

increased by the addition of men who are not necessarily of the seed of Jacob according to the flesh, but who have been redeemed by the power of God, exactly as Abraham and Jacob themselves were redeemed. They are described as in a very particular sense the work of God's hands, because their inclusion in His family rests entirely upon His own mighty deeds of justification.

These who seem to be outside the pale -- these who are like Lebanon -- are to become a fruitful field, to take a place in the midst of the Israel of God, to sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and to fear the God of Israel.

Verse 24 concludes the chapter, looking into the still more distant future. The wise who turned away from God and became foolish have been cast aside, and the deaf and blind who were outside the pale were brought into the covenant of God. Verse 24 shows those who had erred in spirit also eventually coming to understanding, and those who were murmurers again receiving instruction (American Standard Version). It is a perfect parallel to the promise which Paul gives in Romans 11 that the natural branches of the olive tree, which have been broken off for a season, are again to be grafted into their own olive tree. Thus Isaiah 29 is a picture of the general course of the present age, closely paralleling that in Romans 11.

What a lesson there is for all of us in the declarations of this chapter! We can now look back and see how precisely the course of events here predicted has been fulfilled. We must realize that no one receives a place in God's kingdom solely because of birth or background, but only because of the marvelous electing grace of God. God is the potter and we are the clay. He works out His perfect plans. We have no righteousness of our own and deserve nothing good at His hand. For His own purposes God has chosen to take what was Lebanon, a forest, and make it into a fruitful field, and for a time to turn the former fruitful field into a forest. Let us not be high-minded, but fear, lest we also be cast out if we become forgetful of God. Let us rejoice that His own fruitful field is again to be brought back, and that the people of Israel as a nation are again to rejoice in God and to be saved through the marvelous redemptive grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.