

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Isaiah Chapter 28 — The Woe Against Ephraim's Pride and the Cornerstone in Zion

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Isaiah Chapter 28 begins a new series of prophetic warnings marked by the word:

“Woe.”

The chapter first addresses:

Ephraim.

The northern kingdom of Israel.

Its leaders had become characterized by:

Pride.

Drunkenness.

Self-confidence.

Spiritual blindness.

Their beautiful and fertile land had become like:

A fading flower.

Their glory looked impressive.

But it was already dying.

Isaiah then contrasts two crowns.

The first is:

The proud crown of Ephraim.

It fades.

It falls.

It is trampled.

The second is:

The Lord Himself.

Isaiah says:

“The Lord Almighty will be a crown of glory.”

Human glory fades.

God does not.

The chapter then turns toward:

Priests.

Prophets.

Religious leaders.

Those who should have provided:

Spiritual clarity.

Moral leadership.

Sound judgment.

Instead, they stagger because of:

Wine.

Strong drink.

Their judgment is corrupted.

Their tables are defiled.

Their minds are clouded.

Then Isaiah records the mocking response of those who reject God’s message.

They complain that the prophet’s teaching sounds like:

“Rule on rule, rule on rule, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.”

The language may reflect their sarcastic ridicule of Isaiah’s repeated warnings.

They treat God’s instruction as:

Childish.

Repetitive.

Annoying.

Because they refuse clear revelation, God says they will hear:

Foreign lips.

Strange tongues.

The language they mocked will be replaced by the language of:

Conquerors.

God offered:

Rest.

Repose.

But:

“They would not listen.”

The chapter then shifts to Judah’s rulers.

They have created what Isaiah calls:

A covenant with death.

An agreement with the grave.

This probably represents their confidence in political arrangements, deceptive alliances, and human strategies they believed would protect them from invading judgment.

Their security is built upon:

Lies.

Falsehood.

God answers their false foundation with:

A true foundation.

“See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation.”

The New Testament directly applies this cornerstone to:

Jesus Christ.

There are therefore two foundations in the chapter:

A refuge of lies.

And:

God’s Cornerstone.

One collapses.

The other stands.

Finally Isaiah uses the wisdom of farming to explain:

God's discipline.

A farmer does not:

Plow forever.

Thresh every crop the same way.

Crush grain endlessly.

He knows:

What tool to use.

How much pressure to apply.

When to stop.

Isaiah says this agricultural wisdom ultimately comes from:

God.

The message is powerful:

God's discipline is neither:

Random.

Thoughtless.

Cruel.

Endless.

It is:

Measured.

Wise.

Purposeful.

The central truth of Isaiah 28 is:

Pride, drunkenness, corrupted leadership, mockery of God's Word, and false security will collapse under divine judgment, but God has laid a sure and precious Cornerstone in Zion, and those who trust in Him will stand secure under the wise, measured, and purposeful discipline of the Lord.

I. WOE TO EPHRAIM'S PROUD CROWN

Isaiah 28:1 — Fading Glory

“Woe to the proud crown of Ephraim's drunkards, to its fading flower of glorious beauty, set on the head of a fertile valley—to those overcome with wine!”

Ephraim represented:

The northern kingdom.

Its capital region was:

Beautiful.

Fertile.

Prosperous.

But Isaiah calls its glory:

A fading flower.

Why?

Because:

Pride.

Drunkenness.

Spiritual decay.

Had corrupted it.

Cross References

Hosea 4:11

Sexual sin and intoxication rob people of sound judgment and take away spiritual understanding.

Proverbs 23:29

Those who linger over alcohol bring sorrow, conflict, complaints, wounds, and impaired judgment upon themselves.

James 1:11

Like a flower scorched by the sun, human prosperity and outward beauty can quickly fade away.

Spiritual Principle

A beautiful society can be spiritually dying beneath the surface.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Do not mistake outward prosperity for inward health.

II. GOD HAS A STRONG AND MIGHTY INSTRUMENT

Isaiah 28:2 — Judgment Like a Storm

“See, the Lord has one who is strong and mighty. Like a hailstorm and a destructive wind, like a flood of mighty waters overflowing, he will throw it violently to the ground with his hand.”

The image is overwhelming.

Judgment comes like:

Hail.

Wind.

Flood.

Historically, Assyria stands behind this imagery as the great imperial instrument threatening the northern kingdom.

But the greater emphasis is:

The Lord controls the event.

Cross References

Isaiah 30:30

The Lord’s judgment is pictured with thunder, storm, fire, cloudburst, hail, and overwhelming force.

Ezekiel 13:11

God warns that a falsely built wall will collapse under flooding rain, destructive hail, and violent winds.

Revelation 16:21

Final judgment imagery includes enormous hail falling upon humanity under divine wrath.

Spiritual Principle

What pride builds slowly can be swept away quickly.

III. EPHRAIM'S CROWN WILL BE TRAMPLED

Isaiah 28:3 — Pride Underfoot

“The proud crown of Ephraim’s drunkards will be trampled underfoot.”

The crown symbolizes:

Honor.

Pride.

Status.

Prestige.

Soon:

It is under someone’s feet.

Cross References

Proverbs 16:18

Pride leads toward destruction, and arrogance prepares the way for collapse.

Daniel 4:37

Nebuchadnezzar finally acknowledges that God is able to humble everyone who walks in pride.

Obadiah 1:3

Pride deceives those who feel secure and convinces them that no one can bring them down.

Spiritual Principle

Pride always believes:

“I will remain above.”

God can put it:

Underfoot.

IV. EPHRAIM WILL FALL LIKE AN EARLY FIG

Isaiah 28:4 — Quickly Devoured

“That fading flower of glorious beauty, set on the head of a fertile valley, will be like a ripe fig before summer. As soon as someone sees it and takes it in his hand, he swallows it down.”

An early ripe fig is:

Desired.

Immediately eaten.

The image communicates:

Speed.

Ease.

Sudden conquest.

Cross References

James 1:10

The rich should remember that earthly glory passes away like a flower.

Nahum 3:12

Fortresses are compared to fig trees with ripe fruit that fall immediately when shaken.

Psalms 103:15

Human life and glory are compared to grass and flowers that flourish briefly and then disappear.

Spiritual Principle

What looks attractive and secure can disappear quickly when judgment arrives.

V. THE LORD BECOMES THE TRUE CROWN

Isaiah 28:5 — A Crown That Does Not Fade

“In that day the Lord Almighty will be a crown of glory, a beautiful wreath for the remnant of His people.”

What a contrast.

Ephraim's crown:

Fades.

God:

Becomes the crown.

Human glory is replaced by:

Divine glory.

Cross References

Isaiah 62:3

God's restored people are pictured as a beautiful crown and royal diadem held securely in the Lord's hand.

Zechariah 9:16

God's people are pictured like precious stones shining in His land when He saves them.

Revelation 2:10

Christ promises the crown of life to those who remain faithful even through suffering.

Spiritual Principle

The safest glory is:

God Himself.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When God becomes your crown, you no longer need fading human glory to tell you who you are.

VI. GOD GIVES JUSTICE AND STRENGTH

Isaiah 28:6 — Wisdom in Court and Strength at the Gate

“He will be a spirit of justice to the one who sits in judgment, a source of strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.”

God provides:

Wisdom.

Justice.

Strength.

For:

Judges.

Defenders.

Leadership functions correctly only when:

God supplies what is needed.

Cross References

Isaiah 11:2

The Spirit of the Lord rests upon the Messiah with wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, and reverence for God.

1 Kings 3:9

Solomon asks God for a discerning heart so he can judge the people rightly and distinguish good from evil.

Psalms 18:39

God equips His servant with strength for battle and enables him to stand against opposition.

Spiritual Principle

Good leadership requires more than office.

It requires:

God-given wisdom and strength.

VII. PRIESTS AND PROPHETS ARE DRUNK

Isaiah 28:7 — Spiritual Leaders Lose Judgment

“But these also reel from wine and stagger from strong drink; priests and prophets stagger with drink, they are befuddled with wine, they stumble in judgment.”

This is especially serious because:

Priests.

Prophets.

Should guide:

Others.

Instead:

They cannot guide themselves.

Alcohol has clouded:

Discernment.

Judgment.

Spiritual responsibility.

Cross References

Isaiah 5:11

Isaiah condemns those who chase strong drink from early morning and continue drinking late into the night.

Micah 2:11

Micah says a people committed to falsehood would gladly accept a prophet who promised them wine and strong drink.

1 Timothy 3:3

Christian overseers are instructed not to be addicted to wine or controlled by violent, undisciplined habits.

Spiritual Principle

A leader who cannot govern himself is dangerous when asked to guide others.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Spiritual leadership and impaired judgment should never be treated as compatible.

VIII. THEIR TABLES ARE DEFILED

Isaiah 28:8 — No Clean Place

“Their tables are covered with vomit; there is not a clean spot.”

Isaiah does not soften the image.

This is:

Disgusting.

Humiliating.

Deliberate.

The leaders who should represent:

Holiness.

Are surrounded by:

Defilement.

Cross References

Proverbs 23:21

Drunkenness and gluttony lead to poverty, laziness, and degradation.

2 Peter 2:22

Persistent return to corruption is compared to a dog returning to its vomit and a washed animal returning to filth.

Habakkuk 2:16

Those who sought honor through indulgence will instead be filled with shame and humiliation.

Spiritual Principle

Sin eventually reveals its ugliness.

IX. THE PEOPLE MOCK GOD’S TEACHING

Isaiah 28:9 — “Who Is He Trying to Teach?”

“‘Who is He trying to teach knowledge to? To whom is He explaining His message? To children just weaned from milk, to those just taken from the breast?’”

Many interpreters understand verses 9–10 as mocking speech.

The leaders resent Isaiah’s repetitive preaching.

They are essentially saying:

Does he think we are:

Babies?

Children?

People needing elementary lessons?

The problem is not:

God’s message.

The problem is:

Their pride.

Cross References

Hebrews 5:13

Someone still living only on milk is compared to an infant who lacks maturity in understanding righteousness.

1 Corinthians 3:2

Paul tells spiritually immature believers that he had to feed them with milk rather than solid food because they were not ready for deeper instruction.

1 Peter 2:2

Believers are encouraged to desire pure spiritual nourishment like newborn infants long for milk so they may grow.

Spiritual Principle

Pride can make simple truth feel insulting.

X. “LINE UPON LINE”

Isaiah 28:10 — Repeated Instruction Mocked

“For it is rule on rule, rule on rule, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.”

This line has often been used positively to describe:

Careful Bible teaching.

And the principle of learning truth progressively certainly has value.

But in this immediate context, Isaiah appears to be quoting or echoing the people’s sarcastic complaint.

They mock the repetitive sound of:

Instruction.

Command.

Warning.

They resent hearing:

The same truth.

Again.

And again.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 6:7

God commanded His people to teach His words repeatedly to their children during daily life—at home, on the road, at bedtime, and in the morning.

2 Timothy 2:15

God’s servant is instructed to handle the Word of truth accurately and responsibly.

Hebrews 5:12

Some believers should have matured enough to teach others, yet still needed instruction in the basic truths of God.

Spiritual Principle

Truth may need repetition because hearts are often slow to learn.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Do not despise repeated truth simply because you have heard it before.

XI. GOD WILL SPEAK THROUGH FOREIGN LIPS

Isaiah 28:11 — Judgment Through Another Language

“Very well then, with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people,”

They mocked:

God’s clear Word.

So eventually they will hear:

Foreign speech.

The language of invading forces.

Paul later cites this passage in:

1 Corinthians 14.

There it becomes part of his argument about tongues functioning as a sign.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 14:21

Paul quotes Isaiah to explain that God once spoke to unbelieving people through foreign languages, yet even then they would not listen.

Deuteronomy 28:49

Israel was warned that covenant rebellion could bring a distant nation against them whose language they could not understand.

Jeremiah 5:15

God warns Judah that He will bring an ancient and powerful nation whose language the people do not understand.

Spiritual Principle

Those who reject understandable truth may eventually learn through painful consequences.

XII. GOD OFFERED REST

Isaiah 28:12 — “But They Would Not Listen”

“To whom He said, ‘This is the resting place, let the weary rest; and this is the place of repose’—but they would not listen.”

God offered:

Rest.

Relief.

Repose.

They refused:

To listen.

The tragedy is not merely that judgment came.

It is that:

Rest was offered first.

Cross References

Matthew 11:28

Jesus invites the weary and burdened to come to Him and receive rest.

Jeremiah 6:16

God called His people to seek the ancient good path and walk in it so they would find rest for their souls, but they refused.

Hebrews 4:9

A Sabbath-like rest remains available for the people of God.

Spiritual Principle

Judgment is especially tragic when rest was offered and rejected.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God’s invitation should be received before His warning becomes consequence.

XIII. THE MOCKED WORD BECOMES JUDGMENT

Isaiah 28:13 — Fall, Injury, Snare, Captivity

“So then, the word of the Lord to them will become: rule on rule, rule on rule, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little—so that as they go they will fall backward, be injured, snared, and captured.”

What they mocked becomes:

Judgment.

They treated God’s message as:

Meaningless repetition.

But the result of rejecting it is:

Fall.

Injury.

Snare.

Capture.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 2:16

The gospel message has different effects: to some it is associated with life, while to others it becomes connected with judgment and death because of rejection.

John 18:6

When Jesus identifies Himself to those coming to arrest Him, they draw back and fall to the ground.

Isaiah 8:15

Many will stumble, fall, be broken, snared, and captured because they reject the Lord’s appointed foundation.

Spiritual Principle

The Word we reject does not become powerless because we reject it.

XIV. GOD ADDRESSES JERUSALEM'S SCOFFING RULERS

Isaiah 28:14 — Hear the Word of the Lord

“Therefore hear the word of the Lord, you scoffers who rule this people in Jerusalem.”

The audience shifts toward:

Jerusalem.

Its rulers are called:

Scoffers.

That is dangerous because mockery has reached:

Leadership.

Cross References

Proverbs 1:22

Wisdom asks how long mockers will delight in mocking and fools continue hating knowledge.

Proverbs 9:12

Those who gain wisdom benefit themselves, but mockers ultimately bear the consequences of their own scorn.

Amos 7:16

A resistant religious leader tells Amos not to prophesy against Israel, showing hostility toward God's warning.

Spiritual Principle

A mocking population is dangerous.

Mocking leadership is even more dangerous.

XV. A COVENANT WITH DEATH

Isaiah 28:15 — Lies as Refuge

“You boast, ‘We have made a covenant with death, and with the grave we have made an agreement. When the overwhelming scourge sweeps by, it cannot touch us, for we have made lies our refuge and falsehood our hiding place.’”

This is probably Isaiah's biting description of Judah's false political confidence.

They believe their:

Agreements.

Strategies.

Diplomacy.

Deception.

Will protect them.

Isaiah exposes the spiritual reality:

They are trusting:

Death.

Lies.

Falsehood.

Cross References

Amos 9:2

Even if people attempt to hide in the depths or climb to the heavens, they cannot escape the Lord's judgment.

Jeremiah 13:25

Judgment comes because God's people forgot Him and placed confidence in falsehood.

Psalms 55:23

God brings violent and deceitful people down because deception cannot provide permanent security.

Spiritual Principle

A lie can feel safe before it is tested.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

False security is still insecurity, no matter how convincing it feels.

XVI. GOD LAYS A PRECIOUS CORNERSTONE IN ZION

Isaiah 28:16 — The Sure Foundation

“So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be shaken.’”

Here stands the answer to:

False refuge.

Lies.

Political security.

Human foundations.

God Himself provides:

A stone.

Tested.

Precious.

Foundational.

The New Testament identifies this cornerstone with:

Jesus Christ.

Cross References

Romans 9:33

Paul combines prophetic cornerstone imagery and applies it to Christ, declaring that those who trust in Him will not be put to shame.

1 Peter 2:6

Peter directly applies Isaiah's promise to Jesus Christ, the chosen and precious cornerstone, and says the believer in Him will never be ultimately disgraced.

Ephesians 2:20

The church is pictured as God's household built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone.

Spiritual Principle

God does not merely expose false foundations.

He provides:

The true one.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A refuge of lies collapses.

Christ the Cornerstone stands.

XVII. CHRIST THE CORNERSTONE

Isaiah 28:16 has a clear New Testament fulfillment.

Jesus is:

The tested Stone.

The precious Stone.

The chosen Stone.

The Cornerstone.

A cornerstone established:

Alignment.

Stability.

Direction.

A building out of alignment with the cornerstone was:

Wrong.

So it is with:

Christ.

He is not an addition to the foundation.

He is:

The Foundation Stone by which everything else is measured.

Spiritual Principle

The question is not merely:

“What am I building?”

But:

“What am I building on?”

XVIII. JUSTICE BECOMES THE MEASURING LINE

Isaiah 28:17 — Lies Swept Away

“I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line; hail will sweep away your refuge of lies, and water will flood your hiding place.”

God measures:

Accurately.

Justice is:

The line.

Righteousness:

The plumb line.

Everything crooked is exposed.

Cross References

Amos 7:8

God uses the image of a plumb line to show that He is measuring His people according to His righteous standard.

2 Kings 21:13

God says He will measure Jerusalem with the same strict standard used against previously judged cities.

Matthew 7:27

Jesus describes the house built on a poor foundation collapsing when rain, floods, and winds test it.

Spiritual Principle

God does not measure righteousness by public opinion.

He uses:

His standard.

XIX. THE COVENANT WITH DEATH IS CANCELLED

Isaiah 28:18 — False Agreements Fail

“Your covenant with death will be annulled; your agreement with the grave will not stand. When the overwhelming scourge sweeps by, you will be beaten down by it.”

The people thought:

We have arranged protection.

God says:

No.

Their agreement cannot:

Override God.

Cross References

Isaiah 8:8

The Assyrian flood is pictured sweeping through Judah until the waters rise nearly to the neck.

Nahum 1:8

God overwhelms His enemies like a rushing flood and pursues darkness and rebellion.

Daniel 9:26

Daniel describes devastating conflict, destruction, and desolation coming according to the determined course of events.

Spiritual Principle

No human agreement can nullify divine accountability.

XX. JUDGMENT COMES AGAIN AND AGAIN

Isaiah 28:19 — Sheer Terror

“As often as it comes it will carry you away; morning after morning, by day and by night, it will sweep through.’ The understanding of this message will bring sheer terror.”

Judgment becomes:

Repeated.

Relentless.

Morning.

Day.

Night.

Once they finally understand Isaiah's warning:

Terror.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 28:67

Under judgment people experience continual dread, wishing for morning at night and night in the morning because of fear.

Jeremiah 15:8

Disaster comes unexpectedly and repeatedly upon a rebellious nation.

Lamentations 3:23

In contrast to repeated judgment, God's mercies are also described as new every morning, demonstrating His continuing faithfulness to His people.

Spiritual Principle

The time to understand warning is:

Before.

Not:

After consequences arrive.

XXI. THE BED IS TOO SHORT

Isaiah 28:20 — False Security Cannot Provide Rest

“The bed is too short to stretch out on, the blanket too narrow to wrap around in.”

This is vivid.

A short bed gives:

No rest.

A narrow blanket gives:

No covering.

So Judah's false strategies provide:

No real security.

Cross References

Isaiah 30:7

Egypt's promised help is described as useless and ineffective when Judah relies upon it instead of God.

Job 15:31

Those who trust in what is worthless deceive themselves, because emptiness becomes their reward.

Matthew 7:26

Jesus compares the one who hears His words but does not obey them to a foolish builder who constructs a house on sand.

Spiritual Principle

A false refuge may appear comfortable until you actually need it.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Do not wait for the storm to discover that your blanket is too small.

XXII. THE LORD PERFORMS HIS STRANGE WORK

Isaiah 28:21 — Judgment Is His Unusual Task

“The Lord will rise up as He did at Mount Perazim, He will rouse Himself as in the Valley of Gibeon—to do His work, His strange work, and perform His task, His unusual task.”

At Perazim and Gibeon:

God fought for His people.

Now:

The shocking thing is that He rises in judgment against His own rebellious people.

That is why it is described as:

Strange.

Unusual.

Judgment is real.

Yet Scripture consistently reveals that God delights in:

Mercy.

Not rebellion.

Cross References

2 Samuel 5:20

God gave David victory over the Philistines at Baal-perazim and broke through the enemy before him.

Joshua 10:10

The Lord threw Israel's enemies into confusion at Gibeon and gave His people victory.

Habakkuk 1:5

God warns that He is doing a work so astonishing that people would scarcely believe it even if it were explained to them.

Spiritual Principle

The God who once fought for them can discipline them when they rebel against Him.

XXIII. STOP MOCKING

Isaiah 28:22 — Chains Can Become Heavier

“Now stop your mocking, or your chains will become heavier; for the Lord, the Lord Almighty, has told me of destruction decreed against the whole land.”

This is both:

Warning.

Invitation.

Stop now.

Mockery can still be:

Abandoned.

But continued rebellion increases:

Consequences.

Cross References

Isaiah 10:23

God announces a determined and decisive judgment that will be carried out throughout the land.

Daniel 9:27

Daniel speaks of desolation and judgment continuing until what has been decreed is completed.

2 Peter 3:3

Peter warns that scoffers will arise, following their own desires and mocking God's promised intervention.

Spiritual Principle

Mockery may feel powerful.

It does not cancel truth.

XXIV. GOD CALLS PEOPLE TO LISTEN

Isaiah 28:23 — Hear and Pay Attention

“Listen and hear my voice; pay attention and hear what I say.”

The tone changes.

Isaiah now introduces:

A farming illustration.

But first:

Listen.

Cross References

Psalms 78:1

God's people are called to listen carefully to instruction and turn their ears toward the teaching being given.

Proverbs 4:20

A child is urged to pay attention to wise words and listen closely to sound instruction.

Matthew 13:9

Jesus repeatedly calls anyone with ears to hear to listen carefully to His teaching.

Spiritual Principle

Wisdom often begins with:

Listening.

XXV. THE FARMER DOES NOT PLOW FOREVER

Isaiah 28:24 — Plowing Has a Purpose

“When a farmer plows for planting, does he plow continually? Does he keep on breaking up and working the soil?”

The answer is:

No.

Plowing is:

Necessary.

But temporary.

The farmer does not destroy the field by:

Endless plowing.

He prepares it for:

Seed.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 9:10

Paul explains that the plowman and thresher work in hope of eventually sharing in the harvest.

Hosea 10:11

God uses agricultural imagery of plowing and cultivation to describe the work required in preparing His people.

Luke 17:7

Jesus refers to a servant returning from plowing or tending fields, illustrating ordinary agricultural labor and duty.

Spiritual Principle

Preparation is not the destination.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God may break up hard ground because He intends to plant something there.

XXVI. DIFFERENT SEEDS ARE PLANTED DIFFERENTLY

Isaiah 28:25 — Wisdom in Sowing

“When he has leveled the surface, does he not sow caraway and scatter cumin? Does he not plant wheat in its place, barley in its plot, and spelt in its field?”

The farmer understands:

Order.

Placement.

Timing.

Different seeds receive:

Different treatment.

Cross References

Matthew 13:3

Jesus tells of a farmer going out to sow seed, using ordinary agricultural practice as a picture of spiritual truth.

Mark 4:3

Jesus again commands His hearers to listen as He describes a sower scattering seed.

Luke 8:5

A farmer goes out to sow seed, and the results vary according to where the seed falls.

Spiritual Principle

Wisdom recognizes that not everything should be handled identically.

XXVII. GOD TEACHES THE FARMER

Isaiah 28:26 — Wisdom Comes from God

“His God instructs him and teaches him the right way.”

Agricultural wisdom itself:

Comes from God.

Human skill ultimately reflects:

Divine wisdom.

Cross References

James 1:5

Anyone lacking wisdom is encouraged to ask God, who gives generously to those who seek Him.

Proverbs 2:6

The Lord gives wisdom, and true knowledge and understanding come from Him.

Job 35:11

God is the One who teaches humanity and gives greater understanding than instinct alone can provide.

Spiritual Principle

Practical wisdom is also a gift from God.

XXVIII. SMALL SEEDS ARE THRESHED GENTLY

Isaiah 28:27 — Measured Pressure

“Caraway is not threshed with a sledge, nor is a cartwheel rolled over cumin; caraway is beaten out with a rod, and cumin with a stick.”

Different crops require:

Different treatment.

Too much force would:

Destroy.

Rather than:

Separate.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 9:9

Paul quotes the law protecting the ox while it works in threshing, showing God’s concern even within agricultural labor.

Ruth 2:17

Ruth beat out what she had gleaned, using a suitable process to separate usable grain from the stalk.

Judges 6:11

Gideon threshed wheat in hiding during Midianite oppression, illustrating the ordinary practice of separating grain.

Spiritual Principle

God knows how much pressure each situation requires.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The divine Farmer never confuses threshing with destroying.

XXIX. GRAIN IS NOT THRESHED FOREVER

Isaiah 28:28 — Discipline Has a Limit

“Grain must be ground to make bread; but one does not go on threshing it forever. The wheels of a cart may crush it, but he does not grind it to dust.”

This is the heart of the farming analogy.

The farmer applies:

Pressure.

But:

Not forever.

Why?

Because his objective is:

Bread.

Not:

Destruction.

Cross References

Amos 1:3

God condemns Damascus for extreme cruelty pictured as threshing people with iron instruments, showing destructive oppression rather than measured discipline.

2 Samuel 12:31

David's conquest imagery includes severe treatment associated with implements and forced labor, illustrating how destructive human power can become.

Matthew 3:12

The Messiah is pictured separating wheat from chaff, gathering the wheat and judging what is worthless.

Spiritual Principle

God's correction has:

Purpose.

Measure.

An end.

Key Truth

The Farmer knows when to stop threshing.

XXX. GOD'S PLAN IS WONDERFUL AND HIS WISDOM MAGNIFICENT

Isaiah 28:29 — The Final Explanation

“All this also comes from the Lord Almighty, whose plan is wonderful, whose wisdom is magnificent.”

The chapter ends with:

Wisdom.

God knows:

How to judge.

How to discipline.

How to correct.

How to preserve.

How to restore.

Cross References

Isaiah 9:6

The coming Messiah is associated with wonderful counsel, divine strength, enduring care, and royal peace.

Job 12:13

Wisdom and power belong to God, and counsel and understanding are His.

Romans 11:33

Paul marvels at the immeasurable depth of God's wisdom and knowledge and the unsearchable character of His judgments and ways.

Spiritual Principle

When God's methods confuse us, His wisdom has not failed.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God always knows whether the field needs:

Plowing.

Planting.

Threshing.

Or:

Rest.

XXXI. TEN GREAT LESSONS FROM ISAIAH 28

1. Pride Produces Collapse

Ephraim's crown:

Fades.

Principle:

Human glory is temporary when separated from God.

2. Drunkenness Corrupts Judgment

Leaders stagger.

Principle:

Anything that controls the mind can impair spiritual responsibility.

3. God Is the True Crown

Principle:

Human honor fades; God's glory endures.

4. Mocking God's Word Is Dangerous

Principle:

Ridicule does not make truth less true.

5. God Offers Rest Before Judgment

Principle:

Grace often speaks before consequences arrive.

6. Lies Cannot Become a Safe Refuge

Principle:

False security fails precisely when security is most needed.

7. Christ Is the Sure Cornerstone

Principle:

Everything built upon Christ has the only foundation that cannot ultimately fail.

8. God Measures by Justice and Righteousness

Principle:

Human standards do not replace God's plumb line.

9. God's Discipline Is Measured

Principle:

The Farmer knows how much pressure to use and when to stop.

10. God's Wisdom Surpasses Human Strategy

Principle:

His counsel is wonderful and His wisdom magnificent.

XXXII. WHAT ISAIAH 28 TEACHES ABOUT PRIDE

Ephraim has:

A crown.

Beauty.

Fertility.

But pride turns:

Glory.

Into:

A fading flower.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Pride makes temporary blessings feel permanent.

XXXIII. WHAT ISAIAH 28 TEACHES ABOUT INTOXICATION

Drunkenness affects:

Personal judgment.

National leadership.

Spiritual discernment.

Spiritual Principle

What dulls discernment should never be allowed to govern spiritual responsibility.

XXXIV. WHAT ISAIAH 28 TEACHES ABOUT LEADERSHIP

Priests and prophets are not exempt from:

Discipline.

Accountability.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The more influence a leader possesses, the more dangerous impaired judgment becomes.

XXXV. WHAT ISAIAH 28 TEACHES ABOUT MOCKERY

The leaders mock:

God's teaching.

Isaiah warns:

Their chains can become heavier.

Spiritual Principle

Mockery may delay repentance until repentance becomes harder.

XXXVI. WHAT ISAIAH 28 TEACHES ABOUT THE WORD OF GOD

God's Word can become:

Rest.

Instruction.

Life.

But when rejected:

It becomes testimony against the rebel.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

How you respond to truth helps determine what truth becomes in your life.

XXXVII. WHAT ISAIAH 28 TEACHES ABOUT REST

God said:

“Let the weary rest.”

They refused.

Spiritual Principle

God's rest must be received.

XXXVIII. WHAT ISAIAH 28 TEACHES ABOUT FALSE SECURITY

Judah trusts:

Agreements.

Strategies.

Lies.

God says:

They will fail.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Never confuse a plan with a foundation.

XXXIX. WHAT ISAIAH 28 TEACHES ABOUT CHRIST

The Cornerstone is directly applied to:

Jesus.

He is:

Tested.

Precious.

Sure.

Spiritual Principle

Christ is not one option among many foundations.

He is God's appointed foundation.

XL. WHAT ISAIAH 28 TEACHES ABOUT JUSTICE

God uses:

A measuring line.

A plumb line.

His standard is:

Straight.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God never adjusts the plumb line merely because society prefers a crooked wall.

XLI. WHAT ISAIAH 28 TEACHES ABOUT DISCIPLINE

The farmer analogy teaches:

Purpose.

Variation.

Restraint.

Wisdom.

Spiritual Principle

God does not handle every person or circumstance identically.

XLII. WHAT ISAIAH 28 TEACHES ABOUT GOD'S WISDOM

The chapter ends with:

Wonder.

Not:

Confusion.

The farmer's wisdom reflects:

God's wisdom.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

If the farmer knows what the seed needs, how much more does God know what His people need?

XLIII. THE FADING FLOWER

Ephraim looks:

Beautiful.

But is:

Fading.

Spiritual Principle

Do not judge permanence by appearance.

XLIV. THE TRUE CROWN

The best crown is:

The Lord Himself.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When God is your glory, you are less controlled by human applause.

XLV. DRUNKEN PROPHETS

A prophet requires:

Clarity.

Intoxication creates:

Confusion.

Spiritual Principle

Spiritual responsibility demands sobriety of mind.

XLVI. CHILDREN JUST WEANED

Their insult reveals:

Pride.

They think they are too advanced for:

Basic truth.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The person who thinks he has outgrown foundational truth has usually not mastered it.

XLVII. LINE UPON LINE

Even though the phrase occurs within mockery, God often teaches:

Progressively.

Repeatedly.

Patiently.

Spiritual Principle

Repetition can be mercy.

XLVIII. STRANGE TONGUES

The language of foreigners becomes:

Judgment.

What they refused to hear:

Clearly.

They now hear:

Painfully.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Do not wait for consequences to translate a warning you already understood.

XLIX. “THEY WOULD NOT LISTEN”

This sentence explains much of the chapter.

The problem was not:

Lack of revelation.

It was:

Refusal.

Spiritual Principle

Hearing without listening produces no safety.

L. THE COVENANT WITH DEATH

The rulers believe they have:

Outsmarted danger.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Any plan that requires lies as shelter is already collapsing.

LI. THE PRECIOUS CORNERSTONE

Christ is:

Precious.

Not because people made Him precious.

Because:

God appointed Him.

Spiritual Principle

The value of Christ is not determined by human acceptance.

LII. “THE ONE WHO TRUSTS”

The security belongs to:

The believer.

Not because trust is powerful in itself.

But because:

The object of trust is secure.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Faith stands because the Cornerstone stands.

LIII. JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

These are God's:

Measurement tools.

Spiritual Principle

A building cannot argue with a plumb line.

A life cannot redefine God's righteousness.

LIV. THE SHORT BED AND NARROW BLANKET

What an unforgettable image.

You cannot:

Stretch out.

Cover yourself.

Rest.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

False religion and false security always promise more rest than they can provide.

LV. GOD'S STRANGE WORK

Judgment against His own covenant people is called:

Strange.

Unusual.

Spiritual Principle

God takes sin seriously even among those who possess spiritual privilege.

LVI. THE FARMER PLOWS

Hard soil must be:

Broken.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Some seasons feel disruptive because God is preparing ground.

LVII. THE FARMER SOWS

After:

Breaking.

Comes:

Planting.

Spiritual Principle

God does not break ground merely to leave it empty.

LVIII. DIFFERENT CROPS, DIFFERENT METHODS

Caraway.

Cumin.

Wheat.

Barley.

Spelt.

Different treatment.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Do not assume God must work in someone else's life exactly as He works in yours.

LIX. THE FARMER THRESHES

Threshing separates:

Useful grain.

From:

What must be removed.

Spiritual Principle

Pressure can reveal what should remain and what should go.

LX. THE FARMER STOPS

This may be the most comforting part of the illustration.

He does not:

Thresh forever.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God knows when enough pressure has accomplished its purpose.

LXI. THE BREAD IS THE GOAL

The process includes:

Plowing.

Sowing.

Threshing.

Grinding.

Why?

Bread.

Purpose.

Usefulness.

Nourishment.

Spiritual Principle

Do not judge God's whole purpose by one painful stage of the process.

LXII. EIGHT GREAT CONTRASTS IN ISAIAH 28

- 1. Fading Crown → The Lord as Crown**
- 2. Drunken Judgment → Divine Justice**
- 3. Mocked Instruction → Foreign Judgment**
- 4. Offered Rest → Refused Rest**
- 5. Refuge of Lies → Precious Cornerstone**
- 6. Crooked Security → Righteous Plumb Line**
- 7. Endless Fear → Sure Foundation**
- 8. Crushing Judgment → Measured Discipline**

Key Truth

Every false foundation eventually fails, but God's Cornerstone stands secure and His discipline operates according to perfect wisdom.

LXIII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What is Ephraim's major problem at the beginning of Isaiah 28?

Pride, drunkenness, and spiritual decline.

Question 2

What does the fading flower symbolize?

Ephraim's temporary beauty and glory.

Question 3

Who becomes the true crown of the remnant?

The Lord Almighty.

Question 4

What happens to the priests and prophets?

They become impaired by wine and stumble in judgment.

Question 5

What do verses 9–10 likely describe?

The mocking response of proud people who resent Isaiah's repeated teaching.

Question 6

What happens because they reject understandable revelation?

God speaks through foreign lips and strange tongues associated with invasion and judgment.

Question 7

What had God offered them?

Rest and repose.

Question 8

Why did they not receive it?

They refused to listen.

Question 9

What false confidence did Jerusalem's rulers possess?

They believed deceptive arrangements and political strategies would protect them from judgment.

Question 10

What does Isaiah call this confidence?

A covenant with death and an agreement with the grave.

Question 11

What does God place in Zion instead?

A tested, precious Cornerstone and sure foundation.

Question 12

Who does the New Testament identify with the Cornerstone?

Jesus Christ.

Question 13

What happens to the refuge of lies?

It is swept away.

Question 14

What does the short bed and narrow blanket picture?

False security that cannot provide genuine rest or protection.

Question 15

Why is God's judgment called His strange work?

Because He is acting in judgment against His own covenant people rather than against their enemies.

Question 16

What does the farmer illustration teach?

God's discipline is wise, measured, varied, purposeful, and not endless.

Question 17

Does the farmer plow forever?

No.

Question 18

Does every crop receive identical treatment?

No.

Question 19

Does the farmer thresh grain forever?

No.

Question 20

Where does the farmer's wisdom ultimately come from?

The Lord Almighty.

LXIV. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Isaiah 28 asks several searching questions.

What Crown Am I Wearing?

Reputation?

Money?

Position?

Success?

Or:

Is the Lord my glory?

Is Pride Making Me Spiritually Blind?

Do I think:

I already know enough?

I do not need correction?

Is Anything Impairing My Judgment?

Alcohol?

Anger?

Fear?

Addiction?

Pride?

Do I Mock Truth Because It Is Repetitive?

Am I tired of hearing:

Repent?

Trust God?

Obey?

Pray?

Have I Refused God's Rest?

Has Christ invited me toward:

Peace?

But I continue choosing:

Self-reliance?

What Is My Refuge?

A plan?

Political power?

Money?

Relationships?

Or:

Christ?

What Am I Building On?

Is Jesus actually:

The Cornerstone?

Or merely:

Part of the building?

Would My Foundation Survive the Storm?

Am I Resisting God's Measuring Line?

Is there something crooked I am trying to call straight?

Am I Mistaking Discipline for Destruction?

Could God be:

Plowing?

Sowing?

Threshing?

Preparing?

Can I Trust God to Know When to Stop?

LXV. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“When Every False Refuge Collapses, Christ the Cornerstone Still Stands”

Ephraim’s crown:

Fades.

The leaders’ judgment:

Fails.

The covenant with death:

Is annulled.

The refuge of lies:

Floods.

But:

The Cornerstone remains.

Principle:

Build your life on Christ before the storm reveals what everything else was made of.

LXVI. PRIDE AND INTOXICATION

These two belong together in the chapter.

Both can create:

False confidence.

Impaired judgment.

Spiritual Principle

Anything that makes you feel strong while making you less discerning is dangerous.

LXVII. THE LORD AS CROWN

Ephraim wanted:

Human glory.

The remnant receives:

God Himself.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God does not merely give His people better ornaments.

He becomes their glory.

LXVIII. LEADERS WHO CANNOT SEE STRAIGHT

Priests.

Prophets.

Judges.

All require:

Clarity.

Spiritual Principle

When leaders lose discernment, those following them are endangered.

LXIX. THE DANGER OF MOCKING BASIC TRUTH

Sometimes people call truth:

Too simple.

Too repetitive.

Too old-fashioned.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Truth does not become shallow merely because it is foundational.

LXX. FOREIGN LANGUAGE AS JUDGMENT

The foreign speech becomes evidence that:

The invader has arrived.

Spiritual Principle

Rejecting God's gentle voice can lead to hearing harsher voices.

LXXI. THE REST THEY REFUSED

God offered:

Rest.

They chose:

Resistance.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Some people are exhausted not because God offered no rest, but because they refused the place where rest was found.

LXXII. A HIDING PLACE MADE OF LIES

A lie may temporarily hide:

Guilt.

Fear.

Weakness.

It cannot hide anyone from:

God.

Spiritual Principle

Truth can be painful initially.

Lies become painful eventually.

LXXIII. THE CORNERSTONE IN ZION

The chapter reaches its center here.

God provides:

One sure foundation.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

You do not need many foundations.

You need the right one.

LXXIV. THE PLUMB LINE

A plumb line reveals:

Crookedness.

It does not create it.

Spiritual Principle

God's Word does not make sin wrong.

It reveals what was already crooked.

LXXV. THE TOO-SHORT BED

A person may lie down.

But cannot:

Rest.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Every false security eventually becomes uncomfortable.

LXXVI. THE STRANGE WORK

God's discipline may feel:

Unexpected.

But it remains:

Righteous.

Spiritual Principle

Never use covenant privilege as an excuse for covenant rebellion.

LXXVII. THE FARMER'S PATIENCE

A farmer knows:

Timing.

Sequence.

Process.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God is never confused about which season you are in.

LXXVIII. GOD DOES NOT PLOW FOREVER

Some believers fear:

This painful season will never end.

The farmer says:

Plowing is not forever.

Spiritual Principle

Preparation has a purpose and a limit.

LXXIX. GOD DOES NOT THRESH EVERYTHING THE SAME WAY

The farmer knows:

Caraway.

Cumin.

Grain.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Stop comparing your discipline with someone else's treatment.

God knows the crop.

LXXX. GOD DOES NOT CRUSH WITHOUT PURPOSE

The goal is not:

Dust.

The goal is:

Bread.

Spiritual Principle

God's wise discipline aims at usefulness, not meaningless destruction.

LXXXI. GOD'S COUNSEL IS WONDERFUL

The last verse should shape how we read the entire chapter.

What looks:

Harsh.

Repetitive.

Strange.

Is governed by:

Wonderful counsel.

Magnificent wisdom.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Trust the wisdom of the Farmer when you do not understand the tool in His hand.

LXXXII. SEVEN GREAT MOVEMENTS IN ISAIAH 28

1. Ephraim's Crown Fades

Pride collapses.

2. The Lord Becomes the True Crown

The remnant finds glory in Him.

3. Corrupt Leaders Stagger

Spiritual judgment deteriorates.

4. God's Word Is Mocked

Clear instruction is rejected.

5. False Security Is Exposed

The covenant with death fails.

6. The Cornerstone Is Revealed

God provides a sure foundation.

7. The Farmer Explains Discipline

God's methods are measured by perfect wisdom.

Key Truth

The chapter moves from fading human glory and false foundations toward the eternal stability of God's Cornerstone and the magnificent wisdom of His discipline.

LXXXIII. FINAL APPLICATION

Isaiah Chapter 28 asks one of the most important questions anyone can answer:

What are you building your life on?

Ephraim built on:

Pride.

Prosperity.

Drunken confidence.

Its crown:

Faded.

Jerusalem's rulers built on:

Political agreements.

Strategy.

Lies.

False promises.

God called it:

A covenant with death.

Then God said:

“See, I lay a stone in Zion.”

There is the difference.

Human beings create:

False foundations.

God provides:

The Cornerstone.

The New Testament tells us plainly:

That Cornerstone is:

Jesus Christ.

He is:

Tested.

Precious.

Sure.

The person who trusts Him:

Will not ultimately be put to shame.

That means:

Do not build your life on something that cannot carry its weight.

Money cannot.

Government cannot.

Career cannot.

Popularity cannot.

Alcohol cannot.

Pleasure cannot.

Human intelligence cannot.

Religious leadership cannot.

Political alliances cannot.

But:

Christ can.

Isaiah also warns us about:

Mocking truth.

The leaders had heard:

God's message.

Repeatedly.

Eventually they became irritated by:

Repetition.

They ridiculed the prophet.

Be careful when familiar truth begins to sound:

Boring.

Simple.

Annoying.

Sometimes we need to hear the same truth again because we still have not:

Obedied it.

Then Isaiah gives us the image:

The bed is too short.

The blanket too narrow.

That is every false refuge.

It works:

Until you actually need rest.

Then finally Isaiah takes us into:

A field.

A farmer:

Plows.

But not forever.

Sows.

At the right time.

Threshes.

But according to the crop.

Applies pressure.

But stops before destruction.

That is a beautiful picture of:

God's wisdom.

Maybe you are in:

A plowing season.

Everything feels:

Disturbed.

Broken up.

Unsettled.

Do not assume:

God has abandoned the field.

Maybe He is preparing it.

Perhaps you are being:

Threshed.

Pressure is separating:

Faith.

From pride.

Truth.

From false security.

God knows:

How much.

How long.

What tool.

When to stop.

The Farmer does not want:

Dust.

He wants:

Fruit.

Bread.

Usefulness.

Therefore:

Lay down pride.

Stay sober in mind and spirit.

Listen when God teaches.

Stop hiding behind lies.

Build on Christ.

Submit to God's measuring line.

And trust the Farmer.

Because the chapter ends exactly where our confidence should rest:

“The Lord Almighty, whose plan is wonderful, whose wisdom is magnificent.”

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

You alone are worthy to be:

Our crown.

Our glory.

Our foundation.

Forgive us for pride.

Forgive us when prosperity makes us:

Self-sufficient.

Careless.

Spiritually dull.

Keep our minds:

Clear.

Sober.

Discerning.

Father, protect spiritual leaders from anything that corrupts:

Judgment.

Truth.

Character.

Help those who teach Your Word to do so:

Faithfully.

Clearly.

Humbly.

Father, forgive us when we mock or ignore truth because we have:

Heard it before.

Give us teachable hearts.

Help us listen when You say:

Rest.

Repent.

Trust.

Obey.

Father, expose every covenant with death in our lives.

Sweep away every refuge of lies.

Reveal every false hiding place.

And build our lives upon:

Jesus Christ.

Thank You for the precious Cornerstone.

Thank You that He is:

Tested.

Sure.

Unshakable.

Teach us to trust Him completely.

Father, measure our lives by:

Justice.

Righteousness.

Truth.

Straighten what is crooked.

Correct what is wrong.

And when discipline comes:

Help us trust Your wisdom.

When You plow:

Give us patience.

When You plant:

Give us faith.

When You thresh:

Give us endurance.

When pressure comes:

Remind us that You know exactly how much is needed.

Thank You that You do not thresh forever.

Thank You that Your purpose is not meaningless destruction.

Your counsel is:

Wonderful.

Your wisdom is:

Magnificent.

Teach us to trust the Farmer.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Key Verse

“See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be shaken.” — Isaiah 28:16

Central Truth

Pride, drunkenness, corrupt leadership, mockery of God's Word, and every refuge built upon lies will eventually collapse, but God has laid Jesus Christ as the tested and precious Cornerstone in Zion, and those who trust in Him rest upon a sure foundation while God wisely and purposefully disciplines His people like a skilled farmer tending his field.

Isaiah 28 in One Sentence

Isaiah warns that Ephraim's proud and drunken glory will fade, condemns spiritually impaired leaders and those who mock God's repeated instruction, exposes Jerusalem's false covenant with death, reveals Christ as the precious Cornerstone in Zion, and closes by showing through the wisdom of the farmer that God's discipline is measured, purposeful, and governed by magnificent wisdom.