

Living in a fallen world with fallen people means inevitable difficulties. Trying situations and conflict are a part of human life that we simply can't escape. In these chapters, God addresses Judah and us so as to confront us about how we deal with these difficulties. He is asking us to take a look at where we really place our trust. Do we have idols that we depend on, idols like money, or human strength, or ingenuity, or the wisdom of others? Where do we turn first for help?

¹ 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 do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD! Isaiah 31:1 This is Isaiah's fifth woe to Judah. It is the same message as the previous chapter. Have you noticed that when we don't get the message God is trying to teach us, He will often repeat it whether by bringing up the same message or difficulty again and again. The message bears repeating. Where is our trust placed? Is man the pinnacle of all things or is God?

The leaders of Judah thought they could defeat Assyria with the help of Egypt or escape by horseback if the situation got too bad. Why is it that we fail to look to the Commander of the armies of heaven? Perhaps it because we know He would tell us to repent and change our ways. David wrote, *⁷ Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.* Psalm 20:7 David trusted in the Lord rather than might, and he was victorious. That is why in his later years he was punished so severely for numbering his soldiers (2 Samuel 24:1). God pronounces a curse on all who trust in man, who make flesh their strength, whose heart departs from the LORD. (Jeremiah 17:5). Why would we put ourselves under that curse? Do we first consult with God or with man? **Do we go to prayer or to the phone to call someone who might have an answer we seek?**

This does not mean that God will never direct you to others for help or use natural means. Isaiah will tell Hezekiah of a natural remedy for an illness, but the direction to use it came from the Lord (2 Kings 20:7). Hasn't He given us common sense? Sure. But do you look to it first or to the LORD first? The LORD may direct you to use that common sense solution or He may not, but His answer is always best.

² And yet he is wise and brings disaster; he does not call back his words, but will arise against the house of the evildoers and against the helpers of those who work iniquity. Isaiah 31:2 God is all wise and knows what we need, even if it is disaster. The near total disaster brought by Assyria still did not save Jerusalem from defeat by the

Commented [PW1]: 2 Samuel 24:1 (ESV)

¹ Again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, "Go, number Israel and Judah."

Commented [PW2]: 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 [PW3]: 2 Kings 20:7 (ESV)

⁷ And Isaiah said, "Bring a cake of figs. And let them take and lay it on the boil, that he may recover."

Babylonians. God has already said Judah's iniquity will not be atoned for until they die (Isaiah 22:14; Numbers 23:19). God knew they would not turn for long, but He speaks a word of warning for those in the future who read this, and possibly for a few individuals who did turn to Him.

³ The Egyptians are man, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall, and they will all perish together. Egypt is symbolic of Satan and worldliness. Even if Egypt came in all its strength, what the Lord determines will come to pass. Nothing can stop Him from doing His will. How foolish to trust in man instead of God. We are so prone to walk by sight instead of by faith in our all-powerful, loving God.

⁴ For thus the LORD said to me, "As a lion or a young lion growls over his prey, and when a band of shepherds is called out against him he is not terrified by their shouting or daunted at their noise, so the LORD of hosts will come down to fight on Mount Zion and on its hill. Once again we come to a verse that has an immediate fulfillment and an ultimate one. What tips us off is the language that is used. First, intermediate fulfillments are often figurative and partial, whereas the ultimate ones are usually quite literal and conclusive. The Lord will send His angel to spare Jerusalem from Assyria (Isaiah 37:36), but only after all the other walled cities are taken. While the angel of the Lord may actually be the Lord Jesus, Assyria is outside the city, not on Mt. Zion. So we see it doesn't match completely with the immediate events.

The second clue is often the language God employs. "As a lion" causes us to think of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Messiah, or of Ariel, the lion God. A band of shepherds reminds us of the evil shepherds in Ezekiel's prophecy and of those who convicted Jesus (Ezekiel 34:2). The lack of fear reminds us of Jesus before Pilate (John 19:10-11). We see Jesus as the Lord of hosts in Joshua 5:13-15. There we read of a man who is that commander who declares the ground where He stood was holy and commanded Joshua to take off his shoes just as God told Moses from the burning bush (Exodus 3:5-6). Joshua called this man "the LORD" (Joshua 6:2).

The ultimate fulfillment of verse 4, of *the LORD of hosts will come down to fight on Mount Zion and on its hill*, is Jesus on Calvary of Mount Zion waging war against Satan and the fallen angels. Jesus was not daunted by the jeering religious leaders (Mark 15:29-32). He is the Lion of Judah, and the prize He has claimed is the souls of all who will come to Him. He covers, or makes atonement for, the city of peace (Jerusalem). They are those who have found peace in Him (Luke 2:14). He delivers them from the clutches of Satan. He covers us, as we will see in the next verse. That was the joy set before Him, for which He endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2)

Commented [PW4]: Isaiah 22:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ The LORD of hosts has revealed himself in my ears: "Surely this iniquity will not be atoned for you until you die," says the Lord GOD of hosts.

Commented [PW5]: Numbers 23:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

Commented [PW6]: Isaiah 37:36 (ESV)

³⁶ And the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.

Commented [PW7]: Ezekiel 34:2 (ESV)

² "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep?"

Commented [PW8]: John 19:10-11 (ESV)

¹⁰ So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?"
¹¹ Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."

Commented [PW9]: Joshua 5:13-15 (ESV)

¹³ When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?"
¹⁴ And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?"

[... [1]

Commented [PW10]: Exodus 3:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."
⁶ And he said, "I am the God of your father, the G

[... [2]

Commented [PW11]: Joshua 6:2 (ESV)

² And the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor.

Commented [PW12]: Mark 15:29-32 (ESV)

²⁹ And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days,
³⁰ save yourself, and come down from the cross!"

[... [3]

Commented [PW13]: Luke 2:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

Commented [PW14]: Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)

² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Our Christmas message last year was about the Lord coming down to the womb of Mary to eventually wage war on our behalf on Calvary. The name "Lord of Hosts" means the Commander of the Armies of Heaven, but Jesus did not need His army (Luke 12:53). He overcame Satan with His sacrificial death, something Satan could not comprehend. Jesus is the super warrior of which all our hero stories are just a shadow (Jeremiah 20:11). He has already won the greatest battle through the most amazing means anyone could imagine.

⁵ Like birds hovering, so the LORD of hosts will protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver it; he will spare and rescue it. Isaiah 31:5 Like a mother bird spreading her wings over her chicks, so the Lord has come down to protect us from being Satan's prey. This imagery is used in Deuteronomy 32:11 to describe God's care for His people (Psalm 91:4).

"Spare" in the ESV is the Hebrew word that is also translated "passover." It reminds us of the blood stained doors on the night of the last plague. The blood on the doorposts was the sign that God would hover over them and protect them from the plague of the death of the firstborn (Exodus 12:13). The language God gave Isaiah reminded the people of their beginnings and the love and care God had for them, and still had if they would just turn to Him. It is for us as well.

⁶ Turn to him from whom people have deeply revolted, O children of Israel. Isaiah 31:6 To turn is to repent. Salvation has always come to those who repent and trust in God. Jesus made it possible, regardless of whether it was before or after the cross. We are saved when we turn from our sins to God, from trust in self and self-rule, to the Lordship of Jesus. Though it is the Jews who were being addressed, it has always been true for all people who would turn to Him. Consider Jesus' example of the Gentiles to whom the prophets were sent (Luke 4:25-27).

The phrase, "From whom people have deeply revolted," is such a sad expression. It breaks my heart to think of how we, as fallen beings, can so despise the One who loves us enough to die in our place. We can be so sin sick that we despise the greatest love of all. This verse is repeating the message in the previous chapter (Isaiah 30:15). Return and find God to be your rest and your salvation.

When we return to God we find our values were upside down. We detest the things we once sought after and love that which we despised. *⁷ For in that day everyone shall cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which your hands have sinfully made for you.* Isaiah 31:7 Real help is found in returning to God to place our trust and reliance upon Him. He is the only place of true rest (Matthew 11:28). Quietly listening to His reassuring voice can become our strength.

Commented [PW15]: Matthew 26:53 (ESV)

⁵³ Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?

Commented [PW16]: Jeremiah 20:11 (ESV)

¹¹ But the LORD is with me as a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble; they will not overcome me. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten.

Commented [PW17]: Deuteronomy 32:11 (ESV)

¹¹ Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions,

Commented [PW18]: Psalm 91:4 (ESV)

⁴ He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

Commented [PW19]: Exodus 12:13 (ESV)

¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

Commented [PW20]: Luke 4:25-27 (ESV)

²⁵ But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land,

²⁶ and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.

²⁷ And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

Commented [PW21]: Isaiah 30:15 (ESV)

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,

Commented [PW22]: Matthew 11:28 (ESV)

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

This is a verse about the day in which the Jews would finally turn. As yet they were unwilling. The revival after the Assyrian army was slain was short-lived. The next king would dive headlong into idolatry (2 Kings 21:1-2). But those who would turn to the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to the One who would defeat our ultimate enemy, they would forsake all idols, all things that come between God and us.

⁸ *"And the Assyrian shall fall by a sword, not of man; and a sword, not of man, shall devour him; and he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be put to forced labor.* Isaiah 31:8 The angel of the Lord will wield the sword (2 Kings 19:35) and the Babylonian, Scythian, Chaldean, Medes, and Persian armies fulfilled the Word of God in this verse.

⁹ *His rock shall pass away in terror, and his officers desert the standard in panic," declares the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.* Isaiah 31:9 Isaiah again uses the language of Deuteronomy 32. In that chapter, verse 31 tells us ³¹*For their rock is not as our Rock; our enemies are by themselves.* There is no god with them. The gods they trust in aren't real. The previous chapter in Isaiah reminded the people of Judah that their Rock is the LORD (Isaiah 30:29).

Isaiah 30:33 told us a burning place was prepared for Israel's enemies and the breath of the Lord would kindle it. Once again I believe we can see the double meaning. The Assyrians would flee in a panic when the sword of the Lord slew 185,000 of them. But Assyria as an enemy bent on destroying God's heritage represents another power. It's the power that would annihilate the lineage of David so the Messiah would not come. It's the power that slew the children of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16). The rock of this world will pass away in terror. His officers (fallen angels) will desert their standard in panic, for the Lake of Fire is prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

¹ *Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in justice.* Isaiah 32:1 If we weren't sure that the previous chapter (31) pointed to the coming of Jesus, it becomes more clear when we see that Isaiah has moved on to the kingdom of the Messiah. The defeat of evil ushers in the reign of the Messiah. It's the pattern we have already seen, an intermediate partial fulfillment or shadow of what was to come, the coming of the Messiah and a spiritual fulfillment, and the total fulfillment in the Millennial Kingdom. The only righteous king is Jesus. The only princes that rule with total justice will be ruling under the King of Righteousness. If you don't get justice here, don't be surprised. No government of man can guarantee justice.

Some theologians are opposed to the idea of multiple fulfillments. The majority today believe prophecies were for the time in which they were written and not meant to be understood as Messianic. This goes against New Testament Scripture and Jesus' words (Luke 24:44). Others try to divide prophecies up as only for then or only for the future.

Commented [PW23]: 2 Kings 21:1-2 (ESV)

¹ Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah.

² And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel.

Commented [PW24]: 2 Kings 19:35 (ESV)

³⁵ And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.

Commented [PW25]: Isaiah 30:29 (ESV)

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.

Commented [PW26]: Isaiah 30:33 (ESV)

³³ For a burning place has long been prepared; indeed, for the king it is made ready, its pyre made deep and wide, with fire and wood in abundance; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of sulfur, kindles it.

Commented [PW27]: Matthew 2:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.

Commented [PW28]: Matthew 25:41 (ESV)

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'

Commented [PW29]: Luke 24:44 (ESV)

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

My conviction is that prophecies of the Messiah are ultimately about the first coming or Messianic reign but may be foreshadowed in part by immediate events. We have seen this already in a number of prophecies by Isaiah.

² Each will be like a hiding place from the wind, a shelter from the storm, like streams of water in a dry place, like the shade of a great rock in a weary land. Isaiah 32:2 What a relief it will be to know we can count on justice to always prevail in the day Jesus reigns on the earth. All leaders will be godly and appointed by Jesus. Though the freewill of man will still cause pain and loss, those living in that day can run to a godly ruler and know justice will prevail.

³ Then the eyes of those who see will not be closed, and the ears of those who hear will give attention. Isaiah 32:3 Though everyone will have an intellectual knowledge of God, the heart of man must still surrender to Him to have a relationship of submission to Him.

⁴ The heart of the hasty will understand and know, and the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak distinctly. Isaiah 32:4 In a previous chapter we saw those who trusted in the cornerstone would not be in haste (Isaiah 28:16). Many in the Millennial Kingdom will trust the Cornerstone. Those who have been given spiritual sight and hearing will continue to grow and not backslide, as opposed to those who did not want to see or hear and remained blind and deaf the things of God (Isaiah 30:10). And those who once had trouble sharing the Gospel and testimonies of what God had done in their life will become eloquent witnesses.

⁵ The fool will no more be called noble, nor the scoundrel said to be honorable. Isaiah 32:5 When the fool is exalted and scoundrel is honored, society is in trouble. We have plenty of that, but so does every culture that turns from God. Imagine the day when that will no longer be a problem and every leader will be righteous and just.

⁶ For the fool speaks folly, and his heart is busy with iniquity, to practice ungodliness, to utter error concerning the LORD, to leave the craving of the hungry unsatisfied, and to deprive the thirsty of drink. ⁷ As for the scoundrel—his devices are evil; he plans wicked schemes to ruin the poor with lying words, even when the plea of the needy is right. Isaiah 32:6-7 God is reminding them of what is wrong with their current social order, but He is also directing them to look to a future day when God will make sure that justice is served and the needs of all are met.

⁸ But he who is noble plans noble things, and on noble things he stands. Isaiah 32:8 His reign is coming. It is here now in the hearts of those who are surrendered to Him (Luke 17:21). This is God's noble plan. The Millennial Kingdom will be the final example for man to realize how much we need the Lord. The first couple had all they needed in the Garden of Eden but they still rebelled (Genesis 3:6). Jesus' reign on earth will show man a similar lesson.

Commented [PW30]: Isaiah 28:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.'

Commented [PW31]: Isaiah 30:10 (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,

Commented [PW32]: Luke 17:21 (ESV)

²¹ nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

Commented [PW33]: Genesis 3:6 (ESV)

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

The history of man has shown us man's governments of every sort fail eventually because the heart of man is evil (Jeremiah 17:9). The Millennial Kingdom will show us all that even if Christ reigns, and even if we are aware of the devil's schemes, many will still choose to rebel against God (Revelation 20:7-8). Nevertheless, it is God's noble plan that will prevail. How noble of God to go to such great lengths to show us how much we need Him and the greatness of His love for us.

Judah would not hear the message of grace and turn to God. Will we? They would once again face a siege that would result in captivity. I close with two quotes from Oswald Chambers' devotional. "What hinders me from hearing is that I'm taken up with other things." "The way in which I show God that I neither love nor respect Him is by the obtuseness of my heart and mind toward what He says."¹ May the Lord help us to hear and receive God's Word in our mind and heart!

Questions

- 1 What problem is God addressing?
- 2 How did David's life demonstrate this?
- 3 What is more powerful, flesh or spirit?
- 4 How do we know verse 4 is Messianic?
- 5 How was it fulfilled?
- 6 What is the word "spare" in verse 5?
- 7 How does verses 6 and 7 go together?
- 8 Which "rock" is reliable?
- 9 Are you looking forward to 30:1-4?
- 10 What is wrong with our present culture? How will it change?

Commented [PW34]: Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV)

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Commented [PW35]: Revelation 20:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison
⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.

Commented [PW36]: Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, February 13

Joshua 5:13-15 (ESV)

¹³ When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us, or for our adversaries?”

¹⁴ And he said, “No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, “What does my lord say to his servant?”

¹⁵ And the commander of the LORD’s army said to Joshua, “Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.

Exodus 3:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”

⁶ And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Mark 15:29-32 (ESV)

²⁹ And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days,

³⁰ save yourself, and come down from the cross!”

³¹ So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself.

³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.