**A Refuge of Lies**

*Isaiah 28:15*

**Introduction**

1. **Isaiah 28:14-15** – the rulers of Jerusalem scoffed at God’s word and instead made lies their refuge against the threat of Assyria.
2. Context:
   1. **(vv. 1-4)** – leaders of Israel (Samaria) rebuked for their pride and inebriation with literal intoxicants, but especially false counsel.
   2. **(vv. 5-6)** – judgment will teach them that God is their strength. (Future – remnant)
   3. **(vv. 7-10)** – turn to Judah (Jerusalem) – they are no different than Israel (Samaria), but are disgustingly drunk (literal), especially with false counsel and error – they mock God’s word, especially Isaiah’s call to wait on the Lord **(vv. 9-10).**
   4. **(vv. 11-13)** – because they rejected God’s word, He would teach them through judgment with a people of strange speech they could not understand (Assyrians).
   5. **(vv. 14-15)** – they made a covenant with death so that the Assyrians would not defeat them – they made unauthorized alliances with other nations (Egypt – trusting in the arm of flesh) – fed lies by themselves (prophets/priests – **cf. Isaiah 9:14-16)** and Egypt about protection against Assyrian threat.
      1. Not that they literally said such, but that they claimed wisdom and strength to deliver themselves, yet such itself was a lie, and involved lies/deception.
   6. **(vv. 16-19)** – Jehovah (looking forward to Messiah as well) should have been their firm foundation, but because they rejected Him their refuge of lies would be swept away and their covenant with death would fail.
      1. **(vv. 16-17a**) – corresponds to **verses 5-6** – looking to future when remnant makes God their refuge.
   7. **(vv. 20-21)** – their refuge of lies is not sufficient and will fail (like seeking rest and warmth in a bed that is too short, and a blanket too narrow).
   8. **(v. 22)** – further warning and urge to trust in God instead.
3. The same faithless mistake made by Judah continues to be made by people today, including some among God’s people – covenants are made with death and Sheol, and lies and falsehoods are turned to for refuge instead of the Lord.
   1. These will be shown ineffective and will be swept away.
   2. In the life that now is, and in the judgment to come these refuges of lies will match the metaphor – (**v. 20)**
4. A Refuge of Lies
5. Atheism
   1. Atheism is turned to for refuge from the accountability that comes with the conviction in a Creator God.
      1. **Acts 17:26-28** – creation designed in such a way to elicit search for God in pursuit of fulfilled purpose/responsibility.
      2. **Romans 1:18-24** – truth of God’s existence evidenced in creation is suppressed with unrighteousness due to “lusts of their hearts.”
         1. **(vv. 22-23)** – the very urge to replace God is a kind of evidence for God’s existence – the rejection of the existence of the true God is combined with the creation of idols to provide a refuge from responsibility inherent within created nature, and the defiled conscience that comes with the rejection of it – there must be a greater being/idea to justify our way of life (why there is such aggression from many atheists instead of a laissez-faire approach).
         2. Today – the idol joined to the rejection of the true Creator is the theory of **materialistic naturalism** (only matter, and all phenomena by natural law), **evolution and natural selection, humanism** (rejection of divine, and focus on man), etc.
   2. Atheism cannot provide for an objective morality:
      1. Not that atheists reject the idea of morality, or that they don’t live with any sense of morality, BUT THAT THEIR MORALITY IS ILLOGICAL, INDEFENSIBLE, AND INCONSISTENT.
         1. Morality is non-material – based on the naturalist worldview it cannot be explained, measured, or defended (no mechanism for determining the morality of an action).
            1. No reason to suggest we live above the behavior of the most ruthless beasts (or even what that would mean – above?).
         2. Result – not refuge, but chaos.
      2. When God is rejected – **Romans 1:28-32** – everything goes.
         1. However, this does not indicate that everyone partook in all of the above, or that each one agreed to the morality of each action.
         2. **1 Corinthians 5:1 –** such base immorality of the gentiles even had its limits of sanction (although inconsistent).
      3. Such does not provide refuge – **Romans 1:24, 26-27** – dishonor bodies, penalty of error due (i.e. the concomitant of an act against nature).
         1. **Proverbs 13:15** – way of unfaithful is hard.
         2. **Romans 1:18** – wrath of God still revealed.
         3. **The denial of God and the moral standard revealed in His law does not undo their reality any more than denying the law of gravity would provide safety in an otherwise fatal plummet.**
   3. Atheism cannot provide for any purpose of life:
      1. Naturalism’s greatest purpose it can provide is the survival of the species – natural selection (that which is greater than the individual, thus, at the individual’s expense – if he is the weak link to eliminate).
         1. NOTE: contradiction – justifies abortion, which at its fundamental basis would be an assault on the idea of preserving the species.
      2. Such has been the cause for countless occasions of suffering (physical, mental, emotional).
         1. The lack of purpose leads to a lack of answers for difficult, yet common, questions. (Origins, purpose of life, suffering, death, after death, etc.)
         2. Such causes great mental anguish.
      3. Solomon’s experiment shows the darkness of such – **Ecclesiastes 1:2; 3:19-20**
      4. But we were created with a purpose – **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14** – there is reward at the end.
         1. Atheism provides no refuge from the problems of this life, much less from the judgment to come.
6. Philosophy
   1. Philosophy – the rational investigation of the truths and principles of being, knowledge, or conduct. (dictionary.com)
      1. Greek – *philosophia* – *philo* (love), *sophia* (wisdom) – the love of wisdom. (NT 1x – **Colossians 2:8**)
      2. When wisdom is pursued and gained through observation of the surrounding world, and through personal experiences.
   2. Specifically, philosophy is a failing refuge in the realm of ultimate substance – i.e. spiritual substance (what is eternal):
      1. The spiritual is, by definition, unexperienced by natural senses – **2 Corinthians 4:18; 5:7**
      2. Because philosophy has to do with the rational part of man (wisdom) it is often conflated with the spiritual – but the spiritual is with God (**John 4:24; Genesis 1:26**) and is only obtainable by revelation (**1 Corinthians 2:11**).
         1. The spiritual involves the rational/intellect, but is not equal to it.
      3. EX: A man can reason within himself, and reach a conclusion based on observational fact that he should act in a certain way, and it benefits his life on earth – prospering in physical, mental, emotional, and relational ways (self-help books), however, in no way can he prosper spiritually with such a pursuit.
         1. About more than just being successful, a good person, or a positive contributor to humanity.
         2. Spiritual purpose – glorifying God; Spiritual salvation – redemption from sin, and transformation by the renewal of the mind.
   3. Philosophy is warned about as being a refuge of lies – **Colossians 2:8-10** – philosophy is empty deceit, but the spiritual substance is Christ.
      1. It appears on the surface to offer true substance.
      2. Substance is in revelation of God (bodily revelation in Christ) – **(vv. 6-7)**.
      3. Salvation is only in the gospel – **2 Timothy 1:10**
      4. Conclusion – ONLY THE WORD OF GOD WILL DO, ALL ELSE IS VAIN – **2 Timothy 3:16-17**
   4. Paul addressed a problem in Corinth (in a culture/age of philosophy/ers) concerning the estimation of the gospel as a philosophy, and the consequences:
      1. Divided as over philosophers – **1 Corinthians 1:12**
         1. Paul and Apollos are one – **1 Corinthians 3:5-8** – speaking the same message.
         2. Christ is being preached – **1 Corinthians 3:10-11**
      2. Gospel preached is not wisdom (Sophia) of man – **1 Corinthians 1:17**
      3. Salvation/spiritual life cannot be found in philosophy (man’s wisdom) – **1 Corinthians 1:18-25**
         1. **(v. 20)** – ***“disputer of this age”*** – “Referring to Grecian sophistical reasoners, while scribe refers to rabbinical hair-splitters.” (Vincent’s Word Studies)
      4. Divine revelation confirmed through the Spirit’s display of power is so faith is in God, not man – **1 Corinthians 2:1-5**
         1. Viewing the gospel as Paul’s or Apollos’ wisdom would produce faith in them – such cannot save.
         2. EX: **Acts 3:12-16; 4:12** – emphasized the miracle to be by the authority of Jesus, not their own power, because only the name of Jesus can save. (**cf. Acts 14:8-18**)
   5. No amount of human reasoning, no matter what moral virtue may seem to come of it, can save us – only the gospel of Christ will do (**cf. Romans 1:16)**.
7. Religious Error
   1. Self-imposed religion is exposed as a refuge of lies – **Colossians 2:20-23**
      1. What makes our religion pure, undefiled, and pertaining to salvation is that it is revealed of God.
      2. EX: David seeking to build God a house, and Nathan consenting – **2 Samuel 7:2-3, 7** (not from revelation/authority, thus not good)
   2. Any religious doctrine/practice sought for refuge that is not of God will be destroyed – **Matthew 15:10-13**
   3. We determine what God has planted through the apostles’ doctrine – **Matthew 16:19; John 16:13; Acts 2:42**
      1. ***“whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:19***, NASB)
   4. The false refuge of:
      1. Binding where the Bible does not bind:
         1. Refuge? – Wanting to be extra careful/safe.
            1. What the Pharisees did – **Matthew 15:2-3** – tradition (addition to revealed law) to safeguard cleanliness, but supplanted God’s law.

Such does not demonstrate faith.

Faith trusts in the sufficiency of the revelation of God in leading to a pure/righteous life.

* + - * 1. Not safe to go beyond revelation – **1 Corinthians 4:6; 2 John 9**
      1. What seems to be spiritual, if not revealed, is of no spiritual value – **Colossians 2:18-19** – claiming spiritual vision, but not of God, fleshly mind.
      2. Place self in seat of lawgiver – **James 4:11-12**
      3. What you have done for refuge has become your destruction.
    1. Loosing where the Bible does not loose:
       1. Refuge? – Minimizing the weight of divine commands or prohibitions.
       2. **James 2:10-12** – saying one or the other is less severe is false.
       3. **2 Thessalonians 2:14-15; 3:6, 14** – their word is gospel, command in Lord’s name, not obey is to suffer consequences. (Church discipline – or any other requirement)
  1. When error is turned to for refuge, even the truth we would hold onto will be compromised – **1 Corinthians 15:12-13** (resurrection gospel); **Luke 8:18**

1. Nominal Discipleship
   1. We began with the refuge of lies in atheism. The Christian who is not truly a disciple of Christ, but only nominally associated, is no safer than one who has rejected the existence of God totally.
      1. Practical atheism – believing in God but living without the logical demand of such belief.
         1. Places oneself in the middle of things – Recognizing the existence of God, and the vanity of life without Him, but not fully embracing the life He directs.
         2. Lukewarm – **Revelation 3:15-16**
      2. Christian indeed? – **John 1:47; Romans 2:28-29; Acts 11:26** (disciples – adherents to Jesus’ teaching – called Christians)
   2. Only those who do the will of the Father find refuge from judgment – **Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 6:46**
   3. The mystery of godliness saves, but there are those who deny its power – **1 Timothy 3:16; 4:7-8; 2 Timothy 3:5**
   4. It is not those who merely claim Christ that belong to Him, but those who follow what He says in all things – **2 Timothy 2:19**
   5. **Nominal discipleship affords us no true refuge – no fellowship with God, no salvation, no transformation, no joy, no hope.**
2. A Tried and Sure Foundation – **Isaiah 28:16; 1 Peter 2:4-7a** – a true refuge – **Psalm 62:5-8**

**Conclusion**

1. Judah made the terrible mistake of trusting in a refuge of lies instead of God. It didn’t cut it (**Isaiah 28:20).**
2. We must learn from their mistakes and find true refuge in God.