

THROUGH THE BIBLE

ISAIAH 29-31

In tonight's chapters, 28-35, Isaiah is in the midst of six "Woes" - 28:1, 29:1, 29:15, 30:1, 31:1, 33:1. The term "woe" is a warning. "Misery" is on the horizon.

These eight chapters describe how God will judge His people, the Jews - and His city, Jerusalem. God's judgment result in a time of terrible calamity, or "woe."

When I hear the word, "woe" - "w-o-e" - I think of "Whoa..." - "w-h-o-a." If you're riding horseback this is the command you use to cause the animal to stop.

It's also used as an expression of amazement or surprise. It's a cause to pause and consider. "Whoa, did you see that!" or "Whoa, I didn't think of it that way."

When I see the word "w-o-e" I think "w-h-o-a..."

When trouble lies ahead I need to slow down, and think through how I can avoid the distress. This is the attitude we need when we come to a biblical "woe."

Isaiah 28 was a woe against alcohol. Now Isaiah 29 is a woe against another form of intoxication - verse 9 tells us, "They are drunk, but not with wine."

The nation's discernment is clouded and blurred by a spiritual numbness. The Jews suffered from a spiritual hangover. They're drunk and blind to the Word of God.

The chapter begins, "Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt!" The Hebrew name "Ariel" means, "lion of God." This was the nickname Jerusalem took, but this was far from God's opinion of His people.

The Jews were living on a proud past. They harkened back to the days of David when the nation was mighty and they ruled their pagan neighbors.

But those were bygone days. At the time of Isaiah, they'd made alliances with foreign nations. They signed protection treaties. They put their trust in powerful neighbors to the south - Egypt and Ethiopia.

Rather than "lion of God" they were "*chicken little*."

Isaiah continues, "Add year to year; let feasts come around. I will distress Ariel; there shall be heaviness and sorrow, and it shall be to Me as Ariel."

God will fight fiercely against Jerusalem as if the city were a lion. He promises funeral music. The phrase "*heaviness and sorrow*" can be rendered "lamentation."

The *holy city* won't be a *happy city* - they're grieving.

He says, "I will encamp against you all around, I will lay siege against you with a mound, and I will raise siegeworks against you." It's difficult for modern folk to imagine the terror conjured up in people's minds when faced with the prospects of ancient "siege warfare."

A siege occurred when a city was surrounded by its enemy's army. Troops cut off all supply lines and communications. The siege army camped outside the city. Often cities were kept under siege for decades.

No matter how well stocked a city might be it eventually ran out of food. Its residents were faced with the choice of surrender, starvation, or cannibalism.

When Isaiah mentions the term "*siege*" it struck fear in his reader's hearts. It brought to mind images of desperate, starving folks dying a slow, tortured death.

Verse 4 “You shall be brought down, you shall speak out of the ground; your speech shall be low, out of the dust; your voice shall be like a medium's, out of the ground; and your speech shall whisper out of the dust.”

When starving, tortured people talk in agonizing tones. Rather than roar like a lion they speak in a low, mumbling, guttural growl. Like the voice of a demon.

As they say, "It's hard to find a happy medium!"

There's no laughter in a city under siege.

Yet God will deliver Jerusalem, verse 5, "Moreover the multitude of your foes shall be like fine dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones like chaff that passes away; yes, it shall be in an instant, suddenly.

You will be punished by the LORD of hosts with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with storm and tempest and the flame of devouring fire.

The multitude of all the nations who fight against Ariel, even all who fight against her and her fortress, and distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision.”

God will use the nations to judge His people, Israel. But then He Himself will judge the nations. Jerusalem will become this world's worst nightmare.

As we mentioned last week, Isaiah is a blend of local and future judgments. Think of it this way, all God's judgments are “precursors” for the final judgment.

They're a shot across the world's bow to back down.

Jerusalem's enemy in Isaiah's day was Assyria, but according to verse 7, in the last days God's judgment goes global. He'll judge a “*multitude of all the nations.*”

“It shall even be as when a hungry man dreams, and look - he eats; but he awakes, and his soul is still empty; or as when a thirsty man dreams, and look - he drinks; but he awakes, and indeed he is faint, and his soul still craves: so the multitude of all the nations shall be, who fight against Mount Zion.” The enemy dreamed of conquest, but God brought about defeat.

“Pause and wonder! Blind yourselves and be blind!

They are drunk, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with intoxicating drink. For the LORD has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets; and He has covered your heads, namely, the seers.” God judged Jerusalem with a spiritual blindness - a spiritual slumber.

Other than Isaiah the prophets of God had become silent. No one was trumpeting God’s warning and Word. The prophets and seers were asleep on the job!

A few decades earlier, around 750 BC, the Prophet Amos predicted this development. As Isaiah began his ministry, Amos was ending his. He said in Amos 8:11...

"The days are coming, says the LORD God, that I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it." Isaiah was seeing the fulfillment of what Amos had prophesied.

And sadly, this is the condition in our day. There are places in the world today, even in America, that lack the solid, consistent teaching of the Word of God.

Churches afraid to offend, tend to shy away from the whole counsel of God. They soft-pedal Christianity.

Once, Kathy had a friend who invited her to a local Methodist church that hosted a support group for moms. Her friend was frustrated. She told Kath, "[Maybe YOU can get them to talk about God. They're tired of hearing it from me.](#)" Not every church in our community is committed to teaching the Scriptures.

Yet this is what it takes to cause faith to grow - a consistent diet of God's Word. The Bible is faith's only fertilizer. In a spiritual famine, faith ends up withering.

Verse 11 ["The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, "Read this, please." And he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed." Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, "Read this, please." And he says, "I am not literate."](#) The idea is that nobody bothers to open their Bible and take heed.

People who can read refuse to do so. They make excuses. ["It's too hard to understand... it's sealed."](#)

It's said, ["The man who won't read is no better than the man who can't read."](#) That applies to the Bible.

I know people who'll fight for the doctrine of inerrancy - they believe the Bible is infallible - they just never read it, let alone teach what the Bible tell us.

In verse 13 God goes on the record, ["Therefore the LORD said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me..."](#) They talk the talk.

They say the right words, but their heart betrays those words. They pay God lip service, but there's no conviction, and no commitment, and no follow-through.

Jesus used this verse in Matthew 15 to describe the Pharisees of his own day... I've heard it said, "A man who is right in his head and wrong in his heart is wrong all over." It's about *willingness*, not just *words*.

Once, a young pastor approached an older, wiser mentor. He placed his hands on the older pastor's gray hair. "I'm trying to find the secret of your success."

The pastor replied, "Too high, young man, too high!"

He then took the younger hands, and moved them to his heart, and told him, "The secret of whatever success God has given me is *down here*, not *up there*."

In verse 13 Isaiah mentions another problem, "And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men..." Rather than obey God because they loved Him, they were forced to obey God out of a fear of retribution. This isn't the obedience that pleases Him.

Subjection to God rises out of an affection for God.

"Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work among this people, a marvelous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden."

God will deliver His people from the promised siege.

He'll give them a reason to praise Him. He'll be gracious. They don't deserve His deliverance, but He'll grant it, and it's grace that creates true worshippers.

Verse 15 “Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the LORD, and their works are in the dark; they say, “Who sees us?” and, “Who knows us?” Never think you can hide a *deed* or *thought* from God.

Intellectually, we’d all agree this is preposterous - but practically, have you ever acted like you were slipping something past God? *As if He wasn’t watching, or He’d fallen asleep, or He’d buy your excuse?* That’s foolish!

Isaiah says, “Surely you have things turned around!” You’ve got it backwards. “Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay; for shall the thing made say of him who made it, “He did not make me”? Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it, “He has no understanding”?” Clay is subject to the Potter, not vice versa. The Potter has total sovereignty over the clay.

Likewise, God does whatever He pleases. The Clay, that’s us, answers to the Potter, not vice versa.

There’s a great riddle. “Where in the forest does the lion sleep?” The answer, “*Anywhere he wants.*”

So it is with God, He does whatever He pleases.

This is the verse Paul quotes when he discusses God’s sovereignty in Romans 9. God doesn’t ask me for permission, or owe me an explanation before He works. God is the potter. I’m just the clay in His hands.

God seeks no counsel. He apologizes for nada.

It’s God Almighty’s prerogative to do *whatever He wants, whenever He wants, however He wants, to whomever He wants!* Hey, God is the boss!

Remember Job also had *“things turned around.”* He reacted to the calamity in his life by questioning God.

He demanded over and over to know *WHY!* Yet the more he questioned God, his reverence for God grew smaller and smaller, while His own arrogance got larger and larger. Job got it all *“turned around”* - until at the end of the book God puts Job back in His place.

God starts asking Job questions only God Himself can answer. He shows Job how little he really knows.

God lets the air out of Job’s pride, and Job learns to *trust God*, even when He can’t *trace all His ways*. As Job, the Jews need to embrace God’s sovereignty.

Verse 17, *“Is it not yet a very little while till Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be esteemed as a forest?”* Lebanon was known by the ancients for its cedars. Yet the land will be denuded.

The Assyrians will flood Lebanon as they march to Jerusalem and turn the forests into plowed fields.

Afterwards, God will restore the forests...

God will make the mountains bald - then He’ll replant a forest. In other words, *God does as He pleases!*

Verse 18 tells us, *“In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness. The humble also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.”*

One day the spiritual famine for God’s Word will end.

“For the terrible one is brought to nothing, the scornful one is consumed, and all who watch for iniquity are cut off - who make a man an offender by a word, and lay a snare for him who reproves in the gate, and turn aside the just by empty words.” The deceivers who try to stumble and tell lies will one day be cut off.

“Therefore thus says the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: “Jacob shall not now be ashamed, nor shall his face now grow pale; but when he sees his children, the work of My hands, in his midst, they will hallow My name, and hallow the Holy One of Jacob, and fear the God of Israel.

These also who erred in spirit will come to understanding, and those who complained will learn doctrine.” Though darkness and blindness covered Jerusalem in Isaiah’s day, the future forecast is bright. Those *“who erred in spirit will come to understanding.”*

And this is a prophecy for the last days. Romans 11:25 tells us, “hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the gentiles has come in and so all Israel will be saved...” By the time Jesus returns, Israel will be purified and embrace Him. God isn’t through with Israel. They’ll reverence Him one day!

Chapter 30 begins another *“Woe.”*

“Woe to the rebellious children,” says the LORD, “Who take counsel, but not of Me, and who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; who walk to go down to Egypt, and have not asked My advice, to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!”

Hezekiah was king at the time of Isaiah’s prophecy.

His predecessor, Ahaz, sinned by failing to stand up to the bully on the block - Assyria. The Assyrians were like the mob. They moved in - blackmailed the locals - and demanded they pay protection money.

Ahaz gave into the bully, but Hezekiah went one step further. He sinned by turning to other nations for help, rather than to God. He sought Egypt's protection.

Ahaz refused to trust God... Hezekiah put his trust in the world... When trouble strikes there're two places we can turn - *the flesh* or *the Spirit* - to *man* or to *God*. We can rely on *divine intervention* or *human effort*.

And Hezekiah chose a strange bedfellow.

It must've offended God all the more that He turned to Israel's ancient oppressor, the Egyptians. Seven centuries earlier God had delivered Israel from Egypt.

Since that time Egypt had represented bondage, and slavery, and hardship, and sin - *why go backwards?*

And why have we turned back? What has this world offered you other than frustration and hollow promises?

Your former friends abandoned you when life got tough... What were suppose to be shortcuts turned into long detours... Why have you turned your back on God, rather than leaning in to His plan for your life?

Yes, God's will often includes a little pain, and trial, but have you given His way an opportunity to work?

Or has fear and doubt and uncertainty caused you to retreat to the familiar - even if it's Egypt - a system that use to oppress you, and rob you of your freedom?

Once, a woman was aboard a twin-engine Cessna when the pilot had a heart attack and fell unconscious.

She was able to activate the radio, and scream, “may day! may day!” The tower picked up her cry for help, but the air traffic controller failed to make contact, because in her panic she kept changing channels!

And likewise, God will help us, but we have to trust Him enough to wait on Him to complete His work. If you’re changing channels, you hinder His deliverance!

Verse 3, “Therefore the strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame, and trust in the shadow of Egypt shall be your humiliation.” Pharaoh will prove a worthless deliverer. Israel will be ashamed they trusted him.

“For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes. They were all ashamed of a people who could not benefit them, or be help or benefit, but a shame and also a reproach.” Egypt was of no help!

Notice Isaiah mentions the city of “*Hanes*.” Located near the mouth of the Nile River, “*Hanes*” was a manufacturing center for Egyptian underwear... *not!*

Actually, the city also went by the Greek name, “*Tanis*.” In the movie “*Raiders of the Lost Ark*” it was home to the map room for the Ark. According to history *Tanis* was buried in a sandstorm, and true to the movie its ruins were found by German archaeologists in 1936.

Isaiah recalls it as the place Jewish representatives struck a deal with ambassadors from Egypt. You could say at *Hanes*, the Jews **jockeyed** for protection.

This world always offers more than it delivers. Don’t fall for it. The devil “**can’t wait to get his Hanes on you!**”

Verse 6 “The burden against the beasts of the South (a reference to Egypt). Through a land of trouble and anguish, from which came the lioness and lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches on the backs of young donkeys, and their treasures on the humps of camels, to a people who shall not profit; for the Egyptians shall help in vain and to no purpose.

Therefore I have called her Rahab-Hem-Shebeth.”

“*Rahab*” means “proud.” It was an ancient name for Egypt. God gives Egypt the name, “*Rahab sits idle.*”

Here Isaiah sees the Hebrew caravans crossing the deserts of Sinai carrying treasure to buy protection that never materializes. Egypt takes the money, but when the chips are down, the Egyptians will refuse to fight.

Verse 8 adds, “Now go, write it before them on a tablet, and note it on a scroll, that it may be for time to come, forever and ever: that this is a rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the law of the LORD; who say to the seers, “Do not see,” and to the prophets, “Do not prophesy to us right things; speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits.” Israel didn’t like truth. They wanted to be told what they wanted to hear.

They were like the proverbial ostrich, with its head in the sand. They preferred ignorance, rather than be confronted with truth, and trust, and real change...

Israel’s rebellious heart cried out, “Get out of the way, turn aside from the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.” Rather than submit to God,

they deny His existence and pretend He's not there... This is the sinful posture of our modern world.

In 2 Timothy 4:3 Paul says of the last days, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables." I think we can safely say that time is upon us right now!

I read of a pastor in Massachusetts who was told by the elders *to keep his sermons to 10 minutes, tell funny stories, and leave the people feeling great about themselves...* They want entertainment, not truth.

Some folks today don't want church, they want a spiritual spa - a watered-down Gospel. Something tailored to them. Not repentance and transformation.

The goal is to pacify people - not please God

It's been said of the popular Gospel preached today. "If it were a medicine it would be too weak to heal, and if it were a poison it would be too weak to harm."

Verse 12 tells us, "Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel: "Because you despise this word, and trust in oppression and perversity, and rely on them, therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach ready to fall, a bulge in a high wall, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant." Like "*a bulge in a high wall*" - as the people ignore God's woe, judgment builds and builds until it finally pops. Fail to trust God - rely elsewhere - and the *bulge* will eventually turn into a *breach*.

"And He shall break it like the breaking of the potter's vessel, which is broken in pieces; He shall not spare.

So there shall not be found among its fragments a shard to take fire from the hearth, or to take water from the cistern." God will shatter Judah's confidence in her Egyptian deliverers like a shattered piece of pottery. *Imagine, dropping your a clay jar on the concrete floor.*

"For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." Quiet confidence - not worldly compromise - is always the key to our deliverance. ***Return and rest in God.***

"But you would not, and you said, "No, for we will flee on horses" - therefore you shall flee! And, "We will ride on swift horses" - therefore those who pursue you shall be swift!" The Jews envisioned themselves fleeing from the enemy on the back of Egyptian horses.

But if they trust in horses - and not in God - they'll find that the Assyrian cavalry and horses are swifter.

Our God is greater... but you must trust to see it!

"One thousand shall flee at the threat of one, at the threat of five you shall flee, till you are left as a pole on top of a mountain and as a banner on a hill."

When fear - not faith - grips a people, they flee rather than fight. And in the end no one is left to take a stand.

If Judah continues to put their confidence in Egypt they'll be like a solitary flag flapping in the breeze.

Verse 18, “Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him.” *Hear God toe-tapping in verse 18?*

He’s waiting... God is waiting on us... *“that He may be gracious to you...”* **He’s waiting on us to wait on Him!** He wants to *deliver us* - and us to *exalt Him*.

Verse 19, “For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you. And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers.” In other words the lessons will be obvious. Israel will understand what God is saying through their trials.

“Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk in it,” whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.” There had been a famine - a famine for truth, for God’s Word.

But the day will come when the famine will cease.

Bible teaching will be restored. Folks will be guided by solid teaching. They’ll hear, *“This is the way, walk in it...”* They’ll no longer flounder - and have no direction.

I love verse 21. Ultimately God’s Spirit is our teacher. In John 16:13 Jesus said of Him, *“When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth...”*

The Holy Spirit is the ear-whisperer.

He comes alongside us or behind us, and whispers a reminder in our ear! He directs our path. Yet how often does He do so through a Scripture we’ve heard.

And notice the Spirit's whisper comes from behind.

Don't wait until you face a fork in the road to seek direction. The whisper comes from the sermon you heard on Sunday, or from today's time in God's Word.

Don't wait until you need a word to seek one.

God's guidance comes from behind us. We've already heard what we need to heed. It catches up to us, and whispers in our ear, when we slow down...

Verse 22, "You will also defile the covering of your graven images of silver, and the ornament of your molded images of gold. You will throw them away as an unclean thing; you will say to them, "Get away!"

When Bible teaching is restored God's people put away their idols... And there are two kinds of idolatry...

One is the worship of false gods.

But the other is the attempt to worship the true God in a forbidden way. God considers both to be idolatry. And the only way for us to understand how God wants to be worshipped is to read and study the Scriptures!

Verse 23, "Then He will give the rain for your seed with which you sow the ground, and bread of the increase of the earth; it will be fat and plentiful.

In that day your cattle will feed in large pastures.

Likewise the oxen and the young donkeys that work the ground will eat cured fodder, which has been winnowed with the shovel and fan.

There will be on every high mountain and on 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 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 that the LORD binds up the bruise of His people and heals the stroke of their wound.”

Verses 23-26 speaks of the Kingdom Age. Jesus will bring a full restoration to His people and the planet.

He'll return to recreate and rule over the Earth.

Revelation 20 says this golden age will last a thousand years. God will redeem the fallen planet. Everything damaged by sin will be rejuvenated.

Crops will be *“plentiful.”* Cattle will have room to graze. Oxen will eat better than people do today. Water supplies will be abundant. The sun will shine brightly. And Jesus will bind up and heal His battered people.

When man sinned, entropy set in. And it affects all of nature. Entropy means everything is running down. Natural systems are breaking down and wearing out.

The law of decay infects all nature. The world moves toward randomness. Energy is further dispersed. Even our own sun is winding down. It'll eventually flame out.

Yet when Jesus returns He'll reverse the laws of entropy. He'll infuse His creation with fresh energy.

Will Jesus rules... the sun will shine brighter. Plants will grow quicker. People will heal faster. The oceans will be purified of man's pollution, plants will flower, and it'll all happen faster than anyone thought possible.

Verse 27 *“Behold, the name of the LORD comes from afar, burning with His anger, and His burden is heavy; His lips are full of indignation, and His tongue like a*

devouring fire.” But when Jesus first appears it won’t be pretty. He’ll be angry. He’ll come to avenge God’s honor and punish man’s wickedness.

This won’t be “**gentle Jesus meek and mild**” - this is a righteous warrior on the rampage. Isaiah describes Him, “**His breath is like an overflowing stream, which reaches up to the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of futility; and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err.**” The nations will be drawn to judgment. They have a bridle in their jaw.

It’s a destiny they’ve earned by their wicked ways.

Yet God says to His people, “**You shall have a song as in the night when a holy festival is kept, and gladness of heart as when one goes with a flute, to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the Mighty One of Israel.**” Here’s a name, “*Mighty One of Israel.*”

Don’t you love that name for Jesus... “**The LORD will cause His glorious voice to be heard, and show the descent of His arm, with the indignation of His anger and the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, tempest, and hailstones.**” Judgment will be felt! *God will be heard!* There’ll be no hiding from His wrath.

Revelation 16:21 mentions Isaiah’s hailstones. “**And great hail from heaven fell upon men, every hailstone about the weight of a talent...**” that’s 75 to 100 pounds.

God will judge the world with hailstones the size of boulders. *And why hailstones... you might wonder?*

Remember, the OT penalty for blasphemy?

It was death by stoning. In the last days God is going to punish the world for its idolatry according to OT Law.

He'll stone the blasphemers, but the rocks will come from the only one without sin. They'll rain from heaven.

Verse 31 “For through the voice of the LORD Assyria will be beaten down, as He strikes with the rod.

And in every place where the staff of punishment passes, which the LORD lays on him, it will be with tambourines and harps; and in battles of brandishing He will fight with it.” *Man is judged and God is praised!*

“For 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.” Isaiah mentions a terrible place he calls “*Tophet*.” In Jerusalem of Isaiah’s day it was the deepest swell in the Valley of Hinnom.

Today there’s a lush, beautiful park just outside the Jaffa Gate. It’s a picnic and concert venue...

But in ancient times it was a sinister place. In the days of Solomon it was a center for idolatry. Child sacrifices were offered up the evil idol of Molech. By the time of Jesus, the area was Jerusalem’s garbage dump. A constant, smoldering fire burned in this valley.

Jesus uses the Valley of Hinnom to help describe [Gehenna](#) or “the lake of fire” - the place of eternal punishment - where the worm does not die, and the fire is never quenched... *Here Isaiah describes hellfire...*

The eternal Tophet is deep and large. Its fire is stoked by a endless supply of fuel. Its kept burning like a stream of lava - by the hot breath of a righteous God.

Recall Jesus said this everlasting fire was created for the devil and his angels. Here in verse 33, Isaiah says it's prepared for the King of Assyria. It could be Satan is seen here as the ultimate king behind Assyria.

Chapter 31 begins another... "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 very strong, but who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD!"

Sadly, men of all ages are impressed with *large numbers* and *physical strength*. Yet God is invisible and spiritual. This is why it requires faith to follow Him.

Faith sees beyond the few and the frail... to God.

In John 20 the risen Lord said to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

You've heard the old saying, "Seeing is believing..." Not according to Jesus! *Believing is NOT seeing...*

Peter was present when Jesus spoke to Thomas. This is why he wrote of Jesus in 1 Peter 1:8, "whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith - the salvation of your souls." "*Having not seen you love...*"

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4, "We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen... for we walk by faith, not by sight." Trust only what you see, and you're shortsighted. Real faith has eyes to see what's beyond the visible and the tangible.

God did deliver Jerusalem. The Assyrians had the city under siege. But the Angel of the Lord - Immanuel - with drawn sword, slaughtered 185,000 Assyrians.

It was a massacre at midnight. In the quiet and dark everything changed for the Jews. They went from fear and dread to tambourines and dancing... Yet nothing visible signaled God's deliverance - no sound of a marching army, or the cloud of a stampeding cavalry.

Nothing was seen in advance. And just because you don't *SEE* any signs of God's deliverance - it doesn't mean Jesus isn't right around the corner ready to save.

Verse 2 "Yet He also is wise and will bring disaster, and will not call back His words..." God's Word can be trusted. God thinks before He speaks. He doesn't utter a promise - then try to take back His words.

"But (God) will arise against the house of evildoers, and against the help of those who work iniquity.

Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out His hand, both he who helps will fall, and he who is helped will fall down; they all will perish together." Only those who trust in God will be saved!

"For thus the LORD has spoken to me: "As a lion roars, and a young lion over his prey (when a multitude of shepherds is summoned against him, He will not be afraid of their voice nor be disturbed by their noise), so the LORD of hosts will come down to fight for Mount Zion and for its hill." Jerusalem had called itself "Ariel" or "lion of God." But the Lord Himself will fight like a lion when he defends His people and fights for Zion.

“Like birds flying about, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem. Defending, He will also deliver it; passing over, He will preserve it.” God will do it!

So what should we do? “Return to Him against whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted.

For in that day every man shall throw away his idols of silver and his idols of gold - sin, which your own hands have made for yourselves.” In that day everyone who didn’t trust in God will be ashamed they didn’t.

“Then Assyria shall fall by a sword not of man, and a sword not of mankind shall devour him.

But he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall become forced labor. He shall cross over to his stronghold for fear, and his princes shall be afraid of the banner,” says the LORD, whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.” Assyria will fall by the sword, but not just any sword - *the sword of the Lord!*

And to document the account Isaiah inserts some *history* into his *prophecy*. In chapters 36-39 he tells the story of the Assyrian siege and God’s deliverance.

We’ll get to it week after next...