

"Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord!" (Isaiah 31:1)

Remember last week's lesson, on Isaiah 30, when God issued another "woe"? To the rebellious leaders of Judah for sending ambassadors, in a caravan loaded with treasures, down to Egypt to make an alliance with them for security against Sennacherib and the advancing Assyrian army! Totally contrary to the expressed will of God! And to add injury to insult, following the same dangerous and circuitous route--through the Negev of Egypt--the same route, only in reverse, that years before, God had led the children of Israel, out from Egypt on their great "exodus" from captivity!

And so God had Isaiah document their outrageous action on a scroll that it might be viewed by the rebellious "children" then, and also serve as a public witness against them forever! So future generations might learn the folly of trusting in someone, or something, other than the Lord for their security and welfare!

And, despite Isaiah's plea for the people to repent and trust in God alone, they would not listen! And yet Isaiah spoke about how much the Lord wanted to be gracious to them and how He would "wait on high" to have compassion for them! Describing--for the eschatological future, as Motyer calls it--when there will be peace and rest, and "an outpouring of creation's bounties, with the end of sin and the curse. and the return of Eden"!

Isaiah ends Isaiah 30 with an assurance that God Himself would deal with Sennacherib and the Assyrians! They wouldn't enter the city of Jerusalem, and the burning fires of the refuse of Topheth, in the Valley of Hinnom, outside the walls of Jerusalem, would be "long ready" for those who warred against God and His people!

But as we begin Isaiah 31 we find Isaiah returning to his same message of "woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses and trust in chariots because there are many, and in horsemen because they are strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the Lord!"

Why don't they realize, Isaiah wonders, that the Egyptians "are men and not God, and that their horses are flesh and not spirit...and that all of them will come to an end together"?

And that the Lord of hosts, as Wiersbe notes,"will pounce on the Assyrians like a lion...and hover over, and swoop down, as an eagle to protect its young," and that the Assyrians "will fall by a sword not of man"!

"Return, O sons of Israel, to Him from whom you have deeply defected," pleads Isaiah! And particularly (as Isaiah had noted in Isaiah 30:18-19) in light of the Lord's "longing to be gracious to them"! (Motyer notes that "Biblical faith seeks to be ready not simply to surmount the next crisis, but to be ready to stand before God"!)

In contrast with the poor leadership exposed, Isaiah (in Isaiah 32) next looks forward to the day (in the eschatological future) when "a king will reign righteously and princes will rule justly"! And he describes it "like a refuge from the wind and a shelter from the storm...(when) the eyes of those who are able to see will not be blinded; and the ears of those who hear will listen; and the mind of the hasty (or impetuous one) will speak clearly; and (as the Message Bible puts it) 'no more will fools become celebrities, nor crooks be rewarded with fame" (which Mark Wever noted as so characteristic of our own day)! And, to finish the line, "when the noble man will devise noble plans"!

What a day that will be! Reminds us of Isaiah's earlier prophecy, in Isaiah 9:6-7, that "...a child would be born to us, a son will be given; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace ...to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore"!

And the prophet Jeremiah also spoke of that day (in Jeremiah 31:31-33) when the Lord declared that He "would make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah..." when He would "write His law on within them and on their heart...and He will be their God, and they shall be My people"!

Hasn't happened yet, obviously!

And beginning with Isaiah 32:9, Isaiah gets back to the realities of the more immediate time for the people of Judah--this time appealing "to the women who are at ease...and the daughters who are complacent" (just like he had spoken earlier to the recalcitrant "sons of Israel"), about the time approaching when the land would be pillaged and "the palace forsaken, and the city deserted" (perhaps speaking of the Babylonian captivity)!

But then, beginning in Isaiah 32:15, Isaiah again (as he so often does!) looks forward to the day "when the Spirit (of the Lord) is poured out on us from on high...when justice and righteousness will reign...and my people will live in a peaceful habitation, and in secure dwellings, and in undisturbed resting places... How blessed you will be"!

In these verses, as Wierbe writes, Isaiah is returning to his description of the messianic kingdom to come! Going from "imminent disaster to forever blessedness"!

Motyer sums up this lesson by asking us to consider the same questions that Isaiah basically asked of his people: where are you going and what are you looking at in the day of trouble? They looked to Pharaoh! Every day brings its threats and needs, great and small, and Isaiah's questions remain pertinent for us! It's not always (or usually) the "big things" that defeat us! Very often they send us fleeing to Jesus! It's the "small stuff," and the "little decisions" that affect us every day that takes our eyes off Him! So, where do we go? Do we seek the Savior and His presence in our lives? He welcomes our call!

Think about it!

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