

"A Refuge of Lies"  
Isaiah 28:14-20  
Parker 874 A  
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Today I'm going to be preaching from the Old Testament, the book of Isaiah, the prophet Isaiah, and I will be preaching from Isaiah chapter 28. This is the prophet's indictment against the leaders of Israel. Actually, the leaders of Jerusalem. Isaiah, as you know, prophesied in the city of Jerusalem about 700 to 750 years before Christ. And so, we are going to look at these passages and the title of this message is "A Refuge of Lies."

I want to begin in verse 14 of Isaiah 28 where the prophet, as he is commanded, guided, and inspired by God to deliver this message and it's a charge against the leaders of Jerusalem. This would include the political, the civil leaders, including the king. It would include also the spiritual leaders, the priest and those who are spiritual guides of the people. And it says in **Isaiah 28:14**: he says, *"Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem."* Now he calls them scornful men. What were they scorning? You know to scorn something is to treat it as it's worthless. That's what it means to scorn. Well what were they scorning? Well they were scorning the law of God. They were scorning the word of God. They were leading people in religion but not according to the word of God. It's like today, we have so much religion but very little truth. So much ceremony, so much sincerity and dedication, but no grace and especially when people read the Bible, the word of God, and they miss Christ and fail to preach Christ and scorn the word of God as

it is to be seen and interpreted and studied in life of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

He says in **Isaiah 28:15**, "*Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement;*" And here's what their covenant is: it's an agreement, it's a contract and these leaders of Jerusalem are saying, well we made a covenant with hell and with death. Now what was that covenant? Well, he explains it right here. They say, "...when the overflowing scourge shall pass through," Now what scourge is he talking about? Well that's the wrath of God. When the wrath of God passes through, "*it shall not come unto us:*" In other words, their covenant with hell and with death is that the wrath of God would not come upon them. They were okay. It's like a person today says I know I'm saved. **4:04** I know that when God's wrath comes upon the evil and the wicked I won't be found among that number. I've made a covenant with death and hell. When God's wrath comes through, I know I'm saved. I know I'm going to heaven. Now that's the covenant they made. Now the issue here is what is the ground of such a claim? If you believe you're saved, if you believe when the wrath of God comes through it will not come upon you, then what is the ground? What is the foundation of your claim? You're claiming you have a refuge. That's what these were claiming. They had made something their refuge and that's the issue of this passage and of this message. What is your refuge? What is my refuge? Well, Isaiah exposes them as having a refuge of lies and it says here in verse 15, "*...for we have made lies our refuge.*" Now they weren't saying that openly and they didn't realize that openly, but the prophet is speaking God's word and God is exposing them. "*We have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:*" They didn't believe that it was a

refuge of lies. These religious leaders did not believe that they were hiding themselves under falsehood, but that was the reality of it. Now what was their refuge?

Well I want you to understand this and understand it well: their refuge was their religion. Their hiding place, which the Lord through the prophet Isaiah calls a falsehood, was a religious profession, it was religious sincerity, it was religious ceremony. If you want to read about the state of Jerusalem and the people of Judah in Isaiah's time, began back in chapter 1 where Isaiah brings the indictment against them. He talks about how religious Jerusalem is, how religious the people are, but they don't know the truth. You see, religion without knowledge and truth is a refuge of lies. You see, people can be religious and sincere and dedicated and even moral and charitable under a refuge of lies. But Isaiah says in **Isaiah 1:10**, "*Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom;...*" In fact in **Isaiah 1:9** he made this statement: He said, "*Except the Lord of hosts*" (that's the true and living God). He says, "*Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant,*" (a very small group of people). He says, "*We should be as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.*" In other words totally evil, totally destroyed. So he says, "*Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom..*" Who is he calling Sodom here? This is Jerusalem, this is the city of God, this is the people of God under the old covenant, this is Israel, Judah. He says, "*Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.*" In other words, he's saying, you're no better off in your religion than Sodom and Gomorrah. Now that is that is a strong indictment and don't you know the people and the leaders, especially the religious leaders, were offended? It's like our Lord, when he came into his earthly ministry and he began preaching, he

told the people, he said in **Matthew 5:20**, "*...That except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" Your religious leaders are the blind leading the blind and you'll all fall in the ditch together. You're in a refuge of lies and that's what Isaiah is saying to his generation and what were they doing? You see, you think about Sodom and Gomorrah, that was such a wicked, evil, grossly wicked people. They were entrenched in homosexuality and bestiality and idolatry, fornication. It was such an evil society. They were sinners who deserved the wrath of God. What Isaiah is saying to the people of Jerusalem in his day is you're no better off than them in your religion because a religion that is not based in the truth of God's free and sovereign grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ, my friend, it's a refuge of lies. Listen to **Isaiah 1:11**: He says, "*To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?*" They were sacrificing, but for what purpose? You know all the sacrifices of the Old Testament, the burnt offerings were types and pictures, object lessons to point sinners who cannot save themselves, sinners who in themselves deserve damnation and hell, to point them to Christ, the Lamb of God as the only way of salvation, the only refuge of lies. So these people, they were sacrificing, they were praying, they were lifting up their hands, they were meeting in worship assemblies, but it was all a refuge of lies.

Now go back to Isaiah 28. Here's how he exposes them and I want you to see this. This is so important. What is the only true refuge for sinners against the wrath of God? Well in Isaiah 28:16 he interjects here in his indictment against Israel, against Jerusalem for their false refuge, a refuge of lies, he interjects in verse 16 a prophecy of the only true, the only right refuge and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. His

blood, his obedience unto death, his blood as the full payment of all the sins of all of his people and his righteousness as the only way in ground of justification before God. Listen to what he says and I want to prove this to you now, I want to interpret scripture with scripture. You follow along in the Scriptures with me and you'll see what I'm saying is true. He says in **Isaiah 28:16**, *"Therefore thus saith the Lord God,"* (this is the true and living God) he says, *"Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone"* And he says this stone is *"a tried stone"* (that's a tested stone). He said, this stone is *"a precious cornerstone,"* and this stone is *"a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste."* Now to make haste is another way of saying shall not be ashamed. You won't have to scurry about in haste because you'll be resting peacefully in the one true refuge. Now if you're in a refuge of lies, you see then you will make haste because you won't know where to turn. You will be ashamed. Now what he's talking about here is the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the foundation stone. Christ is the tried and tested stone, we'll talk about that. Christ is the precious cornerstone. Christ is the sure foundation. Christ is the only true refuge of safety and peace from the overflowing scourge of God's wrath against my sin. There's no other refuge. The psalmist spoke of that often in various psalms when he spoke of God the Lord is my hope. The Lord is my hiding place. The Lord is my high tower. The Lord is my refuge. And any other refuge other than Christ and him crucified and risen again is a refuge of lies. I don't care what it is. It can be a refuge of religion, it can be a refuge of materialism, it can be a refuge of a profession of faith without the heart, but it's a refuge of lies. Now let's look at this verse 16 because this is how he exposes their refuge of lies. He starts out *"Behold"*, listen, this is important and this is life and death. He said, *"I lay in Zion..."* God lays this

rock, this stone, this foundation in Zion. You see this refuge that we're talking about, the only right refuge that exposes all other refuges as being a refuge of lies, is the work of God. Well, what's he talking about? He's talking about the same thing that Jonah learned in the belly of the whale: Salvation is of the Lord. It's of the Lord in it's purpose and it's planning. It's of the Lord in it's provision. It's of the Lord in it's application. It's conditioned on Christ. It's of the Lord in it's final success, final glory. It's all of God. Salvation is not of you or of me or of any man, if it were, it would be a failure. It would be a refuge of lies.

Salvation is of the Lord. It's a sovereign work of God's grace. It's not conditioned on me, it's not conditioned on you. It's all conditioned on the Lord Jesus Christ who, in his work, his obedience unto death on the cross of Calvary, fulfilled every condition to secure the salvation of God's elect people. All for whom he died, his sheep, his church. And that's what he says, "*Behold I lay in Zion...*" Now what is Zion? You know people argue about that today and there's such a confusion about it. Well Zion, in the Old Testament under the old covenant (and this was since the days of David) that Zion was a reference to the city of Jerusalem, the physical city of Jerusalem. But you see, those elements in the old covenant were types and pictures of something spiritual. If you want to follow along in your Bibles, look in Hebrews chapter 12. What is Zion to me and to you? What is it in the New Testament? Well Zion is the church, the church of the living God. It's the charge which Christ bought with his own precious blood. The redeemed of the Lord, the people of God, the elect of God. God chose a people before the foundation of the world and gave them to Christ. That population of people, Isaiah called them an elect remnant, a remnant according to the election of grace. That's Zion, the

heavenly city of God. Over in Hebrews chapter 12, we're seeing compared here (or you might say better contrasted here) the physical things of the old covenant in mount Sinai, the physical Mountain and all of its elements, and even in physical Jerusalem (which worked out to be the place of the Temple) as contrasted with the greater permanent eternal glory of the new covenant. And he says in verse 22 is, now what he's saying here is you haven't come to a physical mountain. When you come to salvation, when you come to Christ, you don't go to Mount Sinai. That's the law; the law cannot save you. All the law can do is condemn you. That's all it can do. You see, the law makes no provision for mercy and grace. The law says do and live, disobey and die. So when you come to Christ you don't come to Mt. Sinai. But he says in **Hebrews 12:22-24**, *"But you are come unto mount Zion..."* Now that Zion is the same as Zion. And he says, *"But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God..."* (He's describing Mount Zion) he says, it's *"the city of the living God,"* it's *"the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels 23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn"* (that's the church of Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ) *"which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,"* (that's the Saints that have already gone to be with the Lord) 24 *"And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of a Abel."* That's what Zion is. **Isaiah 28:16**, *"Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion..."* This is the foundation of his church. And what is the foundation of the church? Jesus Christ and him crucified. Christ told his disciples that in **Matthew 16:18**, *"...upon this rock"* Himself, not Peter, but himself. *"...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."* He says, I lay in Zion a foundation, a stone. Christ is the

foundation. The glory of the person of Christ, who he is, he's God and man in one person and the glory and the power of his finished work on the cross to redeem his people from their sins and bring forth a righteousness that answers the demand of God's law and justice so that God might be a just God and still justify his people. Christ is the foundation you see it's his blood and righteousness alone that forms the foundation of the church. It's not our works. The church is not built upon our works, it's not built upon our faith, it's not built upon anything we do or anything we attempt to do, it is based upon, it's founded upon what Christ accomplished in his obedience unto death. He's "a tried stone." He's tested. Christ was tested all of his earthly life and he passed every test. He was tested by Satan on the Mount of temptation and he passed. He was tested throughout by the Pharisees and scribes and he passed every test. He fulfilled all righteousness in all that he did. He was the sinless substitute, the lamb without blemish without spot. He was tested in the Garden of Gethsemane and he passed the test and the ultimate test was his suffering unto death on the cross and he passed that test too. He was made sin Christ who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He fulfilled all righteousness. Christ did. And then, he's "*a precious cornerstone.*" The cornerstone was the first stone laid on the foundation and everything was measured by and everything was fitted together according to that cornerstone. That's Christ, the cornerstone of the church. He's "*a sure foundation:*" He's not a refuge of lies. My friend, to stand before God, washed in the blood of Christ, to stand before God having his righteousness, Christ righteousness, imputed, charged, accounted to you is a sure foundation. It will turn back the wrath of God from you because the whole wrath of God came upon Christ. And "*he that believeth shall not make haste.*"

Over in the book of Romans chapter 9, part of this verse is quoted. Here he's talking about Israel. In **Romans 9:31-33** he said, *"But Israel, which followed after the law for righteousness,"* (They were trying to work their way into righteousness. They were trying to establish a righteousness of their own.) but, they did *"not attain(ed) to the law of righteousness."* They missed the mark. *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."* **Romans 9:32** says why did they miss the mark? *"Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith,"* Now what is it to seek righteousness by faith? It's to seek it in the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't have righteousness in myself; I have righteousness in Christ. He is my righteousness. He is my refuge. Everything else is a refuge of lies. And he says, *"Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; 33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offense: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."* If Christ is your refuge you will not be ashamed. Now Israel, they were religious, they were sincere. Paul says in **Romans 10:1**, they said, *"...my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."* He said, *"...I bear them record they have a zeal of God but not according to knowledge."* Now these people were like the same ones Isaiah's talking to. He says, *"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."* **Romans 10:3** You see, to be in the right refuge is to be submitted to the righteousness of God. Well, what is that? Well **Romans 10:4** says it. *"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth."* And Peter made the point, in first Peter chapter two, that everyone that is

disobedient are those who will not submit to Christ.

Now back over in **Isaiah 28:17**, he says, *"Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet:..."* You see, Christ came to establish righteousness for his people. As I've quoted earlier in **2 Corinthians 5:21**, *"For he was made sin, Christ who knew no sin, for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* Sin was imputed, charged to him, the sins of his people, his church, and his righteousness is imputed to them. That's the refuge: Christ and his righteousness. And it says, *"and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place."* If your refuge is anything but Christ, his precious blood and his righteousness imputed, Christ himself, then my friend, the hail of God's wrath, which is the measuring line of righteousness, will overflow that hiding place. It will sweep away that refuge of lies. What is your refuge? Is it your religion? Is it your profession? You know, some people will talk about a profession they made when they were a teenager for years on end. That's the refuge. What is your refuge? Is a baptism? Is it church membership? Is it reformation of life? Is it your faith? My friend, if it's anything but Christ and him crucified and risen again, his blood, his righteousness alone, it's a refuge of lies. And that's what he says here. He says in **Isaiah 28:18**, *"your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it."* There's only one refuge from the wrath of God and that's Christ and what he accomplished on Calvary. **Isaiah 28:19** says, *"From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report."* In other words, it will be a trouble to you to

understand what the real refuge is if you're found in that day of God's judgment. He says in **Isaiah 28:20**, "*For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.*" You know what a bed is for don't you? It's to rest in. Have you ever tried to rest and sleep in a bed that's too short for you? Well, that's what these false refuges are. People have this refuge but it's not good enough. You can't rest in it. You see, the only resting place is Christ. He said, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" **Matthew 11:28** That covering, man will try to wrap himself up to hide his shame and his sin but my friend, the only cover that will stand the test of gods overflowing scourge of wrath is the righteousness of Christ imputed, accounted, charged. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall not make haste. You shall not be ashamed. Everything else, no matter how noble or moral or sincere it is, is a refuge of lies. Don't waste another minute of your life trying to sleep and rest in a bed that's too short or cover yourself with a covering that's too narrow. Look to Christ. Well, I hope this message has helped you to understand these Scriptures and I hope you will listen even more. If you'd like a copy of this message, listen to the announcer and he'll give you the information you need to order either by tape or CD or DVD. The title of this message is "A Refuge of Lies" and I hope you'll join us next week for another message from God's Word.