

Isaiah Chapters 30-31 Summary - John Karmelich

Title: The danger of reverting to our pre-Christian ways!

In short, these two chapters are about Israelites in the Southern Kingdom of Judah (Israel was split into two kingdoms at that time) looking to Egypt for help against the threat of the growing Assyrian Empire (occurred about 700BC). Remember God lead Israelites out of Egypt about 800 years earlier! Now the Egyptian leaders must be thinking, Jewish representatives were coming here with gifts to ask us to help them! The Israelites were "betting on the wrong horse" and turning their back on God. Christians know we're to make the best decisions we can after praying for guidance and act as if God won't do anything! Why condemn Israel for turning to Egypt as both nations face the danger of the Assyrian Empire? For those who don't know, Assyria was an empire based out of what's Iraq today! Why condemn Israel for doing this? Further, what does it have to do with us? Glad you asked!

To state the obvious, there's nothing wrong when asking for help when needed. The problem was they turned their back on God to go for help! The point for you and me is not about ancient history. It's the danger of turning on back on God for guidance. Let's be honest, it is easy to slip back into our old ways of living as we were comfortable "living in slavery to sin". One of the things that always fascinated me about the Israelites after they escaped slavery, is they commented on missing Egyptian food! (Numbers 11:5.) The point is there's a comfort level to trusting in things other than God and we're willing to give up our freedom for that slavery! God says to us in effect, "Freedom to trust in Me is the best way for us to live versus turning back to our ways!" I realize that sounds like the obvious to us Christians, but we can easily slip back into old habits ESPECIALLY when things get tough, and we're desperate for relief from whatever we're dealing with at that moment. God's saying to us, "Trust Me, I'll guide you through this difficulty, but don't lose faith in My ability to lead you down the path I desire for My glory!" Now that the danger of turning from God is running through our heads, let me discuss this text specifically. I ask that you don't focus on the historical aspects but the danger of turning from a relationship with God as the ultimate solution to our problems!

First, Isaiah is starting a new "rant" in this chapter. He's saying to his fellow Israelites, you're ignoring God's will by wanting to go to Egypt for help against the problem of the moment. As I said, nothing is wrong with asking for help, the problem is not checking in with God first! Isaiah is complaining about the Israelites taking valuables to Egypt on the backs of mules and camels begging for help! He's telling them in effect what you're doing is a waste of resources and time! Yes, the Israelites were desperate for someone or something to help them. As I preach, pray for His will and make the best decisions one can after that. If you don't know Middle East History (it's ok!) the Egyptians lost to both the Assyrians and the Babylonians a century later! In effect that was the end of a long time of Egyptian dominance in the Middle East. Of course, the Israelites didn't know this, but still turning their collective backs on God to look elsewhere is always the wrong thing to do first!

Isaiah is piling it on by the middle of the chapter: I should point out other God ordained prophets lived at that time! The prophets were ignored as the Israelites in the Southern Kingdom effectively said, "We made a decision to ask Egypt for help and don't care what God thinks!" Given Israel's history with that nation, you'd think they pray their way through this! It shows how stubborn we easily get when we are desperate! In effect, Verse 17's a rough quote of Deuteronomy 28:7 that says: When we ignore God we will run away even when being outnumbered out of fear. Fear causes us to make horrible decisions and

that made the Israelites suffer. Despite Isaiah's pleas that God wants to help, fear of danger scared them to not do what God called them to do!

Isaiah (through God) tries going positive in Verse 18: Isaiah reminds them that God will keep promises (unconditional) He made to that nation! They could benefit sooner if they trust Him! The good news is an Israelite king asked Isaiah for help (some chapters from now)! The Israelite army feared they will be wiped out. The reason I'm sharing all this is all of us have fears! God may want us to seek help, but to deal with any significant issue ALWAYS begins with honestly seeking Him first, turning from sin, and living as He desires! Then and only then will God guide us for His glory! In effect, the rest of Chapter 30 is saying just that trust Him and life will be better! It's a mixture of God reminding us of His eternal promises appealing to our free will to choose God to see us through tough situations!

By the end of Chapter 30 Isaiah is stating how the Assyrian Empire will be wiped out (the Babylonians destroyed them and in effect took over and expanded their empire). Realize the Assyrians never fired a single arrow into Jerusalem. My point is because the Israelites did let go of their fears and trust God, it became a positive situation. Obviously, I don't know what everyone's going through who reads this. It's always a matter that God DESIRES to use our lives for His glory if we trust Him to do His will! That's the main lesson of these two chapters. Speaking of which, I have one more chapter to summarize:

Chapter 31 is still about warning the Israelites not to go to Egypt. As my regulars know, all the chapter numbers weren't added until roughly the time of the printing press! For the Israelites it was easy to see Egypt and its historically powerful army and think they could help us! Meanwhile we can't see God or know what He will do! The Israelites believed in His existence but were ignoring Him. Israel knew of the large army Egypt had, so why not bribe them into helping us? By Verse 3, Isaiah is reminding them that the Egyptians are not God and He always works to protect His people. Chapter 31 is short, and it's in effect making the same point: "Why are you trusting in strangers for help, when I'm (God) willing to step in and help?"

OK John, it's easy to study history and see what people should have done. You don't know the problem that I'm dealing with! Why don't you send me money and help me? (I never ask for money nor is this a financial ministry, so please don't go there!) The only thing I know for sure is, "There is a God and I'm not Him!" I also know for sure God wants to guide us through whatever we're dealing with. I realize I may not like His solution, or He may be quiet through what I'm dealing with, but I know for sure living as He desires is the best way to live and He WILL guide us through whatever we're dealing with at this moment! Remember why we're saved, to use our lives as a witness for Him! To ignore His power that wants to work through us and turn to others for help FIRST will never work! We become a bad witness for Jesus when "our lives are on the line" and not trusting God. Of course, I realize there are situations where a person or group can help us! I'm just saying God should be the FIRST option for help! That's what Isaiah is preaching here!

Bottom line, never let fear control our decisions! Life gets hard for all people at times! Asking God to help should always be step one. I've been amazed in my life how much better life is when I let go of all worry, pray my way through a situation and ask for His guidance. I realize often we just have to make decisions based on our situations after we pray our way through it. I just know after living a long time, God wants to guide me to do His will. There may be short term suffering, but no matter what I want to use my life for His glory and let His will be done through whatever we're dealing with at the moment!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on one of the links below. It is still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for

you reading this. The rest of this email is links to questions you may have. If you're new here, realize you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again for reading this!

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That's it. Hope you enjoy it. Don't forget to fire up a prayer prior to your reading.