

Wonder upon Wonder

Isaiah 29:11-19

Introduction

“This vision is like a sealed book” (v. 11). The vision God is referring to is what He has just said in the beginning of this chapter, predicting the siege of Jerusalem. He has pronounced judgment—this is Law. But from the last part of our reading to the end of the chapter, God is talking about the restoration that is to come—this is Gospel. The natural man cannot understand the things of God. Therefore, the vision is like a sealed book. Now, if the natural man cannot understand the Law, he cannot understand the Gospel, either. It is also from God. That’s what makes it a wonder upon wonder. Today, we unpack that wonder and, with the Holy Spirit’s help, we can understand it. God will open the sealed book for us.

Paradise

The last three verses of our reading talk about Paradise. Lebanon will be a *fruitful field* that is *regarded as a forest (v. 17)*. There are cedar forests in Lebanon, though extensive logging has all but depleted them. Now, there are efforts being made to reforest the country. But the *“deaf shall hear”*, the *“blind shall see”*, the *“meek shall have joy”*, and the *“poor shall exult in the Lord”* point to a more distant future. They point to God’s kingdom of grace, initiated when Christ came the first time, and are fulfilled in completeness in His kingdom of glory. But God addresses the current situation in **verses 13, 15-16**.

A World Turned Upside Down

In **verse 16**, God says, *“You turn things upside down!”* Indeed, sin has turned our world upside down. Right is wrong and wrong is right. If you love all people equally and treat everyone equally important, you’re called a racist. Lifestyles the Lord condemns in His Word are not just accepted and tolerated but celebrated. This kind of thinking creeps into the church when we allow the world to dictate right and wrong. If we don’t stick to the Bible for our way of life, we will become as upside down as the world is.

Denying God

How ridiculous it seems to think of a clay pot saying of the potter who made it, *“He did not make me” (v. 16)*. Yet, today, naturalists declare with pride, “No God made us; we’re here by accident!” They cling tenaciously to that philosophy because if they admitted that God created the universe, they would have to admit we are all fallen and in need of a Savior. However, we would never deny God, except when we try to find excuses for not doing what the Bible says, by rationalizing and applying situational ethics.

Lip-service

Verse 13 is a picture of lip-service. *“This people draw near Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips.”* But while they talk a good talk, their *“hearts are far from Me.”* There is no substance to Israel’s worship. Here is the problem. God had given them three types of Law—ceremonial, civil, and moral. They honored Him with their lips, keeping the ceremonial law. But they didn’t treat others the

way they should—civil and moral law. **James** talks about this in **chapter 2** (Read **James 2:2-4**). We see here mistreatment of the poor even during a worship service!

Man-made Law

“Their fear of me is a commandment taught by men” (v. 13). This is basing our salvation on man-made laws instead of God’s Law. When we make logic, reason, or experience the magisterium of Scripture, we end up with all the man-made divisions we have in the church.

Wonder upon Wonder

God says He’s going to do something that will confound the people even further. Their wisdom and discernment won’t be able to handle it. This is where the Gospel comes in. The wonder upon wonder is that God would send His one and only Son into the world to die a cruel death on the cross and pay the price for our sins. That staggers the imagination.

Because

In **verse 14**, the word that gets my attention is ‘therefore.’ It points us back to the word at the beginning of **verse 13**, ‘because.’ Did God send His Son to die because He saw something worth redeeming in us? No. Because we were helpless and condemned in our sins, God sent His Son to die on the cross. This shows us how much God loves us. He gives us whatever we need, beginning with forgiveness of sins and salvation, for the sake of His Son Jesus Christ.

Means of Grace

And for us today, behold, here is that wonder upon wonder. Jesus comes to us in Word and Sacrament. God’s Word is pure grace; who can explain it’s power? Sacrament means “mystery;” human logic and reason cannot comprehend how this could be the body and blood of Christ. So, many don’t believe it is. But “is” means “is.” Receive the **WONDER UPON WONDER** of Christ’s body and blood today.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
