

WEEK 04

ISAIAH 29

God condemns and corrects spiritual hypocrisy by reawakening our senses to fully perceive His awe-inspiring nature, which leads us to true worship.

Preface

In the previous weeks, we learned about God’s severe judgment for those who neglect His command to advocate for the poor and powerless, and the wicked who are irreverent to God’s holiness. **Last week**, we learned that God despises pride and He humbles the proud.

This week, we will learn about true worship that stems from the awareness and awe of God.

Context: At the end of Isaiah 14, Isaiah received a series of oracles in the year King Ahaz died (~715 BC). He prophesied about the future judgments of the surrounding nations (Isa. 14-23) and other prophecies that are more universal in perspective (Isa. 24-27). The main message of these prophecies is that God will destroy the wicked and the proud, and establish His kingdom where His people can worship Him.

Isaiah 29 is written along with other “woe oracles” in Isa. 28-33. These oracles declare the impending doom of Jerusalem due to the spiritual problems caused by bad leaders (Isa. 28) and the people’s distrust in God.

History: The judgments described in Isaiah 28-29 are generally interpreted as Assyria’s attack on Jerusalem which came to pass in 701 BC.

Observation

1. What is the future fate of ‘Ariel’ and the consequence of her sins? (Isa. 29:1-4)

Leaders’ note: ‘Ariel’ refers to Jerusalem, the place of Judah’s worship. In the Hebrew language, the word ‘Ariel’ sounds similar to other words that translate to ‘altar hearth’ (v.2), interpreted as a place of death.

2. What are the three major reasons for ‘Ariel’s’ judgment? (Isa. 29:9-12, 13-14, 15-16)

Leaders’ note: v.9-11 - spiritual insensitivity and deadened senses, v.13-14 - meaningless/empty worship, v.15-16 - deception and the determined decision to hide from God, denying God’s sovereignty and wisdom.

3. How will God restore ‘Ariel’? (Isa. 29:5-8, 14, 17-21)

4. What will be the results of God’s restoration? (Isa. 29:18-19, 22-24)

Interpretation

1. What are the dangers of spiritual blindness and drunkenness?

2. What are wrong perceptions that lead to false worship?
3. What does this passage teach us about God's desire for our worship?
4. John 4:23 says that true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth. How does Isaiah 29 illustrate the failure to worship in the Spirit and in truth?

Application

1. What are the things that hinder us from seeing and experiencing God's wonder?
2. What are the signs of false worship and how do we guard against it?
3. What are some ways for us to grow as true worshipers personally and communally?

Optional Follow-Up Exercise: Worship God in New Ways

We often equate worship with music, as it is the most commonly practiced form at a church gathering. However, worshipping God should extend to every aspect of our lives. True worship stems from a heart that is fully satisfied in God. It involves the entirety of our being to magnify Christ and become the instruments of righteousness.

This week, try incorporating several new ways to worship God. The goal is to increase our awareness and awe of God in our lives.

Practical Instructions:

1. **Admire the wonders of nature:** Take a short walk, and observe God's good design in His creations.
2. **Dedicate a sacrifice of silence to God:** Wake up earlier or find a time when you can experience complete silence. Spend time focusing on God's wonder during that time.
3. **Read and memorize Scripture:** Acknowledge the power of God's words and discover the beauty of God through His words.
4. **Love others:** Reach out to others and do acts of service. Jesus has modeled us the life of a servant. In serving, we declare God's beauty and emulate it.
5. **Create an artwork:** Meditate and express the beauty of God in the artwork that we create.