
Observations from Isaiah

LESSON XXV : TRUST THE WORLD OR THE LORD? (30:1-31:9)

General outline (from Young's *Isaiah*):

- I. The Crisis and the Messiah (1:1-12:6)
 - A. Introduction to the Entire Prophecy (1:1-31)
 - B. Early Messages of Isaiah (2:1-5:30)
 - C. Judah's True Hope: The Messianic King (6:1-12:6)
- II. The Theocracy and the Nations (13:1-39:8)
 - A. Judah and the World Power (13:1-27:13)
 - B. God's Sovereignty Manifested in Salvation and Judgement (24:1-27:13)
- III. True Deliverance is Found Not in Egypt but in the Lord (28:1-35:10)
 - A. The Lord's Purpose (28,29)
 - 1. Samaria Ripe for Judgement (28:1-29)
 - 2. The Iniquity of Jerusalem and the Announcement of Deliverance (29:1-24)
 - B. The Judean Alliance with Egypt (30,31)
 - 1. To Trust in Egypt is to be Deceived (30:1-33)
 - 2. Egypt is No Help, but the Lord will Protect Jerusalem (31:1-9)

Egypt, 'Rahab-Do-Nothing' — 30:1-7

<i>"Woe to the obstinate children," declares the LORD, "to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin; who go down to Egypt without consulting me; who look for help to Pharaoh's protection, to Egypt's shade for refuge. But Pharaoh's protection will be to your shame, Egypt's shade will bring you disgrace. Though they have officials in Zoan and their envoys have arrived in Hanes, everyone will be put to shame because of a people useless to them,</i>	<i>Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin: That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion. For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes. They were all ashamed of a people that could not profit them, nor be an help</i>	<i>Wo [to] apostate sons, The affirmation of Jehovah! To do counsel, and not from Me, And to spread out a covering, and not of My spirit, So as to add sin to sin. Who are walking to go down to Egypt, And My mouth have not asked, To be strong in the strength of Pharaoh, And to trust in the shadow of Egypt. And the strength of Pharaoh Hath been to you for shame, And the trust in the shadow of Egypt confusion, For in Zoan were his princes, And his messengers reach Hanes. All he made ashamed of a people that profit not, Neither for</i>
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who bring neither help nor advantage, but only shame and disgrace.” An oracle concerning the animals of the Negev: Through a land of hardship and distress, of lions and lionesses, of adders and darting snakes, the envoys carry their riches on donkeys’ backs, their treasures on the humps of camels, to that unprofitable nation, to Egypt, whose help is utterly useless. Therefore I call her Rahab the Do-Nothing. (NIV)

nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach. The burden of the beasts of the south: into the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people that shall not profit them. For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still. (KJV)

help, not for profit, But for shame, and also for reproach! The burden of the beasts of the south. Into a land of adversity and distress, Of young lion and of old lion, Whence [are] viper and flying saraph, They carry on the shoulder of asses their wealth, And on the hump of camels their treasures, Unto a people not profitable. Yea, Egyptians [are] vanity, and in vain do help, Therefore I have cried concerning this: ‘Their strength [is] to sit still.’ (YLT)

THE SIN OF TRUSTING EGYPT — Isaiah moves from the more general denunciation of chap 28,29 to specific ones aimed at alliance with Egypt. In those chapters Isaiah seemed to address the attitudes of the people, here he speaks of results which are flowing from those attitudes. As he has done previously, Isaiah brings *a denunciation followed by a promise*. Isaiah attacks the foolishness of depending upon Egypt by looking at Egypt’s character (v1-7) and God’s word (v2,8,15). The contrast is as follows: *‘Trust the Lord and He will not allow them to be put to shame (29:22), but trusting in Egypt will surely shame them’*.

THE HISTORICAL SETTING — Most commentators date this portion around 701 BC, either shortly before or shortly after the Egyptian army’s advance to Eltekeh and Sennacherib’s defeat of it there. It was a time of crisis for Judah. *“Whatever hopes Hezekiah may have had for the success of his revolt, ... those hopes were now dashed. All his allies had either capitulated or been defeated, his outer fortresses were now defeated, and the end was clearly at hand. If any human help was to be found, Egypt was the only possibility.”* [Oswalt, Isaiah] *“The plan which, according to Isa 29:15, was already projected and prepared in the deepest secrecy, is now much further advanced. The negotiations by means of ambassadors have already been commenced; but the prophet condemns what he can no longer prevent.”* [K&D, Isaiah]

JUDAH’S CONTINUED REBELLION — only the rebellious nature of the people could explain their desire for an Egyptian alliance, one long-ago forbidden by God (Ex 13:17; Deut 17:16). Note the translations: *obstinate* (NIV), *rebellious* (KJV), *apostate* (YLT). “Without doubt the chief reason for this prohibition was to negate as much as possible the heavy influence such an old and established pagan culture could have had (and did have, if we look at Jeroboam’s bull cult) upon a struggling and culturally deprived people like the Hebrews. *So they had not needed a new word from God; they only needed to obey the one they had. But the mind which is set on this world’s ways cannot see the wisdom of God’s ways. To it, rebellion is not rebellion but simply common sense.*” [Oswalt, Isaiah]

SIN LEADS TO SIN — ‘heaping sin upon sin’ could refer to the first sin of bringing Assyria into the land due to Ahaz’s alliance with her, now it is compounded by Judah wanting a further

alliance with Egypt to get Assyria out! It could also be a reference to their sin of concealment and deception added to her sin of alliance. “In any case, *it is true that something about the human condition leads us not to confess sin but to compound it with more. It is also true, as with Jacob, that when we once set out to make ourselves secure in ourselves, sin against God and others come naturally, for we have made ourselves gods and our ends then justify our means.*” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

THE SIN OF NOT SEEKING THE LORD — The Lord denounces Judah’s disregard for His guidance: ‘*plans that are not Mine...*’ (v1), ‘*but not by My Spirit...*’ (v1), ‘*without consulting Me...*’ (v2). *Without question the decision-makers had not consulted with the prophet before or after making their plans due to their knowing the Lord’s word would contradict what they had in their heart to do.* (cp King Ahab’s refusal to seek the word of Micaiah due to the king knowing he always spoke against him — 1 Kings 22:8) “*Yet the whole basis of the life of faith is summed up in Jesus’ words in the garden of Gethsemane, ‘Not my will, but thine be done’ (Mk 14:36). Only someone who is absolutely convinced of God’s good intentions toward him can say those words. All others are doomed to distrust God and to believe that their will is better than his, that they, the pot, know better than the Potter (29:16).*” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] “The redemption of Abraham has been mentioned in 29:22. There was a time when he went down through the Negev (as v. 6) to Egypt without consulting God (Gen 12). Abraham too might have pleaded an adequate reason, for there was famine in the land; but his action had shameful consequences, for both himself and his wife.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

THE EMPTY PROMISES OF THE WORLD — Egypt was a fading power, unable to protect herself much less than protecting anyone else! In this crisis, Egypt was defeated barely 100 miles from their home by an army more than 600 miles from their home (the Assyrians). So Isaiah says to depend upon Egypt was to bring upon themselves shame. Here was a ‘burden’ (oracle, NIV) concerning the ‘burden-bearers’, the animals of the Negev. The sense is a caravan loaded with treasures struggles through wild terrain infested with lions and snakes, all to buy the help of an old dragon who is in fact helpless. All the cost in effort and wealth will come to nothing, says Isaiah. ‘*Rahab the Do-Nothing*’ (NIV), ‘*Rahab who sits still*’ (Oswalt), ‘*Their strength is to sit still*’ (KJV, YLT), ‘*The bragging people, they are sit-still*’ or ‘*Boast-house, they are idlers*’ (Keil & Delitzsch). “On the one hand, Rahab is the sea monster of popular legend. She is the ancient chaotic Matter against whom the gods struggled for survival, only subduing her by dint of the last bit of effort. The Hebrews used that legend as a literary allusion when they spoke of God overcoming Egypt to set them free. So is that who Egypt is? Some ancient Rahab with all the destructive powers of chaos at her command? Hardly. She is more like a fat old grandmother sitting sleepily in the sun. Why go to all that effort to buy help from her? [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] “*To this deceitful land the ambassadors of Judah were going with rich resources on the shoulder of asses’ foals, and on the hump of camels, without shrinking from the difficulties and dangers of the road through the desert, where lions and snakes spring out now here and now there. Through this very desert, through which God had led their fathers when He redeemed them out of the bondage of Egypt, they were now marching to purchase the friendship of Egypt, though really, whatever might be the pretext which they offered, it was only to deceive themselves; for the vainglorious land would never keep the promises that it made.*” [K&D, *Isaiah*]

'You would not' — 30:8-18

Go now, write it on a tablet for them, inscribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness. These are rebellious people, deceitful children, children unwilling to listen to the LORD's instruction. They say to the seers, "See no more visions!" and to the prophets, "Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions. Leave this way, get off this path, and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!" Therefore, this is what the Holy One of Israel says: "Because you have rejected this message, relied on oppression and depended on deceit, this sin will become for you like a high wall, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly, in an instant. It will break in pieces like pottery, shattered so mercilessly that among its pieces not a fragment will be found for taking coals from a hearth or scooping water out of a cistern." This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it. You said, 'No, we will flee on horses.' Therefore you will flee! You said, 'We will ride off on swift horses.' Therefore your pursuers will be swift! A thousand will flee

Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us. Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. And he shall break it as the breaking of the potters' vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit. For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not. But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift. One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of

No, go in, write it on a tablet with them, And on a book engrave it, And it is for a latter day, for a witness unto the age, That a rebellious people [is] this, sons — liars, Sons not willing to hear the law of Jehovah. Who have said to seers, 'Ye do not see,' And to prophets, 'Ye do not prophesy to us Straightforward things, Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits, Turn aside from the way, decline from the path, Cause to cease from before us the Holy One of Israel.' Therefore, thus said the Holy One of Israel, Because of your kicking against this word, And ye trust in oppression, And perverseness, and rely on it, Therefore is this iniquity to you as a breach falling, Swelled out in a wall set on high, Whose destruction suddenly, at an instant cometh. And He hath broken it As the breaking of the potters' bottle, Beaten down — He doth not spare, Nor is there found, in its beating down, A potsherd to take fire from the burning, And to draw out waters from a ditch. For thus said the Lord Jehovah, The Holy One of Israel: 'In returning and rest ye are saved, In keeping quiet and in confidence is your might, And ye have not been willing. And ye say, No, for on a horse we flee? Therefore ye flee, And on the swift we ride! Therefore swift are your pursuers. One thousand

at the threat of one; at the threat of five you will all flee away, till you are left like a flagstaff on a mountaintop, like a banner on a hill.” Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! (NIV)

five shall ye flee: till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on an hill. And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him. (KJV)

because of the rebuke of one, Because of the rebuke of five ye flee, Till ye have been surely left as a pole On the top of the mountain, And as an ensign on the height. And therefore doth wait Jehovah to favour you, And therefore He is exalted to pity you, For a God of judgment [is] Jehovah, O the blessedness of all waiting for Him. (YLT)

THEIR UNDERLYING ATTITUDE — Isaiah turns from denouncing Judah’s reliance upon Egypt (v1-7) to the attitudes which prompted that reliance. *“Fundamentally, it is a refusal to trust God (v15), which is in fact what the entire division (chap 7-39) is about. And having decided that Egypt is to be trusted more than God, they do not wish to hear anything which would call their choice into question.... Jesus encountered much the same response from the Pharisees. They were convinced that right standing before God was achieved through legalistic righteousness and they refused even to hear data which might call their conviction into question (Lk 6:6-11).” [Oswalt, Isaiah]*

AN EVERLASTING WITNESS OF REBELLIOUS JUDAH — Isaiah is commanded to permanently record for Judah the Lord’s message to them. What exactly was that message is debated: it might have been as little as the name ‘Rahab’ (v7) to as large as the entire argument against Egypt (chapters 28-32). While we’re not sure exactly what was inscribed, the important is the reason for the inscription. “The written material was to stand as an eternal witness about days to come. Thus, as indicated also by 8:16, *its chief value was not for the present deafened, hardened generation, but for generations yet to be born.* They would see the record of God’s promises, both of disaster and blessing, see how those were realized, and believe.” [Oswalt, Isaiah] *Why are we studying Isaiah? — to examine historically the political problems between Israel, Assyria and Babylon? If that’s all we are getting from these studies then we are indeed the losers. But the principles by which the Lord dealt with Judah are the same principles by which He deals with us today. It is these principles which are important; the historical background is interesting but secondary.*

THE WORD OF GOD’S HONEST APPRAISAL OF LIFE — “‘This is a rebellious people’ is a remarkable statement in the context of the ancient Near East. Every other people caused its victories and its triumphs to be recorded. If we know anything untoward about a people, it has had to be pieced together from other sources, certainly not from their own national literature. But the Hebrews somehow realized that they did not make reality. Reality was resident in One who was outside of themselves and outside of what they would wish to be so. *That Isaiah’s bitter words about his people have been preserved is evidence not only of the supernatural preservation of the Word, but also that his view that the Transcendent One’s opinions of us are more important than our own of ourselves did triumph among the Hebrew people.*” [Oswalt, Isaiah] God’s word is sometimes positive (‘Abraham was a friend of God’, ‘David was a man after God’s own heart’) and sometimes negative (‘but it was sin in the eyes of God’, ‘but what he had done displeased the Lord’) but it is always honest and accurate. We may not always like it but it is always true.

JUDAH AND MODERN AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY — All commentators agree v10 is not an actual quotation from the people but rather a summation of their sentiments. *“No one wishes to receive condemnation or to be challenged to behavior which is difficult or costly. We would much rather hear counsel which encourages us to take the path of least resistance and encourages us to good opinions of ourselves. But in fact such counsel takes no account of our unholiness and God’s holiness.”* [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] *This is the scourge of modern American churches: people no longer come to hear the Word of God but rather to ‘feel good’. Many would walk out of a church who preached strong messages of hell, condemnation and the demands of true repentance. Americans would rather hear of their ‘mistakes’ and build up their ‘self-esteem’ than hear of sin.* “Their words (v. 10) to the true prophets of God, like Isaiah himself, were similar in intent to the advice the ungodly priest Amaziah gave Amos: ‘Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. Don’t prophesy anymore at Bethel’ (Amos 7:12-13). An apostate priesthood and a rebellious people rejected the warnings that came through the true prophet of God. Amaziah would have been quite content had Amos continued to preach the authentic word of God, so long as this was done somewhere else. *Isaiah’s listeners would listen to him, but only if the content of his message was trimmed to their own desires. But the preacher was to bring a message to his listeners, not to find it among them....* Isaiah’s use of the title Holy One of Israel here (v. 12) is particularly significant. *The people had resisted his use of it, but he was not their servant but the Lord’s. Nothing would be trimmed to suit their taste.* As Young says, ‘The One whom the nation would cause to cease is the One who will cause the nation to cease. He speaks, and his words are an announcement of destruction to come. Yet he gives a reason why this is so, and that reason is found in the people’s despising the word that Isaiah had spoken.’ *Our reaction to God’s word does not affect that word one whit.”* [Grogan, *Isaiah*] Compare today’s common concept, “*The Word of God is not enough today.*”

SUDDEN, TOTAL JUDGEMENT — *“The prophet had to convey not only the suddenness of the judgment but also its completeness.* He did this by likening the destruction of the wall to the breaking of an article of pottery, the disintegration is so complete that nothing of value — even for the most elementary and humble of uses — is found to remain.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*] *“Do they wish to hear no more of the Holy One of Israel? Then it is precisely for them that the Holy One has a word. They have blinded and deafened themselves so that they may continue on their mad way. Now there only remains to announce the results of such an attitude.... [The] refusal to be instructed by God brings a person into estrangement from him, and that estrangement is an estrangement from life that must be corrected at once if disaster is not to occur.... What this indicates is clear: that judgement has not yet come is hardly grounds for saying it will not come. The NT picks up the same kind of warning about the final judgement (Matt 24:36-44; Mark 13:32-37; 2 Pet 3:3-10). The only prevention for such a sudden destruction is to listen to the word of God and to gaze upon the Holy One, no matter how that conflicts with our preconceived notions for security.”* [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

REFUSING TO REST — ‘For’ (KJV, YLT) indicates a causal link between v15 and the preceding. *Why will judgement come with suddenness? Because the Hebrews would prefer to flee on horses rather than rest in God’s care!* “The Holy One had extended his arms to them with a gentle word of strength (28:12), but they refused. They could have hidden beneath his wings like chicks, but they would not (Matt 23:37).” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

GOD’S WORD REMAINS THROUGH THE DESTRUCTION — God will judge but the destruction was not to be final. In the end there would be a ‘flagstaff on a mountaintop, a banner

on a hill.’ *A final witness left, if for no other reason, to testify to the accuracy of God’s word (v8).* “The threatening tone of vv. 16-17 gives place to an assurance that God is ready and willing to show mercy to his foolish and obstinate people. Verse 18 is easier to understand if we follow the more literal rendering of the RSV: ‘Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you; therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.’ It is precisely because God’s justice must be expressed — and therefore punishment must fall on this rebellious people — that the manifestation of his mercy is delayed. As so often in the prophets, God’s judgment falls first of all; but a remnant preserved through the judgment experiences the blessings of his grace and the fulfillment of his positive purpose for them. Those who wait for him will be identical with this remnant. The Babylonian exile and the return from it are chiefly in view here.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

Judah’s Blessing, Assyria’s Destruction — 30:19-26

O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you. Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.” Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them, “Away with you!” He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful. In that day your cattle will graze in broad meadows. The oxen and donkeys that work the soil will eat fodder and

For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence. Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures. The oxen likewise and the young asses that ear the ground shall eat clean provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fan. And

For the people in Zion dwell in Jerusalem, Weep thou not, weeping, Pitying, He pitieth thee at the voice of thy cry, When He heareth He answereth thee. And the Lord hath given to you bread of adversity, And water of oppression. And thy directors remove no more, And thine eyes have seen thy directors, And thine ear heareth a word behind thee, Saying, ‘This [is] the way, go ye in it,’ When ye turn to the right, And when ye turn to the left. And ye have defiled the covering of Thy graven images of silver, And the ephod of thy molten image of gold, Thou scatterest them as a sickening thing, ‘Go out,’ thou sayest to it. And He hath given rain [for] thy seed, With which thou dost sow the ground, And bread, the increase of the ground, And it hath been fat and plenteous, Enjoy do thy cattle in that day an enlarged pasture. And the oxen and the young asses serving the ground, Fermented provender do eat, That one is winnowing with shovel and

mash, spread out with fork and shovel. In the day of great slaughter, when the towers fall, streams of water will flow on every high mountain and every lofty hill. The moon will shine like the sun, and the sunlight will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven full days, when the LORD binds up the bruises of his people and heals the wounds he inflicted. (NIV)

there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound. (KJV)

fan. And there hath been on every high mount, And on every exalted hill, Rivulets — streams of waters, In a day of much slaughter, in the falling of towers. And the light of the moon hath been as the light of the sun, And the light of the sun is sevenfold, As the light of seven days, In the day of Jehovah's binding up the breach of His people, When the stroke of its wound He healeth. (YLT)

THE RETURN OF ISRAEL TO THE LAND — In v19-33 Isaiah speaks of the certainty of God's salvation. Isaiah first speaks of the changes in Judah by their redemption (v19-26) followed by praise when the enemy is destroyed (v27-33). "Although Judah's failure to trust him would indeed result in destruction, that destruction would be followed by redemption and a corresponding destruction of Judah's enemies." [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] Israel is described here as coming to repentance, seeing the Lord as He really is (v19-21) and rejecting their idols (v22). As a result the Lord will supply that which the idols could not supply (v23-26). '*O people of Zion*' speaks of the grace of God who has brought Judah out of judgement and back into the land. '*You will not weep any longer*' is a consequence of Jerusalem being inhabited, of the Jews returning home. "***Here is the marvel of God's immediate response to the penitent's cry. The emphasis on his graciousness conveyed by the Hebrew is well expressed by the NIV's 'How gracious...!' They were so dull of hearing when he spoke to them (28:7-10; 29:9-10; 30:8-10), but at their cry he comes immediately to meet them in their need. He still hears the cry of repentance today.***" [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

THE TEACHER CLEARLY SEEN — Commentators are divided whether this is plural, *teachers*, referring to the prophets or singular, *teacher*, referring to the Lord (the verb used is singular). But whether the Lord or the Lord speaking through the prophets, the sense is plain: while once separated by their sin, the division has been removed, their sins have been atoned and they deal face-to-face with the Lord. The result of their repentance will be the removal of their idols. "***The people's penitence would be accompanied by a new responsiveness to his word through the prophetic teachers whose task it was to bring it to them. Rejection of God's word always brings hardness of heart, so that the word cannot be heard as before.***" [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

THE RETURN OF GOD'S BLESSINGS — "Like so many of his compatriots, Isaiah had a deep attachment to the soil of his own land (v. 23). This had its basis, not simply in the natural affection of the patriot for his native land, but in a theology of the land; for it was God's land, given by him to his people and from which he threatened to remove them as a consequence of their persistent sin. The Book of Deuteronomy has this as a major theme (e.g., Deut 1:8, 21-25, 34-40; 3:25-29; 6:10-11; 11:8-17; 8:62-68). The prophet often saw God's blessing therefore in terms of good agricultural weather, increased fruitfulness, and fat cattle. In the day of God's blessing on the land, even the working animals will live well above subsistence level." [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

DIVINE HEALING OF ISRAEL — "This picture of nature, released from its present limiting conditions, is taken further still in v. 26. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the prophecy

has passed beyond anything as yet fulfilled and has located itself in God's eschatological purposes. Both the moon and the sun will be much brighter than at present. The number 'seven' is not chosen arbitrarily, for the creation of sun and moon in Genesis 1 occurs in the context of a six-day creation, with divine rest on the seventh. It is as if the fullness of the divine creative energies are channeled to secure the greater radiance of the sun. The people had known severe chastisement from God through the Assyrians. Now his powers will secure healing where once he had smitten them in wrath." [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

Assyria's Destruction — 30:27-33

See, the Name of the LORD comes from afar, with burning anger and dense clouds of smoke; his lips are full of wrath, and his tongue is a consuming fire. His breath is like a rushing torrent, rising up to the neck. He shakes the nations in the sieve of destruction; he places in the jaws of the peoples a bit that leads them astray. And you will sing as on the night you celebrate a holy festival; your hearts will rejoice as when people go up with flutes to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel. The LORD will cause men to hear his majestic voice and will make them see his arm coming down with raging anger and consuming fire, with cloudburst, thunderstorm and hail. The voice of the LORD will shatter Assyria; with his scepter he will strike them down. Every stroke the LORD lays on them with his punishing rod will be to the music of tambourines and harps, as he fights them in battle with the blows of his arm. Topheth has long been prepared; it has been made ready for the king. Its fire pit has been made deep and wide, with an abundance of fire and

Behold, the name of the LORD cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire: And his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err. Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the mighty One of Israel. And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones. For through the voice of the LORD shall the Assyrian be beaten down, which smote with a rod. And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the LORD shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps: and in battles of shaking will he fight with it. For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep

Lo, the name of Jehovah is coming from far, Burning is His anger, and great the flame, His lips have been full of indignation, And His tongue [is] as a devouring fire. And His breath [is] as an overflowing stream, Unto the neck it divideth, To sift nations with a sieve of vanity, And a bridle causing to err, [Is] on the jaws of the peoples. Singing is to you as in a night sanctified for a festival, And joy of heart as he who is going with a pipe, To go in to the mountain of Jehovah, Unto the rock of Israel. And caused to be heard hath Jehovah The honour of His voice, And the coming down of His arm He doth shew with the raging of anger, And the flame of a consuming fire, Scattering, and inundation, and hailstone. For from the voice of Jehovah broken down [is] Asshur, With a rod He smiteth. And every passage of the settled staff, That Jehovah causeth to rest on him, Hath been with tabrets, and with harps, And in battles of shaking he hath fought with it. For, arranged from former time is Tophet, Even it for the king is prepared, He hath made deep, He hath made

wood; the breath of the and large: the pile thereof is large, Its pile [is] fire and LORD, like a stream of fire and much wood; the breath much wood, The breath of burning sulfur, sets it ablaze. of the LORD, like a stream of Jehovah, As a stream of brim brimstone, doth kindle it. stone, is burning in it! (YLT)
(NIV) (KJV)

GOD WILL DESTROY ASSYRIA, NOT THE EGYPTIANS — “It is not the Egyptians who would deliver God’s people, but God himself. This was the message Isaiah sought to impress upon the Judeans, but with little apparent success. They were too enamored of their own means of self-defense to hear a message which invited them to stand still and see God at work on their behalf. Yet this is the message of the Bible from Exodus to Chronicles (Ex 14:13,14; 2 Chron 20:17). *The flesh says with Frederick the Great, ‘God is on the side of the strongest battalions,’ but the spirit says, ‘Stand still and see your salvation’* (1 Cor 2:14).” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] The judgement of God falls; this time not on Judah but on her enemies, in a much greater scale than felt by Judah (v27,28,30,31).

REJOICING AT THE DESTRUCTION OF THEIR ENEMIES — Having seen the salvation of the Lord, Judah rejoices in song and festivities (v29). “Note here, as in chap 24-27, that it is God in sovereign isolation who redeems his people. *Isaiah is saying in every way possible that humanity’s only hope is in abandoning every other hope, including our own abilities, and casting ourselves upon God alone.* Assyria had claimed to hold the scepter of the world, but God held that scepter and would shortly strike down the imposter — first outside Jerusalem’s gates and then more completely a hundred years later at the hands of the Medo-Babylonian alliance.” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] “*Verse 32 has been found objectionable by some commentators; but it should be realized that this passage is not unique in Scripture, as a study of Rev 18-19 will clearly reveal. The truth is that God’s people are here portrayed rejoicing at his judgment on sin because they must take his point of view on everything, and be cause this judgment is at the same time their salvation.*” [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

THE END OF ASSYRIA — Commentators differ as to the sense here; some take v32,33 as Assyria being offered as a sacrifice while others take the reference to be the funeral pyre prepared long ago for Assyria. “Assyria’s funeral pyre, like the Lord’s rod, has stood ready from ancient days. All it wants is the Lord’s breath to kindle it into flame. So again Isaiah is counseling his people that they need not go to Egypt out of fear of Assyria. What they should do is to move even closer to the only One in the universe who truly holds Assyria’s destiny in his hand.” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] “Some places have become symbols of spiritual realities. *Zion-Jerusalem* is the people of God, *Babylon* the world in arrogant opposition to God, and *Ge-Hinnom (Gehenna)* and *Tophet* God’s judgment on sin. Tophet was in the Valley of Hinnom, to the south of Jerusalem (Jer 7:31-32); and there apostate Jews offered their children by fire to the pagan deity, Moloch. Perhaps the prophet is saying here that the king of Assyria himself must pay it. He had dedicated himself to paganism, and now he would suffer for this in terrible judgment from God.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

Helpless Egypt — 31:1-3

<i>Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of</i>	<i>Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are</i>	<i>Wo [to] those going down to Egypt for help, And on horses lean, And trust on chariots, because many, And on horsemen, because very strong,</i>
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their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the LORD. Yet he too is wise and can bring disaster; he does not take back his words. He will rise up against the house of the wicked, against those who help evildoers. But the Egyptians are men and not God; their horses are flesh and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out his hand, he who helps will stumble, he who is helped will fall; both will perish together. (NIV)

very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD! Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words: but will arise against the house of the evildoers, and against the help of them that work iniquity. Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together. (KJV)

And have not looked on the Holy One of Israel, And Jehovah have not sought. And He also [is] wise, and bringeth in evil, And His words He hath not turned aside, And He hath risen against a house of evil doers, And against the help of workers of iniquity. And the Egyptians [are men], and not God, And their horses [are] flesh, and not spirit, And Jehovah stretcheth out His hand, And stumbled hath the helper, And fallen hath the helped one, And together all of them are consumed. (YLT)

“ALLOW ME TO REPEAT MYSELF...” — This chapter duplicates in a shorter fashion the content of chapter 30: *it is folly to depend upon Egypt* (v1-3), and *the Lord will fight for Jerusalem and destroy Assyria* (v4-9). “It is especially the exclusion of dependence upon God which makes the Egyptian alliance so despicable to Isaiah. As Calvin sagely observes, *a believer may use many intermediate means to benefit or defend himself or herself that do not conflict with a prior dependence upon God. But some means, by their very nature, involve abandonment of trust in him.* Theft would be a simple example, and adultery another. Trust in Egypt is one of these, in part because it was a denial of the efficacy of the Exodus. As a result, Judah would be flying in God’s face and would experience the terrible consequences of his reality.” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] *This directly speaks to the lie ‘the ends justify the means’.*

EGYPT HAD THE LATEST IN WARFARE WEAPONRY — The emphasis in v1 of horses and chariots suggests a likely reason why Judah was comforted by the thought of alliance with Egypt. At that time cavalry, with the horse’s speed, stamina and maneuverability gave an army a mobility many times its actual size. It was almost looked upon to have a magical effect, much as having the latest weaponry today is thought to be a cure-all to all military problems. One commentator has stated sarcastically that the Judeans would not know what to do with horses if they had them, given the small, hilly layout of Israel. *“But the destiny of a country does not rest upon either horses or missiles, and when any people feel that special weapons can relieve them of dependence upon God, they are on the road to destruction. This is not to say that weapons and faith in God are mutually exclusive in a fallen world, but it is to say that commitment to God’s ways, with whatever that may mean for weapons in a given situation, is primary.”* [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

THE FAILURE OF THE WORLD’S WISDOM — ‘Yet he too is wise’ is a jab at those who looked upon the wisdom of the world to hold the answers. In modern language, Isaiah was saying ‘You know, God knows a little something too.’ But the Lord would rise up against Judah and against Egypt which is helping Judah. Egypt is but flesh and no match for the spiritual power of God.

Mighty God — 31:4-9

This is what the LORD says to me: “As a lion growls, a great lion over his prey — and though a whole band of shepherds is called together against him, he is not frightened by their shouts or disturbed by their clamor — so the LORD Almighty will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and on its heights. Like birds hovering overhead, the LORD Almighty will shield Jerusalem; he will shield it and deliver it, he will ‘pass over’ it and will rescue it.” Return to him you have so greatly revolted against, O Israelites. For in that day every one of you will reject the idols of silver and gold your sinful hands have made. “Assyria will fall by a sword that is not of man; a sword, not of mortals, will devour them. They will flee before the sword and their young men will be put to forced labor. Their stronghold will fall because of terror; at sight of the battle standard their commanders will panic,” declares the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, whose furnace is in Jerusalem. (NIV)

For thus hath the LORD spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them: so shall the LORD of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof. As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it. Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted. For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin. Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man; and the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him: but he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited. And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear, and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign, saith the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem. (KJV)

For thus said Jehovah unto me: ‘As growl doth the lion and the young lion over his prey, Called against whom is a multitude of shepherds, From their voice he is not affrighted, And from their noise he is not humbled; So come down doth Jehovah of Hosts To war on mount Zion, and on her height. As birds flying, so doth Jehovah of Hosts Cover over Jerusalem, covering and delivering, Passing over, and causing to escape.’ Turn back to Him from whom sons of Israel Have deepened apostacy. For in that day despise doth each His idols of silver, and his idols of gold, That your hands made to you — a sin. And fallen hath Asshur by sword, not of the high, Yea, a sword — not of the low, doth consume him, And he hath fled for himself from the face of a sword, And his young men become tributary. And [to] his rock from fear he passeth on, And affrighted by the ensign have been his princes — an affirmation of Jehovah, Who hath a light in Zion, And who hath a furnace in Jerusalem! (YLT)

HOPE BASED ON REPENTANCE — After denouncing the false hope of Egypt, Isaiah now turns to Israel’s true hope, the Lord alone. *Just as the Lord is sure to punish sinful Judah, He is just as sure to defend them when they repent.* “This announcement of hope before the fact is typical of this book and, indeed, of the gospel. God does not wait until we have repented to act in mercy. Rather, his mercy becomes an impetus to repent. Thus we are invited to repent as a result of attraction rather than because of avoidance.” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

GOD IS BOTH A FIERCE DEFENDER AND A PASSIONATE SHIELD — Verses 4,5 give a dual portrayal of the Lord: the first is a picture of fierce strength while the second is a picture of

passionate attachment. God is both. “[The] main point is that a lion cannot be frightened away and neither can God.... [Verse 5] varies the figure by comparing God to a mother bird which flies back and forth over her nest when a predator is near, both to distract the enemy and, if necessary, to offer herself as a victim to save her little ones. As noted above, this verse presents the other side of God’s relationship to Judah. *Not only is he strong and determined, he is also personally attached to his people and will defend (or shield, as this is the verb from which that noun is derived) them, if need be, with himself.... The Christian cannot help but see this motif brought to its final fulfillment in Christ, who interposed himself between us and the just results of our sins.*” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

TRUE CONVERSION BRINGS ABOUT CHANGE — “*First there is conversion, which is followed by renunciation.* The theological pattern here is very consistent with the rest of the book. Sin, which is typically idolatrous (man making God in his image), results in judgement. That judgement not only calls the efficacy of the idols into question, but it also provides the backdrop against which God can disclose his unconditional love. That love prompts a turning back to God and a concomitant rejection of idolatry.” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

PROPHETIC DESCRIPTION OF THE DESTRUCTION OF ASSYRIA — Verses 8,9 puts the seal upon God’s promises by describing the destruction of Judah’s enemies by other-than-human means. This undoubtedly refers to Sennacherib’s loss of his army outside Jerusalem by the death angel. “*As a study of chapters 36-37 reveals, the Lord’s deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib was a singular demonstration of his reality and power, setting him apart from other deities. The gods of many nations had failed to protect their devotees from the Assyrians, but now the true God showed he was supreme even over the mighty gods of Assyria itself.*” [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

“Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!”

— Isaiah 30:18 NIV