

ISAIAH: JUDGMENT AND HOPE

24. Isaiah 30-31

Jerusalem Rebuked and Defended

Let's turn in our Bibles to Isaiah 30

ISAIAH 30

¹“Ah, stubborn children,” declares the Lord, “who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin;

WHY is YHWH rebuking Judah so harshly for making a military alliance with Egypt to save themselves from the brutal Assyrian armies? Remember, YHWH has already rebuked Judah for reaching out to a number of nations to save them. But I believe the rebuke concerning Israel's alliance with Egypt gets to the heart of the matter.

YHWH had wonderfully and radically **saved** this people from the Egyptians. And now — the very people YHWH had rescued from death and bondage in Egypt are asking the Egyptians to be their savior instead of YHWH.

Judah had become practical atheists. They refused to place their trust in YHWH — **refused to depend on** the Covenant keeping God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and they refused His wisdom and His direction. Hence Isaiah's words — *adding sin to sin*.

These words of Isaiah to 8th century Judah have tremendous relevance to those who profess faith in Jesus in the 21st century. There are two things that are deeply imbedded in the operating system of fallen man and fallen culture: Vertical Independence and Self-Preservation. **Those** are the rules that govern every *kingdom of one* in our fallen world. That is what the New Testament calls *the course of this world (Ephesians 2:2)*. Vertical Independence and Self-Preservation are the *passionate inclinations of our sinful nature (Ephesians 2:2 NLT)*. Again, think: corrupted Operating System; corrupted by the Lie of lies which said that life is found by declaring independence from God.

The Gospel declares that God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ to *“deliver us from the domain of darkness and transfer us to the kingdom of God’s beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13)*. We are rescued from the broken operating system that governs every citizen in the Kingdom of death and darkness

1 Peter 1:18 (ESV) ¹⁸*knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,*

We’re not only rescued from one domain to a new domain — we’re given a new nature and new desires. We become a new creation (If any man be in Christ he is a new creation, old things pass away and all things become new). We are so radically “new” in Jesus that we’re called a “new humanity”

Ephesians 2:15 (NIV) *His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace,*

And as new humans in a new humanity we **desire** and **declare** Vertical dependence on our Creator and Redeemer.

Philippians 2:13 (ESV) ¹³*for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

As the people of God, we need to be **cultivating** the instincts of the new nature we receive. The apostle Paul prayed that constantly for those who came to faith in Jesus.

Colossians 1:9–10 (ESV) ⁹*And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may **be filled with the knowledge of his will** in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰**so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;***

The Scriptures tell us from cover to cover about the ways of God — the steadfast, unyielding, never ceasing, relentlessly pursuing love of God — so that we will see

how worthy He is of our trust and absolute dependence. From cover to cover the Scriptures contain the wisdom of God and the will of God — so that we can have access to the transcendent wisdom of God! The ultimate revelation of the ways, wisdom will of God are wrapped up in Jesus.

John 1:14 (ESV)** ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, **full of grace and truth.

***John 14:6 (ESV)** ⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

***1 Corinthians 1:30 (NIV)** ³⁰It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God*

When our natural instinct is to not depend on God — be independent and put ourselves in the place of God, the Holy Spirit says: *Look at Jesus who said: **Father, not my will, but your will be done (Luke 22:42).** Look at Jesus who **When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly (1 Peter 2:23 NIV).***

When our natural instinct is self-preservation, the Holy Spirit who is at work in our lives says: *Look at Jesus who **didn't come to be served, but to serve and give Himself as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).** Look at Jesus who **valued others above Himself, didn't look to His own interests, but to the interests of others.** Jesus sought to preserve us at His expense. THAT is a brand new operating system!*

Everything in fallen culture around us — and our own flesh — wants us to default to the very actions Judah was taking in the 8th century BC.

³Therefore shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame, and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation.

shame — Three times in three verses God is going to repeat for emphasis that the outcome of refusing to trust in God and instead trusting in Egypt will result in their shame. He will restate again in just a few chapters —

Isaiah 36:6 (NIV) ⁶Look, I know you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces the hand of anyone who leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him.

Have you ever been wounded by the very thing you put your trust in rather than God?

⁴For though his officials are at Zoan and his envoys reach Hanes, ⁵everyone comes to shame through a people that cannot profit them, that brings neither help nor profit, but shame and disgrace.”

You’re going to go there — you’re going to hand over money — you’re going to shake hands — but Egypt won’t help you — Instead Egypt will disgrace you (NLT).

⁶An oracle on the beasts of the Negeb. Through a land of trouble and anguish, from where come the lioness and the lion, the adder and the flying fiery serpent, they carry their riches on the backs of donkeys, and their treasures on the humps of camels, to a people that cannot profit them.

The Negev is a HARSH environment. They were willing to brave all the dangers of the Negev, and would survive all of its perils —

NLT All this, and Egypt will give you nothing in return

They will essentially flush their treasures down a toilet in Egypt because Egypt cannot profit them.

⁷Egypt's help is worthless and empty; therefore I have called her "Rahab who sits still."

This is not a reference to the Rahab in the book of Joshua who ends up being in the lineage of the Messiah. Rahab was one of the mythical beasts of the ancient near east cultures. So, here's the picture: The people of God are appealing to a nation for help that looks like a dragon but it's more like a little gecko. Egypt was going to be a beast that sat still and did nothing to save them.

NIV — Therefore I call her Rahab the Do-Nothing.

AGAIN — the tragedy here is that Judah knew the history of YHWH and the way He watched over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Psalms are replete with songs that declared the power of God and the care of God and the faithfulness of God — that He is *might to save, steadfast in love — never slumbers or sleeps*.

⁸And now, go, write it before them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever.

God told Isaiah to **write** down his message so that they could not claim they had never heard it. In the future, these **words** written in a scroll would **witness** against them.

NIV — 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.

And here we are tonight reading them. By the way — these same words witness against us when we declare vertical independence.

God KNEW how much they needed these words to be written down because He KNEW they were going to find a way to explain it away — find a way to excuse it — find a way to say *that's not what really happened*.

⁹For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord;

¹⁰who say to the seers, “Do not see,” and to the prophets, “Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions,

DON'T tell us what God says. Tell us what WE want to hear. Make His words say what we want them to mean.

G. K. Chesterton — *“The danger of the modern world is that we want a religion that agrees with us when we need a religion that disagrees with us.”*

¹¹leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.”

HERE'S THE DEAL — Not wanting to be told about God or hear about God doesn't make Him go away — doesn't make God less real.

¹²Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, “Because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them, ¹³therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach in a high wall, bulging out and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant;

v. 13 NET — So this sin will become your downfall. You will be like a high wall that bulges and cracks and is ready to collapse; it crumbles suddenly, in a flash.

this iniquity = refusing to trust in God and refusing to seek God in time of trouble **will become your downfall!**

It doesn't look like a fatal sin — it will make Judah like a high wall with a bulge and some cracks. You might think it's not fatal but God is the ultimate structural engineer and HE SAYS that unbelief and self-preservation brings down lives — brings down nations!

¹⁴and its breaking is like that of a potter's vessel that is smashed so ruthlessly that among its fragments not a shard is found with which to take fire from the hearth, or to dip up water out of the cistern.”

AGAIN — it is going to be such a massive collapse — such an epic failure that there will be nothing salvageable.

Why?

¹⁵For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.” But you were unwilling,

THAT is what salvation looks like! WHAT saves? Repentance and trust.

Trust and Obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

By way of Isaiah YHWH has been reasoning with Judah. YHWH has offered them full protection that costs nothing — all they need to do is to sit still, to wait, to trust.

What does TRUST look like?

FIRST — Trusting God implies a **returning**

Returning involves **turning from** any attitude of independence from God — **turning from** our own wisdom that is rooted in self-preservation — and **returning** to the Lord / drawing close to the Lord — and returning to Lord's ways.

Outright disobedience is never consistent with real trust in God's promise.

SECOND — Trusting God's promise means **rest**.

When we trust God, we don't have to strive or scramble to take care of ourselves. *Faith Is Living Without Scheming.*

We don't have to be obsessed with trying to protect ourselves. We have the best Protector, the best Guard in God. We can **rest** in Him, and when we do, it shows we are really trusting in God's promise. Again — so pertinent to the way we can shine in the COVID-19 world

Ray Ortlund — *If we hoard, we're saying to God, "You don't care about my needs," and we're saying to our neighbors, "I don't care about your needs." Isn't it obvious that **trusting God** and loving one another go together so deeply they are inseparable?*

THIRD — Trusting God's promise means **quietness**.

You don't need to argue for your side when God is on your side. Be quiet before Him and before others. It shows that you really trust Him.

FOURTH — Trusting God's promise means **confidence**.

I shared this in one of the Scripture Journal Moments I posted on Instagram last week. Feelings can be like anchors to our thinking — anchors to our confidence. When our feelings are dragging down our thoughts we need to think UP — we need our thinking to be shaped by the Word of God (transformed by the renewing of our minds) We can't let our confidence be attached to the anchor of our feelings. Our confidence is in the Word of God and in the God revealed in the Word!

We navigate life with the revelation of God like a heads-up display in a fighter jet, or some of the newer cars.

FIFTH — Real trust in God's promise literally provides us with **strength**.

There is no person walking this earth more powerful than a child of God boldly and properly trusting the promise of the living God!

¹⁶and you said,

Contrary to what YHWH said

“No! We will flee upon horses”; therefore you shall flee away; and, “We will ride upon swift steeds”; therefore your pursuers shall be swift. ¹⁷A thousand

shall flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five you shall flee, till you are left like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain, like a signal on a hill.

This is reversal of the promise of Leviticus 26:8, and a fulfillment of the curse promised in *Leviticus 26:17 NKJV* *I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you.*

¹⁸Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and 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.

For sure this is directly addressed to a specific people in a specific time. YHWH was waiting to for them to turn away from their plans and put their trust in Him — so why wait any longer to trust Him. Trust Him now!

But that is also true for all of God's people at all times in all places.

There is also another fixed truth that has application to His people. We often wonder why the Lord waits to do things in our lives. Isaiah tells us plainly that God is waiting is so **He may be gracious to you**. Whenever the Lord waits or seems to delay, it always has a loving purpose behind it. We can trust that even when we don't understand it.

Charles Spurgeon — *“Certain of God's people are in trouble and distress, and they are eager for immediate rescue. They cannot wait God's time, nor exercise submission to his will. He will surely deliver them in due season; but they cannot tarry till the hour cometh; like children, they snatch at unripe fruit. ‘To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven’; but their one season is the present; they cannot, they will not wait. They must have their desire instantaneously fulfilled, or else they are ready to take wrong means of attaining it. If in poverty, they are in haste to be rich; and they shall not long be innocent. If under reproach, their heart ferments towards revenge. They would sooner rush under the guidance of Satan into some questionable policy, than in childlike simplicity trust in the Lord and do good. It must not be so with you, my brethren, you must learn a better way.”*

¹⁹For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry.

Remember — The Lord would wait so He can be gracious to them! SO AMAZING!!
As soon as he hears it, he answers you. ²⁰And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher.

The translators have **capital T Teacher**. I believe this is looking forward to a time yet future to us. I believe it's pointing to Jesus.

²¹And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.

I LOVE this verse! Here we see God **actively involved** leading His people. A freshly humbled people — a freshly repentant people who will be listening and they will hear God as if He's right behind them saying: "Hey, turn right here."

THAT is how the Lord wants to lead us! That is what He will do when we're in His Word. THAT is what the Living God does when His Word is treasured up in our hearts.

²²
Then you will defile your carved idols overlaid with silver and your gold-plated metal images. You will scatter them as unclean things. You will say to them, "Be gone!"

THAT was the BIG DEAL in allowing Judah to spend 70 years in Babylon. He He pretty much said: *You want idols? — I'll give you idols!* So He sent them to live for 70 years in idol central! When they returned from captivity they were done with the pagan gods of Canaan.

²³And he will give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground, and bread, the produce of the ground, which will be rich and plenteous. In that day your livestock will graze in large pastures, ²⁴and the oxen and the donkeys that work the ground will eat seasoned fodder, which has been winnowed with shovel and

fork. ²⁵And on every lofty mountain and every high hill there will be brooks running with water, in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.

²⁶Moreover, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day when the Lord binds up the brokenness of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.

I believe this is looking forward to the time when Jesus returns to the earth and rules the earth.

²⁷Behold, the name of the Lord comes from afar, burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke; his lips are full of fury, and his tongue is like a devouring fire; ²⁸his breath is like an overflowing stream that reaches up to the neck; to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction, and to place on the jaws of the peoples a bridle that leads astray.

THIS is the judgment of the Lord on the enemies of His people.

²⁹You shall have a song as in the night when a holy feast is kept, and gladness of heart, as when one sets out to the sound of the flute to go to the mountain of the Lord, to the Rock of Israel. ³⁰And the Lord will cause his majestic voice to be heard and the descending blow of his arm to be seen, in furious anger and a flame of devouring fire, with a cloudburst and storm and hailstones.

Isaiah wants God's people see the *glory* of God's judgments. When we understand how God's **perfect judgment** exalts His **justice** and His **righteousness**, we rejoice!

³¹**The Assyrians will be terror-stricken at the voice of the Lord, when he strikes with his rod.**

In the near fulfillment of this section we see God dealing with Assyria.

Judah had no business trusting in Egypt for help against the Assyrians. They should have trusted the Lord because the Lord was going to take care of the Assyrians

³²And every stroke of the appointed staff that the Lord lays on them will be to the sound of tambourines and lyres. Battling with brandished arm, he will fight with them.

³³For a burning place has long been prepared; indeed, for the king it is made ready, its pyre made deep and wide, with fire and wood in abundance; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of sulfur, kindles it.

a **burning place** — a large fire kindled. I believe this fire is addressed in Chapter 31.

ISAIAH 31

⁸“And the Assyrian shall fall by a sword, **not of man**; and a sword, not of man, shall devour him; and he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be put to forced labor. ⁹His rock shall pass away in terror, and his officers desert the standard in panic,” declares the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.

We’re told in 2 Kings 19 how God turned the Assyrians away from Jerusalem. We need to remember that Isaiah is writing these words before 2 Kings 19.

There in **2 Kings 19:35** we’re told that the angel of the Lord went through the camp of the Assyrians at night wiping out 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. How do you deal with 185,000 dead bodies?

Look back at **Chapter 30:33**

NKJV — ³³For Tophet was established of old, Yes, for the king it is prepared. He has made it deep and large; Its pyre is fire with much wood; The breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, Kindles it.

Tophet was a place in the Valley of Hinnom, just outside of Jerusalem’s walls (Jeremiah 7:31). The Valley of Hinnom served as Jerusalem’s garbage dump. The

combination of rubbish and smoldering fires made it a picture of hell. The Hebrew word for hell (*gehenna*) comes from the word for the Valley of Hinnom.

The picture is that God has a special place in hell for the Assyrian king!