn’t keep on pounding it. He threshes it under the wheels of a cart, but he doesn’t pulverize it. **29** The LORD of Heaven’s Armies is a wonderful teacher, and he gives the farmer great wisdom.

29 1 “What sorrow awaits Ariel, the City of David. Year after year you celebrate your feasts. **2** Yet I will bring disaster upon you, and there will be much weeping and sorrow. For Jerusalem will become what her name Ariel means— an altar covered with blood. **3** I will be your enemy, surrounding Jerusalem and attacking its walls. I will build siege towers and destroy

it. **4** Then deep from the earth you will speak; from low in the dust your words will come. Your voice will whisper from the ground like a ghost conjured up from the grave. **5** “But suddenly, your ruthless enemies will be crushed like the finest of dust. Your many attackers will be driven away like chaff before the wind. Suddenly, in an instant, **6** I, the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, will act for you with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and storm and consuming fire. **7** All the nations fighting against Jerusalem will vanish like a dream! Those who are attacking her walls will vanish like a vision in the night. **8** A hungry person dreams of eating but wakes up still hungry. A thirsty person dreams of drinking but is still faint from thirst when morning comes. So it will be with your enemies, with those who attack Mount Zion.” **9** Are you amazed and incredulous? Don’t you believe it? Then go ahead and be blind. You are stupid, but not from wine! You stagger, but not from liquor! **10** For the LORD has poured out on you a spirit of deep sleep. He has closed the eyes of your prophets and visionaries. **11** All the future events in this vision are like a sealed book to them. When you give it to those who can read, they will say, “We can’t read it because it is sealed.” **12** When you give it to those who cannot read, they will say, “We don’t know how to read.” **13** And so the Lord says, “These people say they are mine. They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. And their worship of me is nothing but man-made rules learned by rote. **14** Because of this, I will once again astound these hypocrites with amazing wonders. The wisdom of the wise will pass away, and the intelligence of the intelligent will disappear.” **15** What sorrow awaits those who try to hide their plans from the LORD, who do their evil deeds in the dark! “The LORD can’t see us,” they say. “He doesn’t know what’s going on!” **16** How foolish can you be? He is the Potter, and he is certainly greater than you, the clay! Should the created thing say of the one who made it, “He didn’t make me”? Does a jar ever say, “The potter who made me is stupid”? **17** Soon—and it will not be very long — the forests of Lebanon will become a fertile field, and the fertile field will yield bountiful crops. **18** In that day the deaf will hear words read from a book, and the blind will see through the gloom and darkness. **19** The humble will be filled with fresh joy from the LORD . The poor will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. **20** The scoffer will be gone, the arrogant will disappear, and those who plot evil will be killed. **21** Those who convict the innocent by their false testimony will disappear. A similar fate awaits those who use trickery to pervert justice and who tell lies to destroy the innocent. **22** That is why the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, says to the people of Israel, “My people will no longer be ashamed or turn pale with fear. **23** For when they see their many children and all the blessings I have given them, they will recognize the holiness of the Holy One of Jacob. They will stand in awe of the God of Israel. **24** Then the wayward will gain understanding, and complainers will accept instruction.

30 1 “What sorrow awaits my rebellious children,” says the LORD . “You make plans that are contrary to mine. You make alliances not directed by my Spirit, thus piling up your sins. **2** For without consulting me, you have gone down to Egypt for help. You have put your trust in Pharaoh’s protection. You have tried to hide in his shade. **3** But by trusting Pharaoh, you will be humiliated, and by depending on him, you will be disgraced. **4** For though his power extends to Zoan and his officials have arrived in Hanes, **5** all who trust in him will be ashamed. He will not help you. Instead, he will disgrace you.” **6** This message came to me concerning the animals in the Negev: The caravan moves slowly across the terrible desert to Egypt— donkeys weighed down with riches and camels loaded with treasure— all to pay for Egypt’s protection. They travel through the wilderness, a place of lionesses and lions, a place where vipers and poisonous snakes live. All this, and Egypt will give you nothing in return. **7** Egypt’s promises are worthless! Therefore, I call her Rahab— the Harmless Dragon. **8** Now go and write down these words. Write them in a book. They will stand until the end of time as a witness **9** that these people are stubborn rebels who refuse to pay attention to the LORD ’s instructions. **10** They tell the seers, “Stop seeing visions!” They tell the prophets, “Don’t tell us what is right. Tell us nice things. Tell us lies. **11** Forget all this gloom. Get off your narrow path. Stop telling us about your ‘Holy One of Israel.’”

Galatians 3:23 - 4:31

3 23 Before the way of faith in Christ was available to us, we were placed under guard by the law. We were kept in protective custody, so to speak, until the way of faith was revealed. **24** Let me put it another way. The law was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith. **25** And now that the way of faith has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian. **26** For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. **27** And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. **28** There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. **29** And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God’s promise to Abraham belongs to you.

4 1 Think of it this way. If a father dies and leaves an inheritance for his young children, those children are not much better off than slaves until they grow up, even though they actually own everything their father had. **2** They have to obey their guardians until they reach whatever age their father set. **3** And that’s the way it was with us before Christ came. We were like children; we were slaves to the basic spiritual principles of this world. **4** But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. **5** God sent him to buy freedom for us

who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. **6** And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.” **7** Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir. **8** Before you Gentiles knew God, you were slaves to so-called gods that do not even exist. **9** So now that you know God (or should I say, now that God knows you), why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to the weak and useless spiritual principles of this world? **10** You are trying to earn favor with God by observing certain days or months or seasons or years. **11** I fear for you. Perhaps all my hard work with you was for nothing. **12** Dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to live as I do in freedom from these things, for I have become like you Gentiles—free from those laws. You did not mistreat me when I first preached to you. **13** Surely you remember that I was sick when I first brought you the Good News. **14** But even though my condition tempted you to reject me, you did not despise me or turn me away. No, you took me in and cared for me as though I were an angel from God or even Christ Jesus himself. **15** Where is that joyful and grateful spirit you felt then? I am sure you would have taken out your own eyes and given them to me if it had been possible. **16** Have I now become your enemy because I am telling you the truth? **17** Those false teachers are so eager to win your favor, but their intentions are not good. They are trying to shut you off from me so that you will pay attention only to them. **18** If someone is eager to do good things for you, that’s all right; but let them do it all the time, not just when I’m with you. **19** Oh, my dear children! I feel as if I’m going through labor pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives. **20** I wish I were with you right now so I could change my tone. But at this distance I don’t know how else to help you. **21** Tell me, you who want to live under the law, do you know what the law actually says? **22** The Scriptures say that Abraham had two sons, one from his slave wife and one from his freeborn wife. **23** The son of the slave wife was born in a human attempt to bring about the fulfillment of God’s promise. But the son of the freeborn wife was born as God’s own fulfillment of his promise. **24** These two women serve as an illustration of God’s two covenants. The first woman, Hagar, represents Mount Sinai where people received the law that enslaved them. **25** And now Jerusalem is just like Mount Sinai in Arabia, because she and her children live in slavery to the law. **26** But the other woman, Sarah, represents the heavenly Jerusalem. She is the free woman, and she is our mother. **27** As Isaiah said, “Rejoice, O childless woman, you who have never given birth! Break into a joyful shout, you who have never been in labor! For the desolate woman now has more children than the woman who lives with her husband!” **28** And you, dear brothers and sisters, are children of the promise, just like Isaac. **29** But you are now being persecuted by those who want you to keep the law, just as Ishmael, the child born by human effort, persecuted Isaac, the child born by the power of the Spirit. **30** But what do the Scriptures say about that? “Get rid of

the slave and her son, for the son of the slave woman will not share the inheritance with the free woman's son." **31** So, dear brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman; we are children of the free woman.

Psalm 62:1 - 12

62 1 I wait quietly before God, for my victory comes from him. **2** He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will never be shaken. **3** So many enemies against one man— all of them trying to kill me. To them I'm just a broken-down wall or a tottering fence. **4** They plan to topple me from my high position. They delight in telling lies about me. They praise me to my face but curse me in their hearts. Interlude **5** Let all that I am wait quietly before God, for my hope is in him. **6** He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will not be shaken. **7** My victory and honor come from God alone. He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me. **8** O my people, trust in him at all times. Pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge. Interlude **9** Common people are as worthless as a puff of wind, and the powerful are not what they appear to be. If you weigh them on the scales, together they are lighter than a breath of air. **10** Don't make your living by extortion or put your hope in stealing. And if your wealth increases, don't make it the center of your life. **11** God has spoken plainly, and I have heard it many times: Power, O God, belongs to you; **12** unfailing love, O Lord, is yours. Surely you repay all people according to what they have done.

Proverbs 23:19 - 21

23 19 My child, listen and be wise: Keep your heart on the right course. **20** Do not carouse with drunkards or feast with gluttons, **21** for they are on their way to poverty, and too much sleep clothes them in rags.