

ISAIAH

Chapter 32

The Kingdom of Righteousness

See, a king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice.² Each man will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land.³ Then the eyes of those who see will no longer be closed, and the ears of those who hear will listen.⁴ The mind of the rash will know and understand, and the stammering tongue will be fluent and clear.⁵ No longer will the fool be called noble nor the scoundrel be highly respected.⁶ For the fool speaks folly, his mind is busy with evil: He practices ungodliness and spreads error concerning the LORD; the hungry he leaves empty and from the thirsty he withholds water. and from the thirsty he withholds water.⁷ The scoundrel's methods are wicked, he makes up evil schemes to destroy the poor with lies, even when the plea of the needy is just.⁸ But the noble man makes noble plans, and by noble deeds he stands.

32:1 *king ... in righteousness.* † The bliss of the Messianic kingdom is again in view (see 9:6; 11:6–9; 16:5 and notes). Cf. vv. 16–17; 33:17. (CSB)

This promise is ultimately fulfilled by the Messiah, though Judah would have kings who would bring blessings to the land, including Hezekiah, who reigned when God defeated the Assyrians. (TLSB)

Namely, Hezekiah and other upright kings. *In righteousness.* It is necessary above all that the king and head be righteous, discreet, and upright. Then the body will be governed most excellently by such a head. And though there are some counselors and citizens, these are members, and they cannot do as much damage as when the king is a fool and a dolt. Therefore great care must be taken to put an excellent king or ruler into office. When the head is in good condition, the body is very well governed. (Luther)

RULERS...RULE WITH JUSTICE – That is, you will not only have a just king but also good princes, who will rule well. Although in all kingdoms there may also be some good-for-nothings, yet the heads themselves are just. For the kingdoms of this world are all weak and therefore have weak members too, since no body is so sound that it does not have some defective member. Care should at least be taken that the head is good. (Luther)

32:2 Leaders of God's people protect and provide for them, following the example of God Himself. (TLSB)

Each man. The Lord's redeemed, as sources of protection and blessing, will reflect him (see the rest of this note; see also vv. 3–8). (CSB)

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shelter ... refuge ... shadow. Similar terms are applied to the Lord in 25:4 (see 4:5–6 and note). (CSB)

That is, he cannot be hurt by any evil because he lives under the good protection of a good prince. (Luther)

Where dense shade brings welcome relief to the heated traveler. This sounds the merciful invitation of the Savior, extended to all those that are heavy laden, to come unto Him and find rest for their souls, Matt. 11, 28-30. (Kretzmann)

streams ... in the desert. See 35:6–7; 41:18; 49:10. (CSB)

This is a very apt illustration. Nowhere is water treasured more highly than in dry and parched places. So the good rulers are compared to rivers and fountains that provide moisture, that bring relief to the weary and to those spent with toil. They are as pleasant as a refreshing drink is to a thirsty man. (Luther)

SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK IN A THIRTY LAND – They are not like the shade of a thin reed, but great and exceedingly solid rocks, which are not moved by any person or by fees but are a most dependable shade to the wearied pauper and to the just man. See how much that is holy and excellent there is in a good prince and ruler. In truth, a pious prince and burgomaster is a great saint. He must be a solid rock against all the schemes of the disobedient, against all the plots of the subjects, against all the feelings of his friends, so that he will not have greater regard for his acquaintances and friends than for the strangers. It is a difficult task for a man to stand in such a way as to be the shade of a rock to all the just. So you see how difficult an office he holds, to be hardhearted and heavy as a rock, so that he cannot be moved by either threats or promises. Thus a woman boasted about king David (2 Sam. 14:17): “My lord the king is like the angel of God,” who cannot be turned aside by either terrors or rewards. Let him who aspires to a ruling office be courageous; let him not rely on his own resources, but let him pray to God on bended knees. For he has been established not only against the world but also against Satan and his members. Therefore the ancients said: “The office reveals the man.” For there we see who is a courageous spirit and who is not among those who take possession of the office. (Luther)

32:3 eyes ... no longer be closed ... ears ... listen. See 35:5 and note (contrast 6:9–10). (CSB)

35:5–6 envisions believers as new creations (cf 2Co 5:17) with open eyes, ears, and mouths (cf Is 42:7). Jesus' ministry opened eyes and ears and mouths (Mt 11:5). (TLSB)

When such a king reigns, the teachers and preachers will also be righteous, and false prophets will be rooted out. *And the ears of those who hear will hearken.* They will have fine preachers and students. There you see that the ruler is installed for the promotion of the Gospel. For the Roman empire in its role of peacemaker surely must have been of help to the apostles, so that the Gospel might be preached throughout the world. Political peace is a great thing and is of a great benefit for the spread of the Word. Where there has been an ungodly prince, however, there will be ungodly teachers and hearers because he permits nothing but lies to be preached. There is something great about a good ruler. Therefore good doctrine, excellent hearers and preachers will thrive under a good ruler. (Luther)

those. Any who believe the message. The King's reign will reverse the blindness and deafness that followed Isaiah's preaching (Is 6:8–10).

32:4 MIND OF THE RASH WILL KNOW AND UNDERSTAND – he rash are most properly called fools who soon reveal what is in their heart. A wise man will first deliberate in his heart whether a thing is useful. Therefore Solomon puts the heart of a fool into his mouth, but he puts the wise man's mouth into his heart (Ecclus. 21:26). Such rash fools soon rush into public statements to give the impression of knowing something; they do not stop to think what good their speech and council might do, they do not have "speech seasoned with salt" (Col. 4:8). In sum: The state will thrive best when justice thrives. Then excellent teaching and teachers and hearers will follow, then also a thorough reformation of the fools will follow. (Luther)

STAMMERING TONGUE – He properly calls the ungodly teachers stammerers in the metaphorical sense. They do not speak when they speak, they stutter pa pa pa, they perform the act of speaking and yet say nothing. Vain babblers, who took the stage and raised one question after another, in fact, countless questions, they filled the church with empty words: Whether, whether, question, question, but they accomplished nothing. (Luther)

People who hesitate to state their convictions clearly because they are confused or because they are afraid what is in their minds. (TLSB)

BE FLUENT AND CLEAR – In few and perfectly clear words they will teach the hearers and enjoy doing it, as you see today, where formerly nothing was accomplished by the aimless preaching of the stammerers. (Luther)

32:5–8 The redeemed will no longer be among the fools. The contrast between the fool and the wise or noble man is characteristic of wisdom literature (compare Pr 9:1–6 with Pr 9:13–18). (CSB)

32:5 NO LONGER... FOOL BE CALLED NOBLE – *fool*. Usually refers to those who do not fear, love, and trust in the Lord (Ps 14:1; 53:1; 74:18, 22). (TLSB)

noble. “Fool” and “noble” sound nearly alike in Hbr. The foolish person will no longer be held in high regard. (TLSB)

scoundrel. A person who does not advocate for the most needy in Israel’s society (Is 1:17). (TLSB)

בִּדְיָ properly means generous, as is stated in Luke: He does good to many, doing good to all and protecting them with the greatest generosity. Such is the title of a good prince, בִּדְיָ, a benefactor. The foolish prince, however, who does not discharge his office, is not called בִּדְיָ. He is called a fool. Scripture calls those לִבְנֵי who are unsuitable and are of no benefit to anyone except to themselves and their own insatiable belly. These are properly the greedy, who seek nothing but their own advantage. (Luther)

32:6 *fool speaks folly*. Cf. 9:16–17; Ps 14:1; 53:1. (CSB)

The greatest folly is to teach wrongly about God. (TLSB)

This is proverbial in Latin, in Greek, and in German. Although those who are in the courts deem themselves to be very wise, make many words, and are always the first to speak, they are very foolish and greedy and not good for anything even to one man, only to themselves. Hence there is need of a wise prince who will not be flattered or provoked by the showy words of the fools who crowd the court. (Luther)

MIND IS BUSY WITH EVIL – that is, these people look out for nothing but their own affairs and the advantage of their own belly, and they skin the people, so that in this way they achieve nothing but grief among the people. (Luther)

PRACTICES UNGODLINESS – The Hebrew word הָיָה means hypocrisy. For under the guise of wisdom and hypocrisy they produce nothing but corruption. Yet, as a cover for that corruption they present the greatest appearance of wisdom. All of our princes suffer such corruption. (Luther)

SPREADS ERRORS – hat is, in the name of God and of the Gospel and with a good front they sow evil while they say: “This is what the Gospel says, this is what Christ says,” and thus under cover of the Lord’s name they speak errors.

They say nothing but what will line their own purses. They say only what will serve them in their kitchen. (Luther)

HUNGRY HE LEAVES EMPTY – As good princes achieve a good government, a good state, and the success of the Word, etc., as indicated above, so these **לֹא־יִשְׂרָאֵל**, these foolish princes, who scheme to achieve the opposite, hinder and prohibit all these good things. This is what it means to leave the craving of the hungry unsatisfied. This is the worst use that is made of an evil ruler. (Luther)

32:7 SCOUNDREL'S METHODS – The proverb says: The stingy man's purse does no one any good. We freely explain by means of German proverbs, so that the text may be made clear, lest anyone ridicule us for not having interpreted in the usual manner. Now the prophet wishes to show that all that belongs to the greedy—their pantries, their kitchen, and their purse—is of no use to others and, as the Greeks say it in their proverb: It is like hay in the dogs' manger. For the hay in the manger is of no use to the dogs, and yet they do not want other beasts to come to the manger and eat. The greedy are affected in the same way. They have no use for these goods, yet they keep others from using them, and thus they offer no one anything and do no one any good. Therefore the prince must be a **יִשְׂרָאֵל**, generous and gracious. He must not be a **לֹא־יִשְׂרָאֵל**, that is, foolish and greedy; otherwise he will be no use to anyone, just as a greedy citizen helps no one, robs everybody, gives nobody anything, is of no use to anybody. Therefore the prince and the teacher should not be greedy but be concerned about others as their office demands. Vessel denotes all kinds of bags. For the type of man who looks out for his own interests cannot judge and teach correctly, but out of the true doctrine he makes a moneybag for himself. (Luther)

MAKES UP EVIL SCHEMES – Here the prophet is speaking especially about the ruler and about teachers, whom also Peter describes (2 Peter 2:3). “In their greed they will exploit you with false words.” By lying words they devise ways and means of deceiving you. Because they are greedy, they look out for their own gain and are out after yours, both physical and spiritual. This is what we experienced with the pope. He calls him **רֹמֵם** in Hebrew, which means one who intentionally plans crimes. *To ruin the poor with lying words*, that is, with words he has made up. Not that these people call them lies, but that the spirit of the prophet does so. (Luther)

plea of the needy. See 1:17 and note. (CSB)

That is, he speaks lying words even to the poor, whom he ought to train and instruct, inform and comfort. The ungodly teachers who seek their own gain do all this for the sake of filthy lucre. (Luther)

32:8 *plans ... stands.* See 8:10 and note. (CSB)

The truly generous prince plans and considers how he might help soul and body and be of use to all, recognizing that he is there for that purpose. The noble prince devises noble things, that is, he is eager to be of service to all. These are properly noble princes and bishops. In the masculine the word נָדִיב means a nobleman. In the feminine it denotes a princely and noble thing. (Luther)

First he says that the prince devises noble things. Here he says that his steadfastness abides and that he stands by his nobility. It is not broken by vexation and ingratitude but always stands firm, whereas the greedy fall in the meantime when they do receive thanks for it. This, however, is praise for the constancy of the princes and teachers who in gratitude and ingratitude, in the kindness and the vexation of their subjects and hearers always continue in their generosity and sincerity. Thus in this time a large group of courtiers around Hezekiah have withdrawn from the king and fawned on the young prince Manasseh. The prophet sees this and therefore rebukes them with this indirect reproach and berates them as ingrates. (Luther)

32:1–8 A coming king will reign in righteousness, opening the eyes and ears of God's people. Those who are busy with error are fools. We should instead give attention to what the Lord has revealed and speak His truth distinctly. Jesus is our King who reigns in righteousness and shares that righteousness with all who believe in Him, providing them with shelter from the storms of sin and death. • King of Righteousness, You have delivered us from sin and death. Keep our hearts free from iniquity and error and busy with the noble things You desire. Amen (TLSB)

The Women of Jerusalem

⁹ You women who are so complacent, rise up and listen to me; you daughters who feel secure, hear what I have to say! ¹⁰ In little more than a year you who feel secure will tremble; the grape harvest will fail, and the harvest of fruit will not come. ¹¹ Tremble, you complacent women; shudder, you daughters who feel secure! Strip off your clothes, put sackcloth around your waists. ¹² Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vines ¹³ and for the land of my people, a land overgrown with thorns and briars— yes, mourn for all houses of merriment and for this city of revelry. ¹⁴ The fortress will be abandoned, the noisy city deserted; citadel and watchtower will become a wasteland forever, the delight of donkeys, a pasture for flocks, ¹⁵ till the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest. ¹⁶ Justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness live in the fertile field. ¹⁷ The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. ¹⁸ My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest. ¹⁹ Though hail flattens the forest and the city is leveled completely, ²⁰ how blessed you will

be, sowing your seed by every stream, and letting your cattle and donkeys range free.

32:9 *women*. Cf. 3:16–4:1. (CSB)

The original Hebrew combines both men and women in this section. (PBC)

complacent ... feel secure.† They have a false sense of security. See v. 11; Am 6:1. These words are used in a good sense in v. 18 (the Hebrew for “undisturbed” is the same as that for “complacent”). (CSB)

Denounced for their love of luxury and warned that their false security will soon vanish. Feeling secure and complacent in this context is the opposite of repentance. (TLSB)

This should be a new chapter. The prophet sees the destruction coming after this joy, he sees the darkness coming after this light which the prophets gave. So today we must admonish our overconfident people, lest in a little while they again fall into darkness. He calls them women metaphorically, that is, wealthy cities furnished with a good government, or people who after their victory have fallen into supreme confidence and complacency, just as we become complacent upon acquiring one good preacher and at last fall into the dangers of darkness again. By this general admonition he declares that this error will be in them even to the time of Christ, just as there is no end of sinning on our part. *At ease*, that is, self-confident and complacent cities, despisers of God. (Luther)

The people of Jerusalem felt secure because of the alliance with Egypt. Perhaps they were also secure because they believed that God would not destroy Jerusalem and His temple there. The temple was a kind of good luck charm they believed would ward off all destruction. (PBC)

32:10 *a year*. Perhaps the invasion of Sennacherib (701 B.C.) is in view. (CSB)

That is, there will be some time. It is a matter of a day and a year. He mentions a specific time for an indefinite time. The time will come, believe me, and this time has not passed in vain. None of your merits and strength would help you. (Luther)

grape harvest will fail. Cf. 37:30. The armies of Assyria would bring widespread destruction, ruining the summer fruit. (CSB)

There will be neither vintage nor fruit harvest, which now make you happy. In other words, disaster will come upon you. (Luther)

Crop failure would have devastating consequences in this agrarian society. (TLSB)

32:11–13 A call to repentance. These outward signs are warnings for their sins. The people produce thorns and briars in their lives. (TLSB)

32:11 TREMBLE – This is an admonition whereby he would scare them away from their self-reliance, as if to say: “You who are now complacent, tremble and shudder, ‘because it is time to strip and gird your loins,’ that is, the king of Babylon is at hand, who will strip you, despoil you, and divest you of your kingdom, government, cities, and riches.” They will be made bare to the point of shame, they will be despoiled and reduced to the most horrible devastation. (Luther)

Strip. Cf. 47:2–3. (CSB)

sackcloth. Cf. 3:24; 22:12; see note on Ge 37:34. (CSB)

“You who once wore the master’s purple now, as slaves, will put on sackcloth.” (Luther)

32:12 *Beat your breasts.* Like the slave girls of Nineveh (Na 2:7). (CSB)

“Upon their breasts they will strike over the fields of pleasantness or desire, over the vine of fruitfulness,” deeply grieving on account of the desolation which had come upon their fertile land. (Kretzmann)

or the fruitful vines. Cf. the Lord’s weeping in 16:9. (CSB)

This explains the nakedness, namely, that the fields and vineyards will be forsaken, since there will be no one to cultivate them. (Luther)

32:13 *thorns and briars.* See 5:6; 7:23 and notes. (CSB)

The vineyard (Israel) is under the Lord’s curse (5:6; Gn 3:18). (TLSB)

They will grow up, that is, there will be no fruitfulness in their fields, but there will be extreme devastation. (Luther)

merriment ... revelry. See 22:2 and note; cf. Jer 16:8–9. (CSB)

Where there are very spacious and very highly decorated houses, which are now secure in supreme joy, there will be a thorny field. (Luther)

The Prophet, as in chapter 3, has in mind women who have never known any want, but have continually lived in abundance and luxury. His purpose was to frighten them out of their secure arid proud repose and to make them realize the condition in which their land was on account of the sins of its inhabitants. (Kretzmann)

32:14 *fortress ... noisy city.* Assyria's invasion is a warning that Jerusalem (see 24:10 and note) will one day be destroyed. (CSB)

Set over the vineyard. In this comparison, it is Jerusalem. (TLSB)

With the inhabitants taken away and the people removed, there will be no activity. (Luther)

donkeys ... flocks. Cf. 7:25; 13:21–22; 34:13. (CSB)

Wild animals will run free in the once-cultivated “vineyard” of Israel. (TLSB)

That is, grass will grow around those towers, where wild asses and flocks will graze. In other words, there will be a most desolate loneliness, as Vergil says: “Where Troy once was, there is now an open field. *Wild ass.* I think that this name refers to all wild beasts of the forest in general. (Luther)

32:15 *till the Spirit.*† The outpouring of the Spirit is linked with abundance also in 44:3 (see 30:23 and note). It is linked with justice and righteousness in v. 16 and with peace, quietness and confidence in v. 17. (CSB)

The Spirit, who will rest on the messianic King, will be poured upon the people, bringing about a new creation (Gal 6:15) and moving them to receive Him as their Lord (Ezk 39:29; Ac 2:1–21). Prophets often envision an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the messianic age (Is 44:3; Ezk 36:26–27). The prophecies are fulfilled in Ac 2; 8:17; 10:44. (TLSB)

This very short verse consoles us by its ending, as if to say, “Under King Hezekiah all things will flourish, but then days will come again when you will be made desolate by the Babylonian king, until at one time the end of all ends and the Savior Christ will come. Thus by a leap the prophet rises up to Christ Himself, the King of kings. The Holy Spirit has come from on high on the day of Pentecost, where He has begun the new reign and former kingdoms have been abolished, the flesh in us has been transformed, and our desires have been put to death. (Luther)

fertile field ... forest. The forest probably stands for Lebanon (see 29:17 and note; cf. 35:1–2). (CSB)

That is, the blind will see, and the seeing will be blinded. The wilderness will become a thoroughly cultivated field through the Word and the church, and those who seem to be cultivated, namely the synagogues, will be turned into deserts by the Word and the church. There righteousness will be found where there is now no righteousness, and vice versa. (Luther)

32:16 *Justice ... righteousness.* See v. 1 and note. (CSB)

32:17 *peace.*† Cf. 9:7; 11:6–9 and notes. (CSB)

The result of the Spirit's coming is righteousness and peace (v 18), even in the midst of storms (v 19; cf Jn 16:33). St. Bernard of Clairvaux: "Righteousness is the mother, the nurse, and the guardian of all virtues" (*SLSB*, p 114). (TLSB)

quietness and confidence. Contrast 30:15. (CSB)

The effect, or reward, is suitable to the counter-promise. For the effect and reward of the righteousness of faith is peace. This is by analogy of the fields whose result or fruit is wheat and corn. Thus you see here the fruit of the righteousness of faith. *And safety forever.* These are words of praise for the righteousness of the New Testament, namely, peace, quietness, and safety, as Paul points out in Rom. 5:1 ff. In vain do we say (Ps. 38:3): "There is no health in my bones because of my sin." (Luther)

32:18 *secure ... undisturbed.* See note on v. 9. (CSB)

places of rest. See 28:12 and note. (CSB)

That is, my people will live in habitations of peace and dwellings of safety and in the tranquility of plenty. These are the fruits of faith, of justification, and of grace. For such trust in the flesh does not exist, but it is by faith alone and by the grace of God. The accent is on the words *My people*. "My, My people," because this is a new people renewed by the Spirit, a people set free from the demanding Law, from biting sin, and from gloating death. These foes are vanquished, and therefore we have great confidence. (Luther)

32:19 *hail.* Cf. 28:2. (CSB)

Earlier seen as one of God's powers to destroy Assyria. (TLSB)

My people will have the above-mentioned blessings; but Jerusalem and the ungodly will not have these benefits and this rest but will be in the hail, in the storm, "and in lowliness," that is, in the lowest depths, at the nethermost place. He calls Jerusalem a city going down an incline, a city lying on the slope. By this location he refers figuratively to the city's fall, and by means of the site itself he refers to the city's destruction, as if to say: "This city is hanging on the edge of the abyss, yea, it is hanging over too far and is headed for destruction." (Luther)

forest.† Probably Assyria. See 10:33–34 and notes. (CSB)

Figurative language to describe the defeat of forces hostile to the coming of the Kingdom. The city appears as the center of opposition (24:10; 25:2). (TLSB)

He is thinking of Lebanon, out of whose forests Jerusalem was constructed. *Hail*. That destruction will come by hail, that is, by the storm and turmoil of consciences. These things will remain *in the descent of the forest*; that is, they will lie prostrate in Jerusalem. *Hail*, that is, disquiet and disaster. So it will be in the presence of the ungodly, who rely on themselves. (Luther)

32:20† The bliss of the day of the Lord is described (see 11:6–9; 30:23 and notes). (CSB)

People will see God’s blessings after the destruction. (TLSB)

He refers to the farmers who sow the seed around the overflowing waters. Thus the apostles sow the seed around the waters, that is, among the nations. There the “oxen,” that is, the preachers, and the “asses,” the godly burden-bearers of Christ, yet sluggish in the flesh, are permitted to range free. So you see, the Gospel provides “oxen,” that is, priests and teachers, and “asses,” that is, godly men. Thus in this chapter the prophet very briefly passes through various disasters after the reign of Hezekiah to the reign of Christ. In the following chapter he returns to the king of Assyria. (Luther)

sow beside all waters. Cf Nu 24:6; Ps 1:3; Jer 17:8. The eschatological stream will bring about complete healing (Rv 22:1–2). (TLSB)

This is again a picture of the prosperity and security of the Church under the blessing of the Lord in the New Testament: the world-powers, all spiritual enemies vanquished and the city of God with the fields of His Word happy and prosperous. (Kretzmann)

32:9–20 Those who are complacent will be laid low. But the pouring out of God’s Spirit will make the lives of His people fruitful. The Lord calls us to repent and shudder over our fruitless lives. In the waters of Holy Baptism, God pours out His Spirit upon us. By that Spirit, we are given Jesus’ righteousness, resulting in lives of peace and trust forever.

- Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life, help me to live this day trusting in my Savior, happily producing the fruit of good works. In Jesus’ name. Amen. (TLSB)