

A COVENANT WITH DEATH
Isaiah 28

Text: Isaiah 28:14-22.

Intro: I want to continue with our studies in Isaiah which I was teaching on Wednesday nights, but with a difference. While keeping the message and times of Isaiah in the background, I want to preach through the remainder of the prophecy, not verse by verse, but from selected passages. I will not be omitting any part of the prophecy, but will be singling out some of the key passages for preaching. I want to take these ancient messages, and bring them down to the present day.

Tonight I want to begin with a subject which we actually covered on Wednesday night, but I want to deal with a very important verse in the chapter which I did not include: verse 16.

Isa. 28:16 is a very important verse, not only because of its place in Isaiah's prophecy, but because it is quoted two times in the NT: in Romans 9:33, and in 1 Peter 2:6.

It has been interpreted in various ways:

- 1) Ewald says that it related to the Temple (Alexander, p. 454).
- 2) Umbreit says that it related to the Law.
- 3) Hitzig says that it related to Zion itself.
- 4) Gesenius says that it related to King Hezekiah.

But Paul and Peter, speaking by the Holy Spirit, said that it spoke of Christ. I doubt if any of us would dispute that. The NT makes the meaning very clear. Thus Isaiah spoke of Christ, as John 12:37-41 clearly teaches.

But before we get to that I want you to see the OT setting once again, and then its NT application.

First of all, we need to understand what a covenant with death is. Let me define it by pointing out . . .

I. WHAT THE PEOPLE WERE SAYING (Isa. 28:14, 15).

Verse 15 defines a covenant with death. The people were inclined to reject Isaiah's message of impending judgment because they felt that they had made enough agreements with surrounding nations to be able to ward off the judgment of God.

II. WHY THE PEOPLE SAID IT.

Actually verse 14 indicates that it was the leaders who said it, but the people seem to have taken up their words.

Two reasons are emphasized in this chapter by Isaiah.

A. First, their pride.

Cf. Isa. 28:1, 3. For the moment we will not look at the other things the Lord said, but it is important for us to see that there was no greater pride manifested among the Gentile nations than was to be found in Israel!

B. Second, their scorn.

Cf. Isa. 28:14.

What is a scorner? He is a mocker. He is "a frivolous and impudent person, who sets at naught and scoffs at the most sacred precepts and duties of religion, piety, and morals" (Wilson, Old Testament Word Studies, p. 372).

The same word is used in Psa. 1:1.

In rejecting Isaiah's preaching, they were rejecting God!

III. WHAT GOD SAID.

A. First of all, note Isa. 28:17-22.

This is also what Isaiah was saying, declaring the Word of God.

If this were all that God said, the case of Israel would have been hopeless. But the chapter begins and ends with words of hope. Scornful men deserve nothing but judgment, but God is a God of mercy and of grace.

B. The key to God's message through Isaiah: verse 16.

Remember: This points to Christ, and only to Christ.

The leaders had turned to others to establish their covenant with death, but those were false hopes. The only true hope, the only escape from death, was to be found in God and in His promise.

Notice what Isaiah said about Christ:

1. He is a foundation stone, laid by God, and there is no other! Any other hope for escaping death is hopeless. Cf. vc. 15b, 17.

2. He is a tried stone--one who has been tested and proved and found sufficient. He never fails. He is the resurrection and the life. Cf. John 11:25, 26. Also see John 5:24.

3. He is a precious corner stone.

That which makes a thing precious is:

- 1) Its usefulness.
- 2) Its availability. Are there others who can do what He can do? No! Then He is precious beyond any calculation.

4. He is a sure foundation--entirely firm and safe.

Jesus Christ is God's covenant with death. There is no other. This is proven to be eternally safe.

So you see the grace of God in this passage. When the leaders of the people felt that they had a covenant with death, God told them what the only way of escape was.

IV. THE APPLICATION FOR US TODAY.

A. First, notice that there have always been those who felt that they had devised a way to escape death.

1. Adam and Eve did when they made garments of fig leaves.
2. Cain did.
3. Think of all the people who heard Noah, but did not pay any attention to him.
4. Proverbs 16:25
There is a way that seemeth right unto a man,
but the end thereof are the ways of death.

B. Second, note how men make a covenant with death--and how they always have:

1. By acting as though they would never die physically.
Cf. the "certain rich man" in Luke 12:20.
2. By closing their minds and hearts to the Gospel, and ignoring that there is an eternity that is to come.
Cf. Heb. 9:27; Mark 8:36, "For what shall it profit a man . . ."

C. Third, the true and only covenant with death: Faith in Lord Jesus Christ.

Cf. John 11:25, 26; 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Concl: What is your covenant with death? Is it Christ, or something, or someone, else? We all need to be sure. Men have their ideas, but Christ is the only hope.

Such a passage as this behooves us to be bold in our declaration of the Gospel. Learn from Isaiah had to say. Note that the judgment of God is certain, and that there is nothing that man can do to escape that judgment, eternal death. Christ is the only hope.

Illus: The evangelist who preached from Isa. 28:20 on the subject, SHORT BEDS AND SCANTY COVERS.