



## Isaiah 33:14-19

(14) The sinners in Zion are afraid;  
Fearfulness has seized the hypocrites:  
“ Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?  
Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”  
(15) He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly,  
He who despises the gain of oppressions,  
Who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes,  
Who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed,  
And shuts his eyes from seeing evil:  
(16) He will dwell on high;  
His place of defense *will be* the fortress of rocks;  
Bread will be given him,  
His water *will be* sure. (17) Your eyes will see the King in His beauty;  
They will see the land that is very far off.  
(18) Your heart will meditate on terror:  
“ Where *is* the scribe?  
Where *is* he who weighs?  
Where *is* he who counts the towers?”  
(19) You will not see a fierce people,  
A people of obscure speech, beyond perception,  
Of a stammering tongue *that you* cannot understand.

### ***New King James Version***

This prophecy, beginning in verse 14, falls within a prophecy of judgment against Assyria. The sinners and hypocrites in Zion can be one of two things: The phrase can certainly apply to the land of Israel, Zion being a part of Jerusalem where the Temple was built. The prophet could be alluding to the fact that there are hypocrites among the people of Israel. It can also be dual and refer to the church, because [God](#) frequently symbolizes the church by using the name "Zion." There can be, among those who are part of the church of God, sinners and hypocrites.

These people are responding to the harshness of the prophecies aimed at Assyria, and they are wondering, "Who can ever survive this?" God, through the prophet, gives an answer about who will be able to survive what is coming: "He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, who despises the gain of oppression, who gestured with his hands refusing bribes, who stopped his ear from hearing of blood shed and shuts his eyes from seeing evil." When people live righteously, God extends protection to them so that they will not have to go through the terrible times that are coming.

Where will this protection take place? He says at a "fortress of rocks." The stronghold of rock will be a place where it will be necessary for food and water to be provided. It is such a wilderness, so desolate, that sustenance will have to be provided, and the implication is that it will be provided miraculously by God. The place is so desolate, so forsaken, such a wilderness, that it will not support life to any great degree. Certainly, it is dry, maybe getting only two or three inches of rain a year, but that's not enough to grow anything. It will not support life.

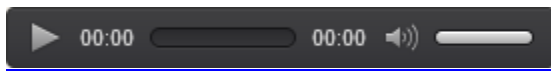
The comments regarding the scribe, "Where is he who weighs, where is he who counts the towers?" are indications of military personnel, personalities in an army. One translation says the scribe is "the general who comes," and that has to be tied to verse 19 because the people in this place of protection—those who have lived uprightly—are not going to see the army that is coming against Israel.

Here we begin to see clearly a turn in Scripture, as it begins to provide admonishments and encouragements urging people to make an effort to try to be in this place of safety, to turn their life aright, to produce qualities that God will look for in the people who will receive His protection from what is coming.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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