

"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!" (Isaiah 30:1)

Last week's lesson, on Isaiah 29, began with a "woe" to "Ariel," the code name for the city of Jerusalem, which was surrounded and about to be seized by Sennacherib and the Assyrians when God suddenly intervened and "turned things around"--causing the Assyrian army to become "like chaff which the wind blows away," never to be a threat to God's people again! And yet, as Motyer notes, the "eleventh hour deliverance for Zion didn't change their hearts and the people continued to "honor God with their lips but with hearts far removed from Him"! And so the Lord would eventually send the Babylonians to completely conquer Jerusalem, destroy the temple, and carry away its people into captivity!

And yet God was not finished with Israel, and Isaiah prophesied that there would "come a day" when God would again turn things around--and when He, who redeemed Abraham, would declare that the "house of Jacob" would no longer be ashamed when he see his descendants "sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and stand in awe of the God of Israel"!

And with that we moved to Isaiah 30 where Isaiah (again!) "goes back" in his commentary, to shed more light on the "state of the heart" of the "children of Israel" prior to God's deliverance of them from the Assyrians! "Woe," the Lord declares, "to the rebellious children, who execute a plan, but not Mine, and make an alliance, but not of My Spirit, and add sin to sin; who proceed down to Egypt without consulting Me, to take refuge in the safety of Pharaoh, and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt"! And "make everyone ashamed of them"! Wow!

Reminds us of how Isaiah began his writing, in Isaiah 1:2-4, with the words: "Listen, O heavens, and hear O earth; for the Lord speaks, 'Sons I have reared and brought up, but they have revolted against Me. An ox knows its owner, and a donkey its master's manager, but Israel doesn't know! My people don't understand!' Alas, sinful nation, people weighed down with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who act corruptly! They have abandoned the Lord; they have despised the Holy One of Israel; they have turned away from Him!"

And so things haven't changed in 30 chapters of Isaiah's writing! And what's particularly ironic (and repugnant to God!) is that there's a caravan of ambassadors, loaded with treasures, headed down to Egypt, following the same dangerous and circuitous route--through the Negev--(only in reverse) that God led the children of Israel through on their great exodus from captivity in Egypt years ago! O the folly of going back "down" to Egypt to establish an "alliance" with "Rahab," when they needed a "reliance" on their God! (Rahab is associated in the Bible, other than as the harlot in Joshua 2, with a "mythical sea monster" and here, in verse 7, used to as a derogatory representation of Egypt!)

Interesting that God would tell Isaiah (in verse 8) to "write (about) it on a tablet, and inscribe it on a scroll, that it may serve as a witness forever" (a permanent written record--in our Bible--so future generations would learn the folly of trusting in someone, or something other than the Lord)!

There would be consequences, of course, for Judah, which Isaiah (in verse 14) likens to the smashing of a potter's jar! So ruthlessly shattered that "a sherd" (a fragment of a "shard") would not be found among its pieces large enough to take fire from a hearth, or scoop water from a cistern"! (Gotta love Isaiah's picturesque language!)

And yet Isaiah reminds them (and us!) again of the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, who "longs to be gracious to them," and who offers them "rest" and "a quietness that would be their strength" if they would repent and trust in Him"! But they would not!

And so, as he has done before, Isaiah (in verses 19-26) looks forward, to "the glories of that day to come"--in the eschatological future--when the people of Zion will "weep no longer...when their eyes will behold their Teacher and their ear will hear Him say; 'This is the way, walk in it!'" When He will give rain for the seed which they will sow in the ground... On the day when the Lord binds up the fracture of His people and heals those He has inflicted (because of their sin). Motyer describes it as "the outpouring of creation's bounties, with the end of sin and the curse, and the return of Eden"!

The apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:21, about a hope "that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God"! What a day that will be!

Then Isaiah ends chapter 30 (in verses 27-33) by turning back again (in Motyer's words) "from the eschatological to the imminent history," with God "overcoming Assyria and its king"!

Isaiah writes (in verses 30-33) that "the Lord will cause His voice of authority to be heard...and the descending of His arm to be seen...and Assyria will be terrified when He strikes them with a rod...and the breath of the Lord will set afire Topheth" (in the Valley of Hinnom), a place outside the walls of Jerusalem (symbolizing Hell) "long made ready" as the place of burial for those who have rejected the Lord, and conspired against His people!

Hear the Word of the Lord! And walk in it!

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