

A good deal of our spiritual life is spent learning to turn from our previous resources to complete trust in the Lord. Jesus told us we needed to be like little children to enter the kingdom of God (Matthew 18:3). Little children know their parents have the answer and trust them for everything. As we get older, we start to think we know it all and wonder what's wrong with our parents. That is what has happened with Judah in this passage. They thought had a better plan than God. They didn't want God's direction. Too often we find ourselves following this bad example. But we are going to see that God is patient and gracious, and though His ways don't seem to make sense, they are always best.

¹ "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; ² who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!" Isaiah 30:1-2 This is the fourth woe. The word "Ah" is the same word for "woe" (28:1; 29:1, 15), and this woe is to the stubborn children of God who insist on trusting in something other than God. The previous verses described those who accept the Lord's instruction. The people of Judah who are being addressed in this chapter stubbornly refused God's direction. They had a plan but it wasn't God's. They had an alliance, but it wasn't with God. They sought direction but it wasn't from God.

How often is this true of born-again children of God? Times of crisis come and we learn where our faith is really placed. But it is also revealed on a daily basis in every day decisions. Is our plan God's plan and His direction? **Are we looking to God or just operating out of our own whims.** Where is our faith placed?

Consider how ridiculous it was for Judah to turn to Egypt. They had been slaves to Egypt in the past. God delivered them through plagues that showed the gods of Egypt were powerless. God showed His mighty power in parting the Red Sea, destroying the army of Pharaoh, providing for them in the wilderness, and defeating the Canaanites before them. So considering their history, what sense did it make to turn to Egypt for help?

Don't we do the same thing? It is so easy to forget how God met us before and showed us He is trustworthy. We forget all the times we looked to Him and found His grace and mercy delivered us from our situation. Instead we turn to the very things that have failed us in the past. We can see them. It doesn't take faith, because it is reasonable to us. But we have lost the faith of child that just runs to Daddy for the answer and help we need.

In verses three through seven Isaiah tells of the envoys that have gone to ask help from Egypt. He declares that instead of help, they will be their shame. The shame is

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³ and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

Commented [PW2]: Isaiah 28:1 (ESV)

¹ Ah, the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim, and the fading flower of its glorious beauty, which is on the head of the rich valley of those overcome with wine!

Commented [PW3]: Isaiah 29:1 (ESV)

¹ Ah, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped! Add year to year; let the feasts run their round.

Commented [PW4]: Isaiah 29:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Ah, you who hide deep from the LORD your counsel, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, "Who sees us? Who knows us?"

that they were going to pay for help that would never come. It was also in the fact that they were trusting in the very nation they had been delivered from in the past.

God declared that Egypt would be like "Rahab who sits still." Rahab was the harlot that hid the spies, Joshua and Caleb. She did something. She took them up and hid them and later lowered them out her window and down the wall to safety. But Egypt was just a harlot who would receive money but do nothing.

Egypt is a picture of the world system. We often look to its help and even spend our money on it (Mark 5:26). In the final analysis it does nothing lasting for us.

⁸ And now, go, write it before them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever. ⁹ For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the LORD; Isaiah 30:8-9 The people of Judah were so hardened toward the Lord that God told Isaiah that his prophecy wasn't for this people but for a future people. That's because these people were unwilling to hear it. They were going through all the religious rituals but without any relationship with God or desire to hear His counsel (29:13).

They did have a desire to hear something though. *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."* Isaiah 30:10-11 Notice that they know they are asking for a lie. They don't want to hear from God or hear more about Him. Sometimes what God has to say to us is comforting. Sometimes it's a slap in the face to wake us up. *We go deep by making our hearts vulnerable to truths most offensive, yet most salutary and essential.*¹¹

God had already told them He would deliver them from Assyria, but only after a time of suffering. He also warned them that eventually they would go into captivity because of the hardness of their hearts. Who wants to hear that? We need to hear the truth, but we often desire to hear a lie. They didn't want to hear about the Holy One of Israel because He requires that we be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:16).

This goes back to the point at the beginning of the chapter. They wanted to do it their way and not God's way (Proverbs 14:12). We are so used to just following our whims when we really need to be looking to God for His plan for our daily choices. It is easy to stop for a moment and just check in your heart if you believe what you are about to do is the Lord's direction or your own. The question is, are we willing? Judah wasn't willing, and that would be quite costly.

We see the same desire today to hear a happy message. Some churches preach a prosperity message that is all hope and happiness. There is no word of final judgment or of the fall of nations that turn from God (Psalm 9:17). Hell is an unmentioned word and even in some cases dismissed as an antiquated idea (2 Timothy 4:3).

¹² Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, "Because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them, ¹³ therefore this iniquity shall be to

Commented [PW5]: Mark 5:26 (ESV)

²⁶ and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse.

Commented [PW6]: Isaiah 29:13 (ESV)

¹³ And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men,

Commented [PW7]: John Ortberg - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners

Commented [PW8]: 1 Peter 1:15-16 (ESV)

¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Commented [PW9]: Proverbs 14:12 (ESV)

¹² There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

Commented [PW10]: Psalm 9:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God.

Commented [PW11]: 2 Timothy 4:3 (ESV)

³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,

you like a breach in a high wall, bulging out, and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant;

¹⁴ and its breaking is like that of a potter's vessel that is smashed so ruthlessly that among its fragments not a shard is found with which to take fire from the hearth, or to dip up water out of the cistern." Isaiah 30:12-14 The warning is to those who despise the Word of the LORD. The apostle John told us the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). When we reject our relationship with Jesus, the natural repercussions are the damage resulting from our misplaced trust. The Jews had been oppressed by Egypt and now they are turning to Egypt for help. How perverse is that? The result is like a chunk of a high wall falling on your head. It's like a clay vessel so violently smashed that there isn't even a spoon size piece left. Nothing of any value remains. That is what we get when despise God's word and instead trust in man, which is to trust in oppression and perverseness.

¹⁵ For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength." But you were unwilling, Isaiah 30:15 Isaiah uses numerous words that have double meanings. One of them was in the previous verse, "perverseness." He said they trusted in it. The word can also mean "to depart." They trusted in departing from the Lord. Now God says to return and rest in Him would mean salvation. They didn't need to pay off Egypt. They just needed to return to the Lord and the Lord would save them like He had in the past.

If they stilled their fears and quietly trusted God to be their strength, they could rest in Him. They could enjoy His salvation from Assyria. But they were unwilling. How often is this true of us? We run around trying to find solutions or some way we can resolve something or escape some problem but don't quietly put our trust in God. We have to first have a heart that is willing to trust and have faith in Him (Proverbs 3:5-6). That is the place of quiet rest. Whatever problems you face, this is the solution. Look to God. Trust Him. Get His plan and direction. Then quietly proceed in faith as you rest in Him. It won't always turn out like you hope, but God will always be faithful to work through it for your good (Romans 8:28).

The leadership of Judah responded with an alternative. They were going to get Egypt's help and if that failed, try to flee on horseback. They would be caught. And because of their rebellious heart that despised God's Word, when Babylon would conquer them, the following verse would come to pass. *¹⁷ A thousand shall flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five you shall flee, till you are left like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain, like a signal on a hill.* Isaiah 30:17 It was the opposite of what God had promised them if they would obey His commandments. Five Israelites were supposed to chase a hundred of the enemy (Leviticus 26:8). God was on the side of their enemy. There would only be a small remnant left in the land.

¹⁸ Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him. Isaiah 30:18 The LORD is waiting for us to wait for Him. He is exalted in showing

Commented [PW12]: 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 [PW13]: Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Commented [PW14]: Romans 8:28 (ESV)

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Commented [PW15]: Leviticus 26:8 (ESV)

⁸ Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.

us mercy. He is a God of justice and must be just. He must have a reason to show mercy. God was greatly exalted in sending His Son to take our sin's just punishment that He might extend mercy to us. The promise is that those who wait for the Lord, instead of running of to solve problems in their own way, will be blessed. Are we waiting on the Lord (Psalm 27:14)?

Commented [PW16]: Psalm 27:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!

Once again, God has declared the sin of Judah and then speaks of His unfailing love and desire for them. He is the same for all who would come to Him through His provision of His Son, Jesus (John 1:12). The prophecy pictures the distant future. There is partial fulfillment and an ultimate fulfillment. Some would say this is just prophetic language that shouldn't be taken literally. Sometimes that may be the case, but I believe the details of this prophecy will ultimately come to pass literally.

Commented [PW17]: John 1:12 (ESV)

¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

¹⁹ For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you. Isaiah 30:19 God is just waiting for them to turn to Him. This happened when the angel slew the Assyrians. It happened when Jews cried out for the Messiah under the oppression of Rome. It will happen again in the day of Jacob's Trouble (Jeremiah 30:7).

Commented [PW18]: 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.

²⁰ And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. Isaiah 30:20 In a remote way this was fulfilled as a shadow under Ezra at the time of the return to the Land (Ezra 7:10). It was definitely true when Jesus ministered in Israel (John 18:20). It will ultimately be true in the Millennial Kingdom. Imagine going to the city of God to bring a question to the King of kings!

Commented [PW19]: Ezra 7:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

²¹ And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. Isaiah 30:21 While Ezra would teach them the Word of God which would serve this purpose, Jesus would send the Holy Spirit, the fullness of this promise (John 14:26). The Spirit was poured out to guide us moment by moment as we walk with the Lord. We have two extremes within the church today. One is looking only to the Word. The other is looking only to the Spirit. But the Biblical way is a balance of both. The Spirit will not contradict the Word. The Word is often the voice of the Spirit. The letter without the Spirit kills (2 Corinthians 3:6). The Word is only as good as it is interpreted correctly, and for that we need the Holy Spirit to guide us (1 John 2:27).

Commented [PW20]: John 18:20 (ESV)

²⁰ Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret.

Commented [PW21]: John 14:26 (ESV)

²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

While the chapter started with rebellious people that were refusing to listen and had a plan that wasn't God's plan, it ends with a people who listen to the Word and are obedient to His voice. God is always offering us hope. He is always showing us that our fallen nature has a remedy.

Commented [PW22]: John 14:26 (ESV)

²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Commented [PW23]: 1 John 2:27 (ESV)

²⁷ But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

²² Then you will defile your carved idols overlaid with silver and your gold-plated metal images. You will scatter them as unclean things. You will say to them, "Be gone!" Isaiah 30:22 The Spirit filled life abhors anything that gets in the way of devotion to Jesus.

The temptations of the world are seen for the destructive things that they are and are forsaken.

There is another word play here. God chose the word "alliance" to describe what Judah desired with Egypt (see verse one). The same word can be translated "molten image." Egypt was their idol. When we are walking with the Lord, acting at His direction, following His plan, we will reject the idolatry of trusting in man (Jeremiah 17:5).

The passage continues with a description of the Millennial Kingdom's abundance. *²⁵ And on every lofty mountain and every high hill there will be brooks running with water, in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. ²⁶ 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 when the LORD binds up the brokenness of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.* Isaiah 30:25-26 Isaiah already spoke of the great earthquake in the end-time that will shake the world (24:19). It will usher in the Millennium and Jesus' reign on the earth.

Though the brooks may possibly be literal, Jesus spoke of the indwelling Spirit as a well of water springing up (John 4:14). Certainly the brightness of light must be figurative because we'd all fry if the moon was like the sun. So I take both of these expressions as meaning the Word of God and the teaching of Scripture is thoroughly known throughout the earth. Jeremiah predicted in that day no one will say, "Know the Lord," for all will know Him (Jeremiah 31:34). Isaiah predicted the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord (Isaiah 11:9).

The rest of the chapter speaks of the Lord coming in judgment on the nations of the world and uses Assyria as an example. While the nations are defeated at Armageddon, the people of God will be celebrating. *²⁹ You shall have a song as in the night when a holy feast is kept, and gladness of heart, as when one sets out to the sound of the flute to go to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel. ³⁰ And the LORD will cause his majestic voice to be heard and the descending blow of his arm to be seen, in furious anger and a flame of devouring fire, with a cloudburst and storm and hailstones.* Isaiah 30:29-30 Remember at the beginning of the last chapter there was a monotony to worship at the feasts. In this day to come when the Lord appears and saves Israel, worship will be sincere. There will be a song during such devastation, because evil is being defeated. All those who have set themselves against the goodness of God will be judged. The reign of the prince of this world will be over. The physical kingdom of Jesus on earth will begin.

How gracious of God to show this rebellious people the glorious future. But remember, God said it was written for those in the future who could learn from Judah's iniquity. **Are we learning to look to God and trust Him rather than our own ingenuity and cunning? Are we trusting God or man?** That does not mean God cannot use man. But where is your trust placed? Are you seeking His plan? Are you finding your strength in quietness and trust? Are you willingly listening for His voice of direction and following it? Man will fail you. God never will.

Commented [PW24]: Jeremiah 17:5 (ESV)

⁵ Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD."

Commented [PW25]: Isaiah 24:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ The earth is utterly broken, the earth is split apart, the earth is violently shaken.

Commented [PW26]: John 4:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Commented [PW27]: Jeremiah 31:34 (ESV)

³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Commented [PW28]: Isaiah 11:9 (ESV)

⁹ They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Questions

- 1 What is the message of the fourth woe?
- 2 How does it apply to us?
- 3 How is the world like "Rahab who sits still"?
- 4 Why was Isaiah writing this down?
- 5 Why didn't they want to hear?
- 6 What was the warning?
- 7 What are two of the words with double meanings? How are they used?
- 8 What was God's invitation? Why didn't they accept it?
- 9 What is God waiting for?
- 10 What are 3 fulfillments of verse 20?
- 11 What does the end of the chapter predict?