

# Isaiah

## Judgment and Redemption

Isaiah 30:18

March 14, 2020

### Today

We begin today with a series of warnings that alternate with promises of salvation – first on the list is Israel:

#### Woe to you Ephraim

- Proud drunks
- A fading flower
- Like a ripe fig that is devoured

**Isaiah 28:5-6** - In that day the LORD Almighty will be a glorious crown, a beautiful wreath for the remnant of his people. <sup>6</sup> He will be a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, a source of strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.

- Priests and Prophets err in vision and stumble in judgment because they are drunk.
- God told them, “this is a place of rest”, but they would not listen.
- **Isaiah 28:14-18** - Therefore hear the word of the LORD, you scoffers who rule this people in Jerusalem. <sup>15</sup> You boast, “We have entered into a covenant with death, with the grave we have made an agreement. When an overwhelming scourge sweeps by, it cannot touch us, for we have made a **lie our refuge** and **falsehood our hiding place.**” <sup>16</sup> So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: **“See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed.**” <sup>17</sup> I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place. <sup>18</sup> Your covenant with death will be annulled; your agreement with the grave will not stand. When the overwhelming scourge sweeps by, you will be beaten down by it.

Like ropes of sand – if you choose to hang on to lies and falsehoods, you will be washed away.

#### Woe to you Ariel {City of God or Jerusalem}

- **Isaiah 29:13-15** - The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men. <sup>14</sup> Therefore once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish.”

**Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the LORD, who do their work in darkness and think, “Who sees us? Who will know?”**

**Woe to you who do not seek my counsel, but place your trust in Egypt – placing your trust in human abilities instead of the power of God to save:**

- **Isaiah 30:3** - But Pharaoh's protection will be to your shame, Egypt's shade will bring you disgrace.
- **Isaiah 30:8-11** - Go now, write it on a tablet for them, inscribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness. <sup>9</sup> These are rebellious people, deceitful children, children unwilling to listen to the LORD's instruction. <sup>10</sup> They say to the seers, “See no more visions!” and to the prophets, “Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions. <sup>11</sup> Leave this way, get off this path, and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!”

**Isaiah 30:18** - Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!

#### Woe to you, destroyer {likely Assyria}

- **Isaiah 31:8-9** - Assyria will fall by a sword that is not of man; a sword, not of mortals, will devour them. They will flee before the sword and their young men will be put to forced labor. <sup>9</sup> Their stronghold will fall because of terror; at sight of the battle standard their commanders will panic,” declares the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, whose furnace is in Jerusalem.
  - You destroy people who do not try to destroy you.
  - You deal treacherously with people you are not treacherous with you

**Isaiah 33:2** - O LORD, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress.

Isaiah 33:10 -11 - "Now will I arise," says the LORD. "Now will I be exalted; now will I be lifted up. <sup>11</sup> You conceive chaff; you give birth to straw; your breath is a fire that consumes you.

**The Sinners of Zion are terrified – fear has seized the hypocrites - who can dwell in the consuming fire?**

- The person who walks and talks with righteousness.
- The person who despises gain by oppressing other people.
- The person who refuses to take a bribe.
- The person who does not listen to talk to bloodshed.
- The person who does not look at evil.

Isaiah 33:16-17 - This is the man who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. His bread will be supplied, and water will not fail him. <sup>17</sup> Your eyes will see the king in his beauty and view a land that stretches afar.

**In chapter 34 God turns his attention back to the nations – judgment is on a global scale.**

**In chapter 35 the subject takes another turn, bringing a vision of the Joy of Salvation:**

Isaiah 35:3-10 - Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; <sup>4</sup> say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." <sup>5</sup> Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. <sup>6</sup> Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. <sup>7</sup> The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow. <sup>8</sup> And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. <sup>9</sup> No lion will be there, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, <sup>10</sup> and the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

### **Chapters 36-39 - Historical Section – 701 BC**

In the 14<sup>th</sup> year of Hezekiah, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, invaded Judah. Sennacherib sent his assistant, The Rabshakeh to Jerusalem with a message. The Rabshakeh + 185,000 men surrounded Jerusalem. Hezekiah's advisors, Eliakim, Shebna and Joah, went out to meet him:

**Rabshakeh {in Hebrew}:** Say to Hezekiah... this is what the great king of Assyria says: Why are you so confident? You say you have military strength, but that is just a bunch of hot air. Who are you counting on to save you from me? If you're relying on Egypt, you're placing your trust in a reed that breaks when you lean on it. If you're relying on the Lord your God, well, haven't you torn down all the high places? Now then, let's make a deal..... I will give you 2000 horses if you can find enough men to ride them! How do you think you are going to withstand even one of my master's servants?

**Eliakim, Shebna and Joah:** Would you mind speaking to us in Aramaic instead of Hebrew? The people on the wall can understand what you are saying.

**Rabshakeh:** I will not! My master did not send me just to talk to you, but to all the people who are going to suffer with you!

**Then he stood and cried in a loud voice for all to hear:** Don't let Hezekiah deceive you! He can't deliver you! Don't let him persuade you to trust God either when he says, 'The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.' Don't listen to him!! Listen to what the king of Assyria says instead: Make peace with me. Then every one of you will eat from his own vine and fig tree and drink water from his own cistern, until I come and take you to a land like your own-- a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards. Hezekiah misleads you when he says the Lord will deliver you. Has the god of any nation been able to deliver his people from the king of Assyria? No! Not a single god has been able to save his land from me! How then can the LORD deliver Jerusalem from my hand?" **{Isaiah 36:14-20}**

Silence – the people standing on the walls said nothing! The advisor's reported back to Hezekiah.....

**Hezekiah tore his clothes and put ashes on his head as a sign of deep anguish. He went to the Temple and sent Isaiah a message:** This is a day of deep distress! Perhaps the Lord your God will hear the words of The Rabshakeh, who has come to ridicule the living God, and will rebuke him for his words. Please pray that a remnant will survive!

**Isaiah:** Go tell the king, don't be afraid because of the words you have heard. The king of Assyria will hear a rumor and return to his own land and he will die by the sword in his own land.

**As Sennacherib advanced on Jerusalem, a rumor began to spread that Tirhakah, the Cushite king of Egypt, was marching out to fight against Assyria. Before Sennacherib moved out to meet the new threat, he sent another message to Hezekiah:** Do not let the god you depend on deceive you when he says, 'Jerusalem will not be handed over to the king of Assyria.' You know what I have done to all the other countries.... I've destroyed them completely! Who's going to deliver you? **{Isaiah 37:10-11}**

**When Hezekiah read the letter, he took it to the Temple and spread it out before the Lord:** Almighty God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Give Your full attention and listen to all the words Sennacherib has sent to insult You. It is true, O LORD, that Assyria has laid waste to many nations.... O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God. **{Isaiah 37:16-20}**

**Isaiah sent word to Hezekiah:** This is the word of the Lord - Because you have prayed to me regarding Sennacherib, these are the words I have spoken against him... The daughters of Jerusalem will laugh at you as you flee! Whom do you think you have insulted and blasphemed and lifted up eyes full of pride? The Holy One of Israel! You even send messengers to insult me! You have said, "With my chariots I have ascended even to the heights of Lebanon and I have cut down its tallest Cedars. I have dug wells in foreign countries and drunk the water. With my feet I have dried up the streams of Egypt!" Listen! I am the One who gave you your power and the ability to conquer nations and turn cities into piles of rubble. Their inhabitants may be powerless BUT I know where you live. I know when you come in and when you go out and how you rage against me. Your disrespect has reached my ears and now I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will make you return by the way you came.

Hezekiah here is a sign: this year and next year you will eat what grows wild. In the third year you will sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit. Once again, a remnant of the house of Judah will take root. Out of Jerusalem will come a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. Concerning the king of Assyria: He will not enter Jerusalem. He won't shoot an arrow at it or build siege ramps against it. He'll go home by the same road by which he arrived - I repeat, he will NOT enter Jerusalem, declares the LORD. I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant! **{Isaiah 37:21-35}**

The next morning some men went into the camp of the Assyrians who were camped outside Jerusalem and found all 185,000 soldiers dead.

Sennacherib went home. In **681 BC**, while worshipping in the temple of his god, 2 of his sons assassinated him then fled. His son Esarhaddon became king.

During this same time Hezekiah became seriously ill and was near death. Isaiah came to him and told him that he needed to get his affairs in order because The Lord said he was going to die, then he left.

Heartbroken, Hezekiah turned to the wall and reminded God of all the good things he had done as king.

Isaiah returned with a message that Hezekiah's life had been extended 15 years {he reigned a total of 29 years} and Jerusalem would be delivered from the Assyrians. To prove the words true, God caused the sun to move backward 10 degrees on the sundial.

Sometime later the king of Babylon {which was still an insignificant kingdom} heard of the miraculous healing of Hezekiah. He sent ambassadors to Jerusalem to learn the story. This was a perfect time for Hezekiah to glory in the Lord and point these men to the wonders and awesomeness of God..... Instead, he showed them the treasures of the land: the gold, silver, spices, etc.... everything in his treasury. There was nothing he did not show them!

**Isaiah:** Who were those men and where did they come from?

**Hezekiah:** They came from Babylon.

**Isaiah:** What did you show them?

**Hezekiah:** Everything. There is nothing I didn't show them.

**Isaiah:** This is what the Lord says, "A day is coming when everything in your house will be carried to Babylon. Nothing will be left. Some of your descendants will be taken as captive and will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon."

**Hezekiah:** The word of the LORD is good..... but he thought, "Great! There will be peace and security in my lifetime."

Hezekiah's relief that he would die in peace and security does not speak well of him. Even a king who "did right in the eyes of the Lord" can be selfish and shortsighted. Keep your eyes on Jesus!

## **Take Aways**

Hezekiah invited God into the situation. I believe that God is a gentleman and if we choose to fight our own battles, He'll let us do just that. But He'd really rather we invite Him in to fight for us. Invite God in!!

Fear is a powerful emotion = fight or flight.

The USA and much of the world was in the midst of a crippling depression when FDR became president. In his 1<sup>st</sup> Inaugural Address {March 1933}, he said: So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.

He was challenging the people and leadership of the USA not to be crippled into inaction by fear, but to fight and move forward.

Many years earlier, Hezekiah's father, Ahaz, had chosen not to trust God when he was afraid and saw no way out of the impending war with Israel and Syria. He chose an alliance with Assyria instead and that single act opened his country up to years of oppression and invasion. Now Hezekiah found himself in a similar situation. He was facing an army he could not defeat. He could not fight and he could not run..... He was out of options. He would lose and his people would suffer and die.

Often, we see only 2 options when faced with a crisis = fight or flight, but for the Christian there is ALWAYS a 3<sup>rd</sup> option = Trust God and let Him work it out.

- **Deuteronomy 1:29-30** - Then I said to you, 'do not be terrified, or afraid of them. <sup>30</sup> 'The LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes,
- **Psalm 20:7** - Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.
- **Psalm 118:6** - The LORD *is* on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?
- **1 John 4:18** - There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear....
- **Philippians 4:6-8** - Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; <sup>7</sup> and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy -- meditate on these things.

**Isaiah 25:9** - In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."