

EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #42

Isaiah 30:6-17

In Isaiah 30:1-5, God gives a “woe” judgment against His rebellious children and now starting in **verse 6**, He wants to develop the insanity and negative repercussions of His people placing their trust in anything other than Him. Not only does God give a “woe” judgment, but now He gives an “oracle.” We may recall that the word “oracle” (massah) refers to something that is uttered by God that puts a real heavy burden or load on its target (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 512). It is a very threatening verbal message that will leave one grieving, not singing.

Now the oracle concerns the “beasts of the Negev.” The Negev was the land located to the south of the Promised Land. In order for the leaders of Judah to get into Egypt, they had to pass through this land known as the Negev. We may recall that the leaders of Israel were traveling to Egypt to try and secure help against the Assyrians. **God wants to specifically address this Egyptian treaty and its ramifications.**

The beasts of the Negev may refer to a couple of things. It may refer to the actual animals that were carrying the gifts. Donkeys and camels were used to carry their riches to the Egyptians in order to gain their help. It also may refer to the fact that God viewed the Arabs in the Negev and in Egypt as beasts.

The message of this text is very clear:

IF GOD’S PEOPLE TRUST IN ANYTHING OTHER THAN HIM AND HIS WORD AND ACTUALLY START MOVING BACK INTO THE WORLD FROM WHICH THEY WERE DELIVERED, GOD WILL SEE TO IT THAT THEY WILL END IN COMPLETE DISASTER .

The territory of the Negev is very dangerous. It is land filled with deadly serpents and lions which can do great harm and can kill. The tragedy of this is that instead of the religious leaders of Israel traveling to the safety of the temple and traveling into the security of the Scriptures where they could consult with God, they are purposely traveling through a dangerous wilderness to consult with people who can do them absolutely no good.

Their thinking is so far away from God’s Word that now these leaders are going back to the same dangerous area that God brought them out of (Deuteronomy 8:15), and they are doing this by their own choice. **Rebellious people will do bizarre things to avoid turning to God and His Word, including risking their own lives and testimonies as they crawl back into a dangerous world.**

In these verses, God has a series of six straightforward, hard-hitting prophetic messages that He presents to His own people.

Straightforward Message #1 – God’s people traveled through dangerous territory to bring a bunch of gifts to people who could not help them. **30:6**

God’s people were so intent on carrying out their own plans apart from God that they were totally oblivious to the dangers of traveling through the Negev. They were risking their lives to travel to a people who could not profit them or help them in any way.

Straightforward Message #2 – God’s people are trying to get help from a power that is vain and empty and will be exterminated. **30:7**

God wanted His people to realize that what they were trusting in was “vain” and “empty.” That word “vain” means they were trusting in a vapor with no substance (Ibid., p. 214) and the word “empty” means they were trusting in something so impoverished that it could not offer them anything (Ibid., p. 768). The name “Rahab” is used as a “poetical name for Egypt.” The particular flare of the word refers to a power that is arrogant and insolent (Ibid., p. 759). God says you are placing your trust in a worthless and useless arrogant power that I am going to bring to nothing. That word “exterminate” (shabeth) is one that means God is going to cause them to cease to exist. He will remove them and take them away (Ibid., p. 804).

There is nothing more depressing than when you learn that the thing you have trusted in for your security means nothing. I cannot help but think of the poor autoworkers who put all of their trust in a company that let them down. Many invested years only to discover their jobs are gone.

Straightforward Message #3 – God’s Word is written and it stands forever. **30:8**

God basically says, My Word and My prophecy is written down and you can read it. Isaiah was a prophet who wrote Scripture and he wrote it on a tablet and scroll. What God wants His people to know is that His Word is in print and it tells you exactly what He will do and what we need to do.

Straightforward Message #4 – God gives His reasons why He will do negative things to His own people. **30:9-11**

The conjunction “for” (ki) which begins **verse 9** gives reasons why God wants His Word written down:

(Reason #1) - Because they are rebellious and false and refuse to listen to God’s Word. **30:9**

Now keep in your mind the fact that outwardly these are very religious people who went through religious motions every single week in Jerusalem. But inwardly they were rebellious and false and they refused to listen to the Word of God or instruction from the Scriptures. Don’t kid yourself, there are millions of people who go to church who do not really want to know and understand God’s Word. There are millions of phony people who are not interested in receiving instruction but are there for themselves and their own false agenda.

(Reason #2) - Because they want to hear only pleasant words from their religious leaders and not the true, living, rightly-divided Word of God. **30:10**

These were people who went to the temple who wanted to hear smooth and soothing things. They did not want to hear anything offensive. I cannot help but think of those religious charlatans who pack in the crowds by telling people the kinds of things they want to hear. They do not speak of judgment or sin or God's righteousness or wrath; they talk about love and forgiveness and mercy. One such religious fraud was asked why he never spoke on hell and he said because he wanted people to always feel good. People are so beaten down during the week that they don't need to hear anything negative at church; so he tells them what they want to hear. One day that phony will face a ferocious judgment like the one God is warning of right here.

(Reason #3) - Because they do not want to hear about the Holy One of Israel. **30:11**

Dr. Edward Young made an interesting observation about this point. He said it is quite obvious from this verse that Isaiah's preaching regularly pointed the people to the Holy One of Israel (*Isaiah*, Vol. 2, p. 347). Isaiah often spoke about the holiness of God and about Jesus Christ, and Israel did not want to hear this. They still don't want to hear it. They wanted to hear about the love of God and the grace of God, but they did not want to hear about the holiness of God; and even to this day, they do not want to hear about Jesus Christ.

God is a Holy God and your only chance and hope for salvation in view of this is to cast all of your faith in Jesus Christ.

Straightforward Message #5 – The Holy One of Israel gives His reasons why He will judge. **30:12-14**

Jesus Christ is the Holy One of Israel and He is giving His own reasons why He will judge. From a grammatical standpoint, **verse 12** is the dependent clause (protasis) and **verse 13** is the independent clause (apodosis). But Isaiah begins with the subordinate clause in **verse 12** to stress the reasons why God is going to judge His own people:

(Reason for Judgment #1) - Because you have rejected God's Word. **30:12a**

Every judgment that ever comes will be based on the written Word of God. God has given us sixty-six precious books and we better be about understanding those books because His judgment will come from those books.

(Reason for Judgment #2) - Because you have put your trust in oppressive liars. **30:12b**

Rather than the people trusting in the written Word of God they relied on religious liars. They were willing to gamble their existence trusting the Egyptian world rather than the written Word of God, so God says you need to know how I am going to judge you:

(Judgment Fact #1) - Your collapse will come suddenly . **30:13**

The word “collapse” which appears in **verses 13 and 14** is one that means to break to pieces, to destroy or rip something to shreds (*Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 803). Isaiah uses a metaphorical picture of a crack in a wall that is about to burst so that it is broken to bits, like when flood waters wash a wall away and it becomes nothing. God warns His own people that they were on the verge of collapse and that collapse would hit suddenly. That adverb “suddenly” means it will happen in a moment, in an instant (Ibid., p. 695).

It typically takes quite awhile for a break in a wall to become a wall that will fall; but when it does fall, it will fall quickly.

(Judgment Fact #2) - Your collapse will come completely . **30:14**

Isaiah says when God’s judgment comes it will completely shatter everything. The end result is that there will not be one useful thing left. God will so completely judge that not one thing will be left that is good and useful.

This is language God is using to describe His own people.

Straightforward Message #6 – The Holy One of Israel gives His people an opportunity to repent. **30:15-17**

Now the “for” (ki) which begins **verse 15** gives us the reasons why God has every right to so ferociously judge His own people:

(Reason #1) - Because He offered people His grace. **30:15**

There are two amazing grace offers that God offered Judah.

Grace Offer #1 - Repent and rest in God and be saved . **30:15a**

Grace Offer #2 - Trust in God and you will have strength and quiet . **30:15b**

All that God’s people had to do was to turn to Him and turn away from trusting in foreign powers. If they would do that, they would find salvation, rest, strength and quiet.

(Reason #2) - Because His people rejected His grace. **30:16-17**

The Holy One of Israel describes Israel’s response to God’s grace offer - rejection. There are two responses God saw to His offered grace:

Grace Rejection Response #1 - They were not willing to repent and trust God. **30:16a**

People would much rather rely upon their own strength or planning than God and this is especially true when it comes to salvation.

Grace Rejection Response #2 - They would rather run than trust God. **30:16b**

Rather than trusting in God, she would rather get on horses and make a run for it out of Judah. She would rather run into the world rather than trust in the Lord.

The Holy One of Israel informs Israel of His response to their rebellion. **30:16c-17**

(Result #1) - You will be pursued. **30:16c**

(Result #2) - Your enemy will destroy you even though you outnumber your enemy. **30:17a**

What a change of events. When Israel was on her way to the Promised Land, it was the small numbers of Israel that caused the massive numbers of Canaanites to flee (Leviticus 26:8). The reason why this happened was because Jesus Christ caused it to happen (Deuteronomy 32:30). Now God was reversing this. Even when His people outnumber the enemy, God would see to it that the enemy would succeed.

(Result #3) - You will end up a small remnant on top of a mountain. **30:17b**

The point of this is that God's people would end up small in number and would be lonely and would stand out for all to see as a group that God turned against.

God's people did not want God's Word. God's people did not want to hear truth. So God says fine, here is what you need to know - your life will end in disaster.

PARTING LESSONS:

- 1. God wants His people trusting Him.**
- 2. God wants His people going to hear instruction from His written Word.**
- 3. God warns His own people that if they move from this focus there will be disastrous results.**
- 4. God offers His grace to those in rebellion.**