

turn things upside down. The exact meaning of this verse is not clear at first sight, but on close examination it becomes absolutely clear.

In the early part of chapter 29 Israel is particularly in view. The prophet has described the great disaster which will threaten Jerusalem, and the manner in which God will deliver His city without any human aid. Now he turns to the leaders of Israel and reproaches them for their forgetfulness of God. They have had every opportunity to know Him and to follow His commands, but have shown an attitude of indifference toward His desires. Because their honoring of God has been lip service rather than heart service, the Lord declares that He will cause their wisdom and understanding to perish.

The Judean nobles consider themselves very wise and think that they are using God for their own purposes; they are attempting to carry out plans for their own selfish purposes and using God's gifts as means to that end. In attempting thus to use Him they are acting as if He were the clay and they the potter. Verses 16 and 17 declare God's determination to prove that He is Himself the potter and that they are the clay, by performing a great overturning and utterly reversing the present conditions.

Israel has been God's fruitful field. Upon it He has lavished His love and His care. He has digged about His vineyard and cultivated it and preserved it. The Gentiles are like the forest of Lebanon, which is outside the covenant land of Israel. Now a marvelous work is to be done. Lebanon is to be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field to be esteemed as a forest!

Verse 17 can have no other meaning than that the people of Israel are to be treated as though they were outside of God's covenant, while those who were previously outside are to be brought nigh and to take a position as His own people.

This thought is further developed in verse 18. The previous verses have told us that these "wise" people, who have the law of God and are fully able to read it, have refused to do so, giving all sorts of excuses to hide their indifference. Those who are deaf are to be given the privilege of hearing the words of the Book, and those who are blind are to see out of obscurity and out of darkness. The heathen,