

Why do we have to get to the very end of all our human resources before we will finally look to God? I suppose it is our fallen human nature. Oswald Chambers asked and answered a similar question: "Why are we so terrified lest God should speak to us? Because we know that if God does speak, either the thing must be done or we must tell God we will not obey Him. If it is only the servant's voice we hear, we feel it is not imperative, we can say, 'Well, that is simply your own idea, though I don't deny it is probably God's truth.'" ¹ It's not as dangerous to listen to a sermon as it is to get quiet and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Or perhaps we could say it is easier to justify disobedience when there is a human messenger involved. But either way, the Holy Spirit is the One who is convicting us. It may be easier in our mind, but it is never justifiable.

Our passage begins just after God had promised a future where He would fill Zion with righteousness and justice. These prophecies go from rebuke to a future hope. God points out their sin, but then declares His grace. We'll see the pattern again in the remainder of this chapter.

⁷ Behold, their heroes cry in the streets; the envoys of peace weep bitterly. ⁸ The highways lie waste; the traveler ceases. Covenants are broken; cities are despised; there is no regard for man. Isaiah 33:7-8 Jerusalem was surrounded by the brutal Assyrian army. They were not unlike ISIS of today, and probably had the same dark territorial power of evil behind them. Daniel called it the Prince of Persia (Daniel 10:20). It seems that throughout time, he has been trying to destroy the people of Israel. He is still at it today. How else do you explain the fixation on such a small territory and people group?

King Hezekiah trusted in God and rebelled against the new king of bbbAssyria. The new king went out to reinforce his power among the subjugated nations and had come to Jerusalem. Hezekiah's faith wavered. He attempted to pay off the King of Assyria by stripping the Temple of gold and silver. Remember, he had already wasted a fortune trying to buy Egypt's help. But he didn't learn his lesson. Money can't always buy your way out of difficulty.

The Assyrian's took the pay off money and decided they would use it instead to finance the siege. The covenant was broken. All the other walled cities of Judah were already conquered. The heroes of Jerusalem knew they were no match for Assyria and were preparing to die. The envoys realized they were lied to and had given bad advice. Is that not unlike ISIS recent attempt to trade a prisoner they had burned alive a month before? Now the people of Jerusalem were just waiting to starve to death. Human life meant nothing to the Assyrians.

Commented [PW1]: Oswald Chamber, *My Utmost for His Highest*, February 12

Commented [PW2]: Daniel 10:20 (ESV)
²⁰ Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come.

⁹ *The land mourns and languishes; Lebanon is confounded and withers away; Sharon is like a desert, and Bashan and Carmel shake off their leaves.* Isaiah 33:9 The lands to the north, so beautiful and verdant were already conquered, a sad portent of what was almost certain to be Jerusalem's future. Isaiah had predicted a day when those proud lands to the north would be brought low (Isaiah 2:12-17), and it had come to pass. That prophecy predicted that that would be the time for the LORD alone to be exalted.

¹⁰ *"Now I will arise," says the LORD, "now I will lift myself up; now I will be exalted.* Isaiah 33:10 This was thirty years after a prediction of the LORD'S deliverance and exaltation. This verse shouts God's triple "now!" In our previous text, it was "in little more than a year," but that time has passed. Now, God would act. This shows us God has a set time to carry out His will. The New Testament calls it in Greek the "*kairos*" moment. It is God's appointed time, the perfect time.

We would have it come much earlier, but God's time is just the right time. Why did God wait so long to spare Jerusalem? It was because they were so hard. **The harder our heart, the more desperate He must make us.** Even this was not enough to avoid captivity. No one will be able to say that God did not do everything possible to bring us to Himself. When we ask why God waited so long, we should know it was either to stretch our faith or because we were so hardhearted.

"Lift myself up" and "arise" are words used when the LORD went to battle against the forces of man and the spiritual forces behind them. When the Ark of the Covenant set out each time the camp of Israel moved in the wilderness Moses would pray that God would arise and scatter their enemies before them (Numbers 10:35, 36; Psalm 68:1).

As we have seen before, this attempt to wipe out Judah is a spiritual battle to doom mankind. Without the people of Judah, the promised line of a savior would be gone. There would be no hope for the salvation of mankind. That is why the prophecies of the defeat of Assyria at the hand of the LORD slips over into the defeat of Satan on the cross of Calvary. It was there Satan tried once and for all to keep mankind from being redeemed. In doing his worst he actually facilitated our salvation.

Jesus understood this parallel. That is why He spoke the triple "now" in John 12 and 13. When the Greeks came seeking Jesus, Jesus knew it was time. His hour had come. It was time for Him to be glorified. It is true that that means to be in the glory He had before with the Father before His incarnation (John 17:4). But it is also true that He was declaring He was going into battle with Satan, a battle in which He would be gloriously victorious. Jesus prayed that the Father's name would be glorified. He acknowledged that there was no way to escape this battle for it was this purpose that He was born (John 12:27-28). The Father answered in an audible voice that He had glorified and would glorify it again.

Hearing that, Jesus responded, ³¹ *Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.* ³² *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."* John 12:31-32
 "Lifted up" is one of the many words with a double meaning. The Hebrew word means

Commented [PW3]: Isaiah 2:12-17 (ESV)

¹² For the LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low;
¹³ against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up; and against all the oaks of Bashan;
¹⁴ against all the lofty mountains, and against all the uplifted hills;
¹⁵ against every high tower, and against every fortified wall;
¹⁶ against all the ships of Tarshish, and against all the beautiful craft.
¹⁷ And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.

Commented [PW4]: Numbers 10:35-36 (ESV)

³⁵ And whenever the ark set out, Moses said, "Arise, O LORD, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you."
³⁶ And when it rested, he said, "Return, O LORD, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

Commented [PW5]: Psalm 68:1 (ESV)

¹ God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered; and those who hate him shall flee before him!

Commented [PW6]: John 17:4 (ESV)

⁴ I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

Commented [PW7]: John 12:27-28 (ESV)

²⁷ "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour?' But for this purpose I have come to this hour.
²⁸ Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

to lift, carry, forgive or exalt. Remember in Isaiah 6 that Isaiah saw the Lord "high and lifted up." What a perfect word for what Jesus was about to do. In being lifted up on the cross, He was going to bring forgiveness, and in the process be exalted, victorious over Satan. The Septuagint (the Old Testament in Greek) mentions "glorified" and "lifted up" together. While John was correct in saying Jesus was speaking of the way Jesus would die, being lifted up on a cross, He was also lifting Himself to go into battle with the enemy of our soul (Isaiah 33:3).

You or I could never defeat that enemy. Many have tried and found eventually he finds our weakness and overcomes us. But there was One who could, One who had no weaknesses. When He raises Himself to do battle, He is the mightiest warrior of all. Thank God, literally, that He was fighting as a man on man's behalf.

Since God grieves with us and feels our pain, I can imagine the anticipation of the time of deliverance. If your child was struggling and destroying their life but you had to wait to intervene, imagine the excitement when the time of intervention finally came. Now! And so God said through Isaiah, ¹⁰ *"Now I will arise," says the LORD, "now I will lift myself up; now I will be exalted.* And 700 years later Jesus, with the same anticipation said, ³¹ *Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.*

And the third "now" of Jesus came in chapter 13 as they left the upper room. ³¹ *When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.* John 13:31 The next morning He would be on the cross, lifted up, in the battle of the ages, and emerge victorious, glorified and bringing glory to the Father, sacrificing Himself for you!

¹¹ *You conceive chaff; you give birth to stubble; your breath is a fire that will consume you.* ¹² *And the peoples will be as if burned to lime, like thorns cut down, that are burned in the fire."* Isaiah 33:11, 12 Speaking now to the Assyrians, God says the fruit of their mighty army is just chaff and stubble, fuel for a fire. The words they spoke against the God of Israel would ignite the fuel and consume them. Be careful little mouth what you say. Mocking God never turns out well. There is a certain thorn bush in Israel that is used on the perimeter of fields to keep out unwanted animals. The plant produces an abundance of sap. To keep the plant in check, after harvest time, the plant is set on fire. It quickly burns to nothing. That is God's declaration of the future of Assyria.

¹³ *Hear, you who are far off, what I have done; and you who are near, acknowledge my might.* Isaiah 33:13 And the world did hear that of all the nations that rebelled against Assyria, only Jerusalem was able to withstand their attack. The Chronicles record that the nations brought gifts to the Lord and King Hezekiah when they heard what God had done (2 Chronicles 32:23).

The Apostle Paul may have seen the ultimate fulfilment when he invites those far and near to be at peace with God through the victory Christ obtained for us (Ephesians 2:16,17; Isaiah 57:19). Certainly those around the world today who have trusted Jesus

Commented [PW8]: Isaiah 33:3 (ESV)

³ At the tumultuous noise peoples flee; when you lift yourself up, nations are scattered,

Commented [PW9]: 2 Chronicles 32:23 (ESV)

²³ And many brought gifts to the LORD to Jerusalem and precious things to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations from that time onward.

Commented [PW10]: Ephesians 2:16-17 (ESV)

¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

Commented [PW11]: Isaiah 57:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ creating the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace, to the far and to the near," says the LORD, "and I will heal him.

for their salvation acknowledge what He has done for us and His mighty power to save us.

14 The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling has seized the godless: "Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" Isaiah 33:14 Though God would come in power and judge the Assyrians, His righteousness would not spare the sinners in Jerusalem. There is a day of judgment. They would tremble when they saw the power and justice of God. The Scriptures tell us God is love (1 John 4:9), but He is also a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29). Those who in previous chapters told Isaiah to quit speaking about the Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 30:10,11) would still answer to Him.

Here the prophecy takes another turn. We began with the desperation of Jerusalem and the intervention of God to save them. Then the prophecy spoke to both the deliverance by grace then, and the ultimate deliverance from sin through the cross. Now we go forward even further into the future regarding those who will dwell in the Jerusalem of the Millennium.

The previous verses were about God coming to judge the Assyrians in battle, but that is a preview of the great battle called Armageddon. After that, who will dwell with Jesus on Mount Zion? The same question is addressed in Psalm 15 and 24. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Who will stand in His holy place? Only the priests were allowed to do that in days of the Psalmist. Who will share in the reign of Christ on earth? God's answer to His own question is similar to that in the Psalms. Only a righteous person can stand before a holy God.

15 He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, who despises the gain of oppressions, who shakes his hands, lest they hold a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes from looking on evil, Isaiah 33:15 That is to say a righteous person. Whose life is righteous and only speaks what is right? There was One. If we are in Him, we will reign with Him on Zion.

16 he will dwell on the heights; his place of defense will be the fortresses of rocks; his bread will be given him; his water will be sure. Isaiah 33:16 Those in Christ will dwell with Him on the exalted places. They will be secure. He is our Rock, our Fortress. He is our bread, the Bread of Life, and His Holy Spirit in us is a spring of living water continually refreshing us.

Now some would say that this is taking the text too far, that it was for that day alone. I don't know how they would explain the next verse. *17 Your eyes will behold the king in his beauty; they will see a land that stretches afar.* Isaiah 33:17 When Jesus is reigning on Zion, our eyes will behold Him! We could say it was true in an intermediate fulfillment of Simeon and Hannah in the Temple when baby Jesus was presented (Luke 2:25-38), but the overall picture is much greater than even they experienced. In the first coming we saw Jesus as a servant. In the next, we'll see Him as King of kings. His kingly beauty is as John saw Him in His glory (Revelation 1:12-16) Seeing a land that stretches afar is a view of His worldwide kingdom.

Commented [PW12]: Hebrews 12:29 (ESV)
29 for our God is a consuming fire.

Commented [PW13]: Isaiah 30:10-11 (ESV)

10 who 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.

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

Commented [PW14]: Luke 2:25-38 (ESV)

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law,

28 he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

29 "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;

30 for my eyes have seen your salvation

31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

33 And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him.

34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed

35 (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

36 And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin,

37 and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.

38 And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Commented [PW15]: Revelation 1:12-16 (ESV)

12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands,

13 and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.

14 The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire,

15 his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.

16 In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

18 Your heart will muse on the terror: "Where is he who counted, where is he who weighed the tribute? Where is he who counted the towers?" Isaiah 33:18 I think we will be able to look back and think of all the things that had us trembling. We will recall the things we feared and realize all the time we were in God's all-powerful hands. We had no reason to fear. That which we feared came to nothing. The oppressor we were so angry with is no more.

20 Behold Zion, the city of our appointed feasts! Your eyes will see Jerusalem, an untroubled habitation, an immovable tent, whose stakes will never be plucked up, nor will any of its cords be broken. 21 But there the LORD in majesty will be for us a place of broad rivers and streams, where no galley with oars can go, nor majestic ship can pass. Isaiah 33:20-21 Again we see this could only be fulfilled in the Millennium. Though it gave them hope for the present, they would later find it was not for their time. Babylon would come as a result of their rejection of the Word. Rome would exile those who rejected the Word made flesh (John 1:14).

Though John describes a physical river flowing out from under the throne of God in Jerusalem in the Millennium (Revelation 22:1), this is not about a river one could navigate like the Nile. This is the river of God, the life giving water of the Word that slakes the thirst of the righteous (Matthew 5:6). The Word of the Lord will go out from Zion (Micah 4:2).

22 For the LORD is our judge; the LORD is our lawgiver; the LORD is our king; he will save us. Isaiah 33:22 This verse alone could be the source text for an entire sermon series. Let me just simply say that the LORD is the judge of all the earth. One day every soul will give an account to Him. He alone is our lawgiver. There are not multiple rules depending on your culture and the time you live and the tendencies of your physical nature. He makes the rules because right and wrong is based on who He is. He made the rules to help us all know what is best for us. He gives us laws for our good. His nature is good.

He is our king. He will reign through all eternity. His will will be done. He will save all who humbly come to Him and place their hope and trust in Him.

23 Your cords hang loose; they cannot hold the mast firm in its place or keep the sail spread out. Then prey and spoil in abundance will be divided; even the lame will take the prey. Isaiah 33:23 While Jerusalem was like a ship so storm tossed there seemed no hope of salvation, at that very time, the Lord would deliver them. This would take place when the angel slew 185,000, but again in the day of Jacob's Trouble, just before the beginning of the Millennium begins (Jeremiah 30:7).

Instead of being the prey of the Assyrians and spoil taken from Jerusalem, Jerusalem will collect Assyrian spoil without fighting. Even the lame can hobble over and pick up treasures for themselves (Psalm 68:12). Jesus will divide the spoils of the victory over Satan with those who are His (Isaiah 53:12), even with the weakest believer.

Commented [PW16]: John 1:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ And 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.

Commented [PW17]: Revelation 22:1 (ESV)

¹ Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb

Commented [PW18]: Matthew 5:6 (ESV)

⁶ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Commented [PW19]: Micah 4:2 (ESV)

² and many nations shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Commented [PW20]: Jeremiah 30:7 (KJV)

⁷ Alas! for that day *is* great, so that none *is* like it: it *is* even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.

Commented [PW21]: Psalm 68:12 (ESV)

¹² "The kings of the armies—they flee, they flee!" The women at home divide the spoil—

Commented [PW22]: Isaiah 53:12 (ESV)

¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

24 And no inhabitant will say, "I am sick"; the people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity. Isaiah 33:24 Once again, this is obviously the Millennial Kingdom. Sickness and uncleanness (sin) are related in Scripture. (Isaiah 1:5-6) Not all sickness is because of sin a person has committed (John 9:3), but it is from the sin of man that caused the world to be in its fallen state. So not only does this predict the removal of the curse on those in Zion but declares those who are there are the forgiven ones (Isaiah 1:26). They are the Jew (Jeremiah 50:20) and Gentile who have come to Jesus for cleansing.

Questions

- 1 Why don't we quietly listen to God?
- 2 What caused Hezekiah's faith to waiver? Lesson?
- 3 Review the three "now" of the LORD and Jesus.
- 4 Multiple meanings of "lifted up"?
- 5 How is verse 13 fulfilled then and now?
- 6 Who dwells with Jesus on Zion?
- 7 How do we know the last section of the chapter is about the Millennium?
- 8 What will we muse on?
- 9 Who is God to us?
- 10 How did this passage speak to you?

Commented [PW23]: Isaiah 1:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

⁶ From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and raw wounds; they are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil.

Commented [PW24]: John 9:3 (ESV)

³ Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

Commented [PW25]: Isaiah 1:26 (ESV)

²⁶ And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city."

Commented [PW26]: Jeremiah 50:20 (ESV)

²⁰ In those days and in that time, declares the LORD, iniquity shall be sought in Israel, and there shall be none, and sin in Judah, and none shall be found, for I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant.