

There is also the possibility that verse 3 is not to be interpreted in this way, but as a rather figurative expression describing the failure of the rulers at the present time to face the facts. They are fleeing away from their duty; they are bound in their wickedness and pride.

It is impossible to be certain which of the two interpretations of verse 3 is the correct one. Here, as so often in the prophetic books, we have certain verses whose meaning is absolutely clear, while others verses may fit with either the previous context or with the following one, and it is some times difficult to be sure which is meant.

In verses 6 and 7 the prophet continues his vision of the future. He sees Elam and Kir taking part in the attack against the city. These are regions far from Jerusalem. Kir is mentioned in 2 Kings 16:9 where it is said that people from Damascus were taken into captivity there. Since Ahaz and the people of Judah have called in the distant Assyrians to protect them from their neighbors, Elam and Kir, regions even more distant than Assyria, will eventually be included among the attackers of Jerusalem. In verse 7 the future calamity is vividly described, as the choicest valleys round about Jerusalem are filled with enemy soldiers.

Verses 8-11 describe the activity of the people of Judah in response to the difficulties ahead. They prepare the armory of the house of the forest. They examine the coverings of Judah. In fear of a siege they make such preparations to bring the water inside the city as are described in 2 Chronicles 32:3-4, where Hezekiah's preparation for the coming of the king of Assyria in later years is described. Verse 10 tells of the tearing down of some of the houses in order to strengthen the walls of the city. Verse 11 describes the frenzied activity of the people as they seek to make the city safe against invasion.

The last part of verse 11 gives a strong rebuke. The people are not criticized for their preparations to resist invasion. They are criticized because they do not add to their looking to the defenses a look toward the One who is the greatest and most important defense of all. They have ignored God in their preparations and have failed to call to Him for help. Therefore the next verse goes on: "And in that