
ISAIAH 33: 1 Woe to you who destroy, but you weren't destroyed; and who betray, but nobody betrayed you! When you have finished destroying, you will be destroyed; and when you have made an end of betrayal, you will be betrayed.

This chapter contains the sequel of the prophecy respecting Sennacherib. The prophet addresses himself to the Assyrian monarch, Isa 33:1-4. The mercy and power of God acknowledged by the Jews, Isa 33:5, Isa 33:6. Distress and despair of the Jews at the approach of Sennacherib, Isa 33:7-9. Gracious promise of deliverance, Isa 33:10-13. Dreadful apprehensions of the wicked, and security of the righteous, Isa 33:14-17. The security of the Jews under the reign of Hezekiah, and the wretched condition of Sennacherib and his army, Isa 33:18-24.

The plan of the prophecy continued in this chapter, and which is manifestly distinct from the foregoing, is peculiarly elegant. To set it in a proper light, it will be necessary to mark the transitions from one part of it to another.

In Isa 33:1, the prophet addresses himself to Sennacherib, briefly, but strongly and elegantly, expressing the injustice of his ambitious designs, and the sudden disappointments of them.

In Isa 33:2, the Jews are introduced offering up their earnest supplications to God in their present distressful condition; with expressions of their trust and confidence in his protection.

In Isa 33:3 and Isa 33:4 the prophet in the name of God, or rather God himself, is introduced addressing himself to Sennacherib, and threatening him that, notwithstanding the terror which he had occasioned in the invaded countries, yet he should fall, and become an easy prey to those whom he had intended to subdue.

In Isa 33:5 and Isa 33:6, a chorus of Jews is introduced, acknowledging the mercy and power of God, who had undertaken to protect them; extolling it with direct opposition to the boasted power of their enemies, and celebrating the wisdom and piety of their king Hezekiah, who had placed his confidence in the favor of God.

Then follows, in Isa 33:7, Isa 33:8, and Isa 33:9, a description of the distress and despair of the Jews, upon the king of Assyria's marching against Jerusalem, and sending his summons to them to surrender, after the treaty he had made with Hezekiah on the conditions of his paying, as he actually did pay to him, three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. 2Kgs 18:14-16.

In Isa 33:10, God himself is again introduced, declaring that he will interpose in this critical situation of affairs, and disappoint the vain designs of the enemies of his people, by discomfiting and utterly consuming them.

Then follows, Isa 33:11-22, still in the person of God, which however falls at last into that of the prophet, a description of the dreadful apprehensions of the wicked in those times of distress and imminent danger; finely contrasted with the confidence and security of the righteous, and their trust in the promises of God that he will be their never-failing strength and protector.

The whole concludes, in the person of the prophet, with a description of the security of the Jews under the protection of God, and of the wretched state of Sennacherib and his army, wholly discomfited, and exposed to be plundered even by the weakest of the enemy.

Much of the beauty of this passage depends on the explanation above given of Isa 33:3 and Isa 33:4, as addressed by the prophet, or by God himself, to Sennacherib; not as it is usually taken, as addressed by the Jews to God, Isa 33:3, and then Isa 33:4, as addressed to the Assyrians. To set this in a clear light, it may be of use to compare it with a passage of the Prophet Joel; where, speaking of the destruction caused by the locusts, he sets in the same strong light of opposition as Isaiah does here, the power of the enemy, and the power of Jehovah, who would destroy that enemy. Thus Isaiah to Sennacherib: - "When thou didst raise thyself up, the nations were dispersed" - Isa 33:3. "But now will I arise, saith Jehovah; Now will I be exalted." Isa 33:10.

And thus Joel, Joe 2:20, Joe 2:21 : - "His stink shall come up, and his ill savor shall ascend; Though he hath done great things. Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice; For Jehovah will do great things." - L.

Verse 1

And dearest treacherously "Thou plunderer" - See note on Isa 21:2 (note).

When thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously "When thou art weary of plundering" - "כנלתך cannellothecha, alibi non extat in s. s. nisi f. Job 15:29 - simplicius est legere ככלתך kechallothecha. Vid. Capell.; nec repugnat Vitringa. Vid. Dan 9:24. כלה calah התים hatim." - Secker.

ISAIAH 33: 2 LORD, be gracious to us. We have waited for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.

Verse 2

Be thou their arm every morning "Be thou our strength every morning" - For זרעם zeroam, their arm, the Syriac, Chaldee, and Vulgate read זרענו zeroenu, our arm, in the first person of the pronoun, not the third: the edition of Felix Pratensis has זרעתינו zerootheynu in the margin.

The prophet is here praying against the enemies of God's people; and yet this part of the prayer seems to be in their behalf: but from the above authorities it appears that Our arm is the true reading, though I do not find it confirmed by any of Kennicott's, De Rossi's, or my own MSS. My old MS. Bible has, - Be thou our arm in early.

ISAIAH 33: 3 At the noise of the thunder, the peoples have fled. When you lift yourself up, the nations are scattered.

Verse 3

At the noise of the tumult "From thy terrible voice" - For המון hamon, "multitude," the Septuagint and Syriac read אמיך amich, "terrible," whom I follow.

ISAIAH 33: 4 Your plunder will be gathered as the caterpillar gathers. Men will leap on it as locusts leap.

ISAIAH 33: 5 The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high. He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness.

ISAIAH 33: 6 There will be stability in your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge. The fear of the LORD is your treasure.

Verse 6

His treasure "Thy treasure" - Ὁ θησαυρος σου, Sym. He had in his copy אצרך otsarcha, "thy treasure, "not אצרו otsaro, "his treasure."

ISAIAH 33: 7 Behold, their valiant ones cry outside; the ambassadors of peace weep bitterly.

Verse 7

Their valiant ones shall cry without "The mighty men raise a grievous cry" - Three MSS. read אראלים erelim, that is, lions of God, or strong lions. So they called valiant men heroes; which appellation the Arabians and Persians still use. See Bochart. Hieroz. Part 1 lib. 3 cap. 1. "Mahomet, ayant reconnu Hamzeh son oncle pour homme de courage et de valeur, lui donne le titre ou surnom d'Assad Allah, qui signifie le lion de Dieu." D'Herbelot, p. 427. And for חצה chatsah, the Syriac and Chaldee, read קשה kashah, whom I follow. The Chaldee, Syriac, Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion read אראה ereh lahem, or יראה yireh, with what meaning is not clear.

The word אראלם erellam, which we translate valiant ones, is very difficult; no man knows what it means. Kimchi supposes that it is the name of the angel that smote the Assyrian camp! The Vulgate, and my old MS., translate it seers; and most of the Versions understand it in this way. None of the MSS. give us any help, but as we see above in Lowth.

ISAIAH 33: 8 The highways are desolate. The travelling man ceases. The covenant is broken. He has despised the cities. He doesn't respect man.

ISAIAH 33: 9 The land mourns and languishes. Lebanon is confounded and withers away. Sharon is like a desert, and Bashan and Carmel are stripped bare.

Verse 9

Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits "Bashan and Carmel are stripped of their beauty" - Φανερα εστα, made manifest. Sept. They read ונערה veneerah.

ISAIAH 33: 10 "Now I will arise," says the LORD; "Now I will lift myself up. Now I will be exalted.

ISAIAH 33: 11 You will conceive chaff. You will give birth to stubble. Your breath is a fire that will devour you.

Verse 11

Your breath "And my spirit" - "For רוחכם ruchechem, your spirit, read כמו רוחי ruchi kemo. "Secker. Which reading is confirmed by the Chaldee, where מימרי meymri, "my word, "answers to רוחי ruchi, "my spirit."

ISAIAH 33: 12 The peoples will be like the burning of lime, like thorns that are cut down and burned in the fire.

ISAIAH 33: 13 Hear, you who are far off, what I have done; and, you who are near, acknowledge my might."

ISAIAH 33: 14 The sinners in Zion are afraid. Trembling has seized the godless ones. Who among us can live with the devouring fire? Who among us can live with everlasting burning?

Verse 14

The sinners in Zion are afraid - Zion has been generally considered as a type of the Church of God. Now all the members of God's Church should be holy, and given to good works; sinners in Zion, therefore, are portentous beings! but, alas! where are they not? The Targum on this verse is worthy of notice: "The sinners in Zion are broken down; fear hath seized the ungodly, who are suffering for their ways. They say, Who among us shall dwell in Zion, where the splendor of the Divine Majesty is like a consuming fire? Who of us shall dwell in Jerusalem, where the ungodly are judged and delivered into hell for an eternal burning?" Everdurynge brennyngis. Old MS. Bible.

ISAIAH 33: 15 He who walks righteously, and speaks blamelessly; He who despises the gain of oppressions, who gestures with his hands, refusing to take a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of blood, and shuts his eyes from looking at evil—

Verse 15

That stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood "Who stoppeth his ears to the proposal of bloodshed" - A MS. reads בדמים bedamim, "in blood."

ISAIAH 33: 16 he will dwell on high. His place of defence will be the fortress of rocks. His bread will be supplied. His waters will be sure.

ISAIAH 33: 17 Your eyes will see the king in his beauty. They will see a distant land.

ISAIAH 33: 18 Your heart will meditate on the terror. Where is he who counted? Where is he who weighed? Where is he who counted the towers?

Verse 18

Where is the scribe? - The person appointed by the king of Assyria to estimate their number and property in reference to their being heavily taxed.

Where is the receiver? - Or he who was to have collected this tribute.

Where is he that counted the towers? - That is, the commander of the enemy's forces, who surveyed the fortifications of the city, and took an account of the height, strength, and situation of the walls and towers, that he might know where to make the assault with the greatest advantage; as Capaneus before Thebes is represented in a passage of the Phoenissae of Euripides, which Grotius has applied as an illustration of this place: - Εκεινος ἑπτα προσβασεις τεκμαιρεται Πυργων, ανω τε και κατω τειχη μετρων.

Ver. 187. "To these seven turrets each approach he marks;

The walls from their proud summit to their base

Measuring with eager eye."

He that counted the towers "Those who were ordered to review the fortified places in Judea, that they might be manned and provisioned for the king of Assyria. So sure was he of gaining Jerusalem and subduing the whole of Judea, that he had already formed all these arrangements." - Dodd's notes.

ISAIAH 33: 19 You will no longer see the fierce people, a people of a deep speech that you can't comprehend, with a strange language that you can't understand.

ISAIAH 33: 20 Look at Zion, the city of our appointed festivals. Your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation, a tent that won't be removed. Its stakes will never be plucked up, nor will any of its cords be broken.

Verse 20

Look upon Zion "Thou shalt see Zion" - For הִרָא chazeh, "see," read תִּרְאֶה techezeh, "thou shalt see," with the Chaldee. - Houbigant. At the end of this verse we find in the Masoretic Bibles this note, חֲצִי הַסֵּפֶר chatsi hassepher, "the middle of the book;" that is the middle of the book of Isaiah.

ISAIAH 33: 21 But there the LORD will be with us in majesty, a place of broad rivers and streams, in which no galley with oars will go, neither will any gallant ship pass by there.

Verse 21

The glorious Lord "The glorious name of Jehovah" - I take דָּשׁ shem for a noun, with the Septuagint and Syriac. See Psa 20:1; Pro 18:10.

ISAIAH 33: 22 For the LORD is our judge. The LORD is our lawgiver. The LORD is our king. He will save us.

ISAIAH 33: 23 Your rigging is untied. They couldn't strengthen the foot of their mast. They couldn't spread the sail. Then the prey of a great plunder was divided. The lame took the prey.

Verse 23

Thy tacklings are loosed - Here the Assyrians are represented under the figure of a ship wrecked by a violent storm; and the people on the beach, young, old, feeble, and diseased, gathering the spoil without any to hinder them. Kimchi, who understands the whole of this chapter of Hezekiah and the king of Assyria, says, "There are others of our rabbins who apply it all to the days of the Messiah."

Their mast "Thy mast" - For תרנמ tornam, "their mast," the Syriac reads תרניך torneycha, "thy mast;" the Septuagint and Vulgate, תרנך tornecha, ὁ ἴστος σου ἀκλίεν, "thy mast is fallen aside." - Septuagint.

They seem to have read נטה natah or פנה panah, תרנך tornecha, or rather, לא כן lo con, "is not firm," the negative having been omitted in the present text by mistake. However, I have followed their sense, which seems very probable, as the present reading is to me extremely obscure.

ISAIAH 33: 24 The inhabitant won't say, "I am sick." The people who dwell therein will be forgiven their iniquity.

Verse 24

And the inhabitant shall not say - This verse is somewhat obscure. The meaning of it seems to be, that the army of Sennacherib shall by the stroke of God be reduced to so shattered and so weak a condition, that the Jews shall fall upon the remains of them, and plunder them without resistance; that the most infirm and disabled of the people of Jerusalem shall come in for their share of the spoil; the lame shall seize the prey; even the sick and the diseased shall throw aside their infirmities, and recover strength enough to hasten to the general plunder. See above.

The last line of the verse is parallel to the first, and expresses the same sense in other words. Sickness being considered as a visitation from God. a punishment of sin; the forgiveness of sin is equivalent to the removal of a disease. Thus the psalmist: - "Who forgiveth all thy sin; And healeth all thine infirmities." Psa 103:3.

Where the latter line only varies the expression of the former. And our blessed Savior reasons with the Jews on the same principle: "Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?" Mar 2:9. See also Mat 8:17; Isa 53:4. Qui locus Isaiae, 1Pet 2:24, refertur ad remissionem peccatorum: hic vero ad sanationem morborum, quia ejusdem potentiae et bonitatis est utrumque praestare; et, quia peccatis remissis, et morbi, qui fructus sunt peccatorum, pelluntur. "Which passage of Isaiah has reference, in 1Pet 2:24, to the remission of sins, and here to the healing of diseases, because both are effects of the same power and goodness; and because with the remission of sins was associated the removal of disorders, the fruits of sin." - Wetstein on Mat 8:17.

That this prophecy was exactly fulfilled, I think we may gather from the history of this great event given by the prophet himself. It is plain that Hezekiah, by his treaty with Sennacherib, by which he agreed to pay him three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold, had stripped himself of

his whole treasure. He not only gave him all the silver and gold that was in his own treasury and in that of the temple, but was even forced to cut off the gold from the doors of the temple and from the pillars, with which he had himself overlaid them, to satisfy the demands of the king of Assyria: but after the destruction of the Assyrian army, we find that he "had exceeding much riches, and that he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, "etc.2Chr 32:27. He was so rich, that out of pride and vanity he displayed his wealth to the ambassadors from Babylon. This cannot be otherwise accounted for, than by the prodigious spoil that was taken on the destruction of the Assyrian army. - L. And thus, in the providence of God, he had the wealth which was exacted from him restored.