

of the title in verse 1. "The valley of vision" can easily refer to Jerusalem. Perhaps it describes the area where Isaiah and many other prophets received most of their divine visions. Or perhaps it depicts Jerusalem as the area which has been the subject of so many prophetic visions. Whichever way one takes it, it is easy to see that it is quite an appropriate title for a chapter dealing with Jerusalem.

At first sight, one immediately guesses that this chapter is a description of a siege. Various phrases in these fourteen verses seem to bear out this conclusion. Many commentators have not gone beyond this first glance. They have tried to fit the passage to one of the numerous sieges of Jerusalem, and have found a satisfactory interpretation difficult to attain.

Some have suggested that it might be a siege by Sennacherib. Others have chosen one by Nebuchadnezzar. Still others have tried to make it prophetic of the siege by Titus. It is noteworthy that Alexander, in his generally excellent commentary on the Book of Isaiah, recognizes that certain verses here do not fit with the idea of a siege, and yet he goes on to discuss the passage as if it were describing a siege, or possibly, as he suggests, all the sieges of Jerusalem viewed in one picture.

As we look carefully at the passage we see that it is not a description of a siege at all. Verse 2 describes the city as a joyous city. One would never think of a city in the midst of a siege as "a joyous city." Verse 13 says: "And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die." Is it possible that these words describe the attitude of people in the midst of a siege? People could hardly be said to have joy and gladness at such a time! This attitude of bravado and careless indifference might characterize people who refused to believe a prophet's threatenings, but hardly those who were already suffering the experiences of a siege.

Thus we see that we must find a different starting-point for our interpretation. In the light of the book of Isaiah as a whole, and of our previous five chapters in particular, it is easy to see that Isaiah is continuing his discussion of the ungodly attitude of the people who trust to the wicked Assyrian alliance for protection against Ephraim and Syria