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Sermon Notes

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God Saves His Stubborn Children from Plans of Self-Salvation

Isaiah 30:1-33

Context: The southern Kingdom of Judah, under the leadership of King Hezekiah and his scheming counselors, were faced with the invasion of the mighty Assyrian Empire under Sennacherib. This terrifying foe, with its overwhelming military power and undefeated military record, threatened Judah's very existence. The people of Judah were faced with four options: 1) they could submit to the Assyrians without a fight and suffer the consequences for the rebellion they had already put up against Sennacherib (this would mean death for many, heavy taxation, the execution of all soldiers, the raping of women, and future slavery under a foreign tyrant; 2) they could resist the Assyrians on the battlefield and then in the walled fortress of Jerusalem (this would mean death for most of their soldiers and starvation for many of their citizens within the walls... but it might result in Assyria growing weary and retreating from the walls of Jerusalem); 3) they could make an alliance with another Gentile nation—Egypt was the most likely one—who might be able to intervene and protect them from the Assyrians; 4) they could repent of their sins against the Holy One of Israel, humble themselves under His mighty hand and seek a miraculous deliverance from the Lord.

Judah's choice is very much like the ones we face every day, even in the 21st century... in fact, the same questions have faced every generation of believers. Can we control our circumstances by making our own plans for self-salvation? Or can we submit to God in repentance and trust in His power to save us from all our foes.

God's counsel, right in the middle of this chapter, has never changed:

Isaiah 30:15 This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength

This promise of salvation is based on what He says in verse 18:

Isaiah 30:18 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!

This chapter is filled with ancient words... words that were born in a dire circumstance that arose over twenty-seven centuries ago—circumstances that in most ways have NOTHING WHATSOEVER to do with our lives—these ancient words spoken to address ancient circumstances turn out to be astonishingly relevant to us today... relevant to teach us how an unchanging God commands us to seek eternal salvation in the midst of our own daily trials

To learn to live by repentance and rest, quietness and trust in Him... to learn to face all the small and great trials of our lives by faith in a God who longs to be gracious to us and who rises to show us compassion... to learn to WAIT FOR HIM while you suffer... because an enemy is coming far more powerful than the Assyrian army... that enemy is DEATH, and the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law... law exposes our sin, and the wages of sin is death

And apart from the same God who first spoke these timeless words twenty-seven centuries ago, there is NO DELIVERANCE from death

This ancient chapter will speak to us today, right now, by the power of the Holy Spirit

It will tell us to seek salvation in Jesus Christ alone, and to learn to live out daily deliverances from smaller trials by the same faith that will deliver us from our final enemy, death!!

I. Woe to Those Who Make Plans to Save Themselves (vs. 1-7)

Isaiah 30:1-7 "Woe to the obstinate children," declares the LORD, "to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin; ² who go down to Egypt without consulting me; who look for help to Pharaoh's protection, to Egypt's shade for refuge. ³ But Pharaoh's protection will be to your shame, Egypt's shade will bring you disgrace. ⁴ Though they have officials in Zoan and their envoys have arrived in Hanes, ⁵ everyone will be put to shame because of a people useless to them, who bring neither help nor advantage, but only shame and disgrace." ⁶ An oracle concerning the animals of the Negev: Through a land of hardship and distress, of lions and lionesses, of adders and darting snakes, the envoys carry their riches on donkeys' backs, their treasures on the humps of camels, to that unprofitable nation, ⁷ to Egypt, whose help is utterly useless. Therefore I call her Rahab the Do-Nothing.

A. God Speaks WOE to Stubbornly Rebellious Children

Isaiah 30:1 "Woe to the obstinate children," declares the LORD, "to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin

1. "Woe" = a word of prophetic warning, that certain judgment is coming because of a specific pattern of sin
2. God speaks this word of woe through Isaiah the prophet to the southern Kingdom of Judah... the Jews... the descendents of Abraham... His chosen people
3. He calls them His "obstinate children"...

- a. His children by adoption... God adopted the nation of Israel and called them His “firstborn son” to Pharaoh, King of Egypt, when He spoke through Moses saying “Let my people go!!”

Exodus 4:22-23 Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, ²³ and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.'

- b. When God brought the Jews out of Egypt, He says He carried them:

Deuteronomy 1:31 There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place."

- c. At the beginning of this book, God lamented aloud for the rebellion of his children

Isaiah 1:2 Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me."

- d. Here in this chapter, God is again lamenting the stubborn rebellion of His children by adoption... they REFUSE to LISTEN to His word!!! They are determined to go their own way
- e. The Hebrew word translated “obstinate” is a strong one... some translate it by STUBBORN... it refers to the hardness of their hearts in doing something that God has specifically warned them against

B. Their Sin: Making, Trusting in, and Acting on Plans That Don't Come From God

Isaiah 30:1 ¶ "Woe to the obstinate children," declares the LORD, "to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit"

- 1. Later in this chapter, God will tell them that He has the power to guide them step by step...

Isaiah 30:21 Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

- 2. God was clearly willing to guide Hezekiah and the Jewish people by means of His word, His prophets... but they were stubbornly unwilling to listen
- 3. Earlier in Isaiah, when threatened by the alliance between Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel in the days of King Ahaz, they sought to make an alliance with Assyria to deliver them... though God warned them not to do it, they did it anyway
- 4. That was like a mouse threatened by a rat asking a huge cat for help... the cat (Assyria) was delighted to devour them both

5. Now that Assyria has come to threaten them, it seems they're going to make the same mistake again... to form a political alliance to deliver them—this time with Egypt!!

Isaiah 30:2 who go down to Egypt without consulting me; who look for help to Pharaoh's protection, to Egypt's shade for refuge.

6. This is their stubborn way... to see a danger coming and to seek a refuge of their own making

C. Heaping Sin Upon Sin

1. God says that in doing this, the people are heaping one sin on top of another
2. It was their sins that brought the threatened invasion on to begin with... their idolatries, their false worship, their injustice to the poor and needy, their sexual immorality, their drunkenness, their love of luxury
3. God responds by threatening an invasion from a powerful Gentile nation... and instead of falling on their faces in repentance and trust, they send emissaries down to Egypt to make an alliance "BUT NOT BY MY SPIRIT"
4. God did not command them to do it... they were acting on their own
5. This is the essence of our problem as well!! We do whatever seems right in our own eyes, and forget to inquire of the Lord... we make plans that are not of His Spirit, and carry them out, thinking they will deliver us from the trouble we are facing

D. Why Go Back to EGYPT????

1. The symbolism of Israel seeking help from the nation that formerly ENSLAVED them is devastating!!!
2. God rescued them from 400 years of bondage in Egypt and brought them out of that country by signs and wonders, destroying Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea
3. Why in the world would they want to go backwards, seeking military help from the very nation that God powerfully defeated??
4. In Deuteronomy 17, God made it plain how HATEFUL it was to Him for any Jewish king to ever go back to Egypt again for help:

Deuteronomy 17:16 The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the LORD has told you, "You are not to go back that way again."

- 5.

E. Egypt Will Not Help Them!!!

Isaiah 30:3 But Pharaoh's protection will be to your shame, Egypt's shade will bring you disgrace.

1. Pharaoh cannot protect them
2. Actually, Egypt's so-called help will only bring the Jews disgrace

Isaiah 30:4-5 Though they have officials in Zoan and their envoys have arrived in Hanes, ⁵ everyone will be put to shame because of a people useless to them, who bring neither help nor advantage, but only shame and disgrace."

F. Isaiah's Humorous Look at the Envoys Travelling to Egypt

Isaiah 30:6-7 An oracle concerning the animals of the Negev: Through a land of hardship and distress, of lions and lionesses, of adders and darting snakes, the envoys carry their riches on donkeys' backs, their treasures on the humps of camels, to that unprofitable nation, ⁷ to Egypt, whose help is utterly useless. Therefore I call her Rahab the Do-Nothing.

1. The oracle is addressed to the ANIMALS OF THE NEGEV... the desert between Judah and Egypt
2. We are brought to watch these beasts of burden—these donkeys and camels—travelling through a dangerous desert land
3. They are heavily laden with gold and silver, led by envoys—messengers—from the officials of Judah to give to Pharaoh, King of Egypt
4. The journey is a dangerous one, a land of hardship and distress, of lions and lionesses, of adders and even “dragons”—so both real and imaginary threats
5. But the Jewish leaders are very willing to run these risks if they can secure the help of Egypt against Assyria
6. BUT Egypt is UNPROFITABLE... her help is UTTERLY USELESS
7. So the Lord calls her “Rahab the Do Nothing”!!
8. “Rahab” is an ancient name for a powerful beast, threatening and imposing, but in this case, immobile... like some huge animal basking in the sun and unwilling to move

G. Summary: God speaks a word of WOE to Judah and her leaders who make a plan to form an alliance with Egypt, something God did not command; they are facing a real threat in Assyria, but they instead are heaping sin upon sin by following their own remedy

II. Woe to Those Who Want God's Prophets to Speak Pleasant Lies (vs. 8-17)

A. Isaiah Commanded to Write the Prophecy Down

Isaiah 30:8 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.

1. This is the lasting legacy of the prophets... their WRITTEN WORDS
2. God wanted to speak not only to that one generation, but to every generation that followed
3. So He commanded Isaiah to write the prophecy down
4. BUT the key issue is not what form the prophetic word comes to us, but what we do when we hear it!!
5. In this section, God exposes the root problem with the Jews of Judah: they refuse to LISTEN to God's word spoken through the true prophets

B. Their Hardness of Heart Exposed

Isaiah 30:9 These are rebellious people, deceitful children, children unwilling to listen to the LORD's instruction.

1. Isaiah stood in a long line of servants of God, the prophets, who spoke to them in God's name
2. In every generation, the prophetic word stood over them to guide them, command them, correct them, rebuke them, give them hope
3. But consistently these people stopped up their spiritual ears and made their necks like iron... they were stiff-necked, unyielding to the word of the Lord
4. BUT that doesn't mean they didn't want ANY preaching at all, or any prophecies at all

C. "Tickle Our Ears; Don't Convict Our Hearts"

Isaiah 30:10-11 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. ¹¹ Leave this way, get off this path, and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!"

1. A powerful exposition of the essence of their rebellion against the Lord

2. They wanted only HAPPY things!! They wanted to hear good things, things that made them feel good about their lives
3. Look at what they say to the prophets”
 - a. SEE NO MORE VISIONS!! [Visions of the Holy One of Israel, high and lifted up... with powerful angels crying out “Holy, holy, holy!!!”]
 - b. GIVE US NO MORE VISIONS OF WHAT IS RIGHT [they don’t want to hear the truth...]
 - c. TELL US PLEASANT THINGS!!! [We want to hear happy stories and funny tales, and promises of only good things in the future]
 - d. PROPHECY ILLUSIONS [Tell me lies... just as long as they’re happy lies]
4. Clear warning: LEAVE THIS WAY, GET OFF THIS PATH... AND STOP CONFRONTING US WITH THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL!!!!

D. A True History of the Jews Then and of People in Every Generation

1. In every generation, God sent His people prophets who would tell them the truth about their sins, and God’s judgments, and the terrible things that would happen in the future if they persisted in rebellion
2. In every generation, the people stopped up their ears and refused to listen, and shot the messenger instead
3. Think of what Stephen said right before they did it to him:

Acts 7:51-52 "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! ⁵² Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute?"

4. Think of these passages:
 - a. Evil King Ahab, planning a military expedition against Ramoth Gilead, has surrounded himself with false prophets who are telling him what he wants to hear

1 Kings 22:7-8 But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there not a prophet of the LORD here whom we can inquire of?" ⁸ The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man through whom we can inquire of the LORD, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah."

- b. In Jeremiah’s day:

Jeremiah 6:13-14 prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. ¹⁴ They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace.

But when Jeremiah tried to warn the King and the people about the coming exile to Babylon, they put him in jail

Jeremiah 37:15-16 They were angry with Jeremiah and had him beaten and imprisoned in the house of Jonathan the secretary, which they had made into a prison. ¹⁶ ¶ Jeremiah was put into a vaulted cell in a dungeon, where he remained a long time.

c. Paul's warning

2 Timothy 4:3-4 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴ They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

5. Fundamental test of a true teacher of the word of God: does He tickle the ears or proclaim the truth, even if it's unpopular??
 - a. Every pastor faces the pressure to shape the truth according to the tastes of his audience
 - b. Every proclaimer of God's word has to make a fundamental decision:

Galatians 1:10 Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Flannery O'Connor: "The truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it."
[Quoted in Ray Ortlund's Commentary]

Or, as the Apostle Paul put it:

Galatians 4:16 Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

6. This is precisely why Jesus wept and lamented over Jerusalem... it was the place where prophets went to die:

Matthew 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.

7. What "Pleasant Things" do people want to hear?
 - a. "I'm Okay, You're Okay, the Future is Bright, God is Pleased with Us, Everything is Just How It Should Be"

- b. Having established that, then preach funny or entertaining stories to take up the time... fill their ears with flattery and divert their minds with AMUSEMENTS
- c. This will make them VERY POPULAR with their hearers... but it is the essence of being a false prophet:

Luke 6:26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.

- d. Fundamentally this was the issue: "STOP CONFRONTING US WITH THE HOLY ONE of ISRAEL!!!"

E. The Future for That is Dark Indeed: Judgment Must Follow

Isaiah 30:12-14 Therefore, this is what the Holy One of Israel says: "Because you have rejected this message, relied on oppression and depended on deceit, ¹³ this sin will become for you like a high wall, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly, in an instant. ¹⁴ It will break in pieces like pottery, shattered so mercilessly that among its pieces not a fragment will be found for taking coals from a hearth or scooping water out of a cistern."

1. The people's desire to hear pleasant things was their defense against a scary future
2. Assyria was coming... they needed a defense...
3. They were building a wall to protect themselves... but any skilled contractor could see the future in a high wall that is cracked and bulging... it will collapse IN AN INSTANT and kill everyone taking refuge under its shadow

Illus. Cinder-block walls in Haiti after the earthquake, built hastily without re-bar and good masonry techniques... after the earthquake, the walls of this school were bowed out noticeably and the structure was condemned... it didn't take a genius to see what was going to happen

So it was with the refuge the Jews had taken under the shadow of a wall built by oppression and deceit... it was going to collapse and kill everyone huddling at its base

F. God's Central Invitation Stands!!!!

Isaiah 30:15 This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength

1. The Jews were threatened with invasion and death; their answer was to send gold on the backs of camels to Egypt to rent an army
2. Instead, God told them what to do to be saved:

3. Notice how verse 15 begins: Solemnly, with the clear names of God

This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says

- a. The very one they wanted Isaiah to stop proclaiming was standing in front of them offering them a clear path to salvation
 - b. God would put His sovereign power to work for their salvation if they would only do these things
4. In REPENTANCE and REST... in QUIETNESS and TRUST is your salvation
- a. Repentance = turning away from the path of sins that have led to this judgment to begin with
 - b. Rest = not venturing forth in your own plans and forming alliance but not by His Spirit
 - c. Quietness = being at peace under the mighty hand of God, resting in Him, knowing that nothing can come to you except by the will of this sovereign God
 - d. Trust = faith... frankly, in the end, this is the consistent message of the Bible... we are **saved by faith alone**

Isaiah 7:9 If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all

Habakkuk 2:4 the righteous will live by his faith

G. The People's Tragic Response to this Clear Invitation from the Lord:
REJECTION

Isaiah 30:15-17 This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it. ¹⁶ You said, 'No, we will flee on horses.' Therefore you will flee! You said, 'We will ride off on swift horses.' Therefore your pursuers will be swift! ¹⁷ A thousand will flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five you will all flee away, till you are left like a flagstaff on a mountaintop, like a banner on a hill."

1. They wanted NONE of God's sweet invitation to repentance and rest, quietness and trust
2. They simply said NO... we have a better plan than returning to the Lord
3. "We will flee on horses..." we will run away from the invaders... or perhaps flee to go get the Egyptians that we have hired to fight for us
4. God says, "Alright, you will flee then"

5. They answer back, “We will ride off on SWIFT HORSES!!”
6. God has the final word: “Therefore, your pursuers will be swift.”
7. There is no escaping God’s judgments... if you reject His sweet invitations to repentance and rest, quietness and trust, nothing remains except the carefully measured out judgment at the hands of a God who cannot be bested
8. The final result: total desolation of the city when everyone has run away

H. Summary: This section makes plain the key issue: how the people respond to the word of God spoken by the prophets; they rejected the words of warning and judgment, and demanded instead a PLEASANT MESSAGE... they hated to hear about the “Holy One of Israel”... so judgment would come upon them; God told them that repentance and rest, quietness and trust were their salvation... but they had plans of their own. The end result: DESOLATION

But thankfully, this was not to be God’s final word in Isaiah 33... instead, God moves out by Sovereign Grace to transform everything

III. Transforming Grace to Those Wait Upon the Lord (vs. 18-26)

A. The Hinge Verse

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!

1. God declares His deepest longing: to show grace and compassion to His sinful, stubborn, wrong-headed people
2. Literally: the Lord WAITS to be gracious...
 - a. God is waiting for His timetable to reveal His grace to His people
 - b. When the wheels of His sovereign plan have turned into place, He will move out in power to show grace to His people
 - c. God is a God who WAITS, and waits patiently... He allows His sovereign control of events to have the proper impact on the people
3. “Grace” = the key to God’s dealings with us
 - a. A commitment in the heart of God to do His people good, despite the fact that they deserve judgment
 - b. From that grace flow everything needed for our salvation

- c. The people's own plans for self-salvation will amount to destruction, so God must step in and TRANSFORM EVERYTHING by His sovereign grace
- d. Notice that God's grace perfectly harmonizes with His justice: God is a God BOTH of grace and of justice
- e. The blessing still goes to the people who WAIT FOR GOD as God waits on His perfect timing to show His people grace

B. First Step: God Works in His People to Cry Out to the Lord

Isaiah 30:19 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.

- 1. As God gives His people the bread of adversity and the water of affliction (vs. 20), the people will cry out to Him for deliverance
- 2. And these verses are true:

Romans 10:13 Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Psalms 50:15 call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.

C. Second: God Directly Transforms the Hearts of His People to Heed His Word

Isaiah 30:20-21 Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. ²¹ Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

- 1. This is the power of God's grace... and it is fulfilled in the transformation of the human heart to hear direct guidance from the Lord
- 2. This is the essence of the New Covenant promise

Ezekiel 36:26-27 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Hebrews 8:10-11 This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ¹¹ No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

3. This is fulfilled in the indwelling Holy Spirit, who guides us directly into all truth

John 16:13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.

4. The essence of the Spirit-filled life is to hear the voice of the Spirit guiding you in the paths of God's commands

Deuteronomy 5:32-33 So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left. ³³ Walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.

Romans 8:4 in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

D. God Transforms the Hearts of the People to Purge Themselves of Idols

Isaiah 30:22 Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them, "Away with you!"

1. The idolatry that led to the Assyrian invasion to begin with will be ended forever
2. God will so work in the hearts of His people that they will HATE the sins that brought about His judgments and they will see through the thin covering of gold over the wooden image they had made
3. They will see that to live for any created thing rather than the Creator is the essence of sin
4. And they will throw away their idols forever and live only for God's glory

E. Finally: God Will Transform Creation Itself for Maximum Fruitfulness

Isaiah 30:23-26 He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful. In that day your cattle will graze in broad meadows. ²⁴ The oxen and donkeys that work the soil will eat fodder and mash, spread out with fork and shovel. ²⁵ In the day of great slaughter, when the towers fall, streams of water will flow on every high mountain and every lofty hill. ²⁶ The moon will shine like the sun, and the sunlight will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven full days, when the LORD binds up the bruises of his people and heals the wounds he inflicted.

1. This is a reversal of the curses on the Land that were part of the Mosaic Covenant

- a. Abundant rain as opposed to the drought that was the curse
 - b. Abundant harvests, not famine
 - c. Rich grazing land for all the cattle the people would own; plenty of fodder for the animals that work the fields
 - d. Even the sun and moon will give enhanced light... perfectly illuminating the Promised Land for maximum harvests
2. Ultimately HEALING for all the wounds God's judgments brought on creation
 3. It is a reversal of the curses on the earth that were part of Adam's judgment in the Garden of Eden

IV. Terrifying Wrath to the Enemies of God (vs. 27-33)

Isaiah 30:27-33 See, the Name of the LORD comes from afar, with burning anger and dense clouds of smoke; his lips are full of wrath, and his tongue is a consuming fire. ²⁸ His breath is like a rushing torrent, rising up to the neck. He shakes the nations in the sieve of destruction; he places in the jaws of the peoples a bit that leads them astray. ²⁹ ¶ And you will sing as on the night you celebrate a holy festival; your hearts will rejoice as when people go up with flutes to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel. ³⁰ The LORD will cause men to hear his majestic voice and will make them see his arm coming down with raging anger and consuming fire, with cloudburst, thunderstorm and hail. ³¹ The voice of the LORD will shatter Assyria; with his scepter he will strike them down. ³² Every stroke the LORD lays on them with his punishing rod will be to the music of tambourines and harps, as he fights them in battle with the blows of his arm. ³³ Topheth has long been prepared; it has been made ready for the king. Its fire pit has been made deep and wide, with an abundance of fire and wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of burning sulfur, sets it ablaze.

- A. The Final Act of this Drama: The Wrath of the Lord Poured Out on His Enemies
- B. The Assyrians Are Mere Mortals... And God Can Deal with the Easily
- C. The Images of Wrath are Powerful
 1. God's "Name" comes from afar... God moves out powerfully to defend His honor
 2. He comes with "burning anger and dense clouds of smoke"
 3. There are anthropomorphic images of God as filled with wrath: lips filled with wrath, tongue a consuming fire, breath a rushing torrent (flood) drowning all His enemies

4. The “nations” God shakes in a sieve of destruction... testing them and then crushing them
5. He leads them by a bit exactly where He wants them to go, and then destroys them
6. All of this is done simply by the word of His power

Isaiah 30:30-31 The LORD will cause men to hear his majestic voice and will make them see his arm coming down with raging anger and consuming fire, with cloudburst, thunderstorm and hail. ³¹ The voice of the LORD will shatter Assyria; with his scepter he will strike them down.

D. The Assyrian Army Destroyed Instantly

Isaiah 37:36 Then the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp.

E. The People of God Celebrating Greatly

Isaiah 30:29 And you will sing as on the night you celebrate a holy festival; your hearts will rejoice as when people go up with flutes to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel.

Isaiah 30:32 Every stroke the LORD lays on them with his punishing rod will be to the music of tambourines and harps, as he fights them in battle with the blows of his arm.

F. Topheth: A Fire Pit of God’s Wrath

Isaiah 30:33 Topheth has long been prepared; it has been made ready for the king. Its fire pit has been made deep and wide, with an abundance of fire and wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of burning sulfur, sets it ablaze.

1. In the Valley of Ben Hinnom just outside the gates of Jerusalem is a huge pit the people used to burn their garbage...
2. The bodies of the 185,000 dead Assyrians and all their now worthless possessions would have to be disposed of; scripture does not tell us what happened to all of them, but it wouldn’t surprise me if they were burned in a vast firepit like the one described here
3. In the New Testament, it is a consistent image of the fires of hell; the word “hell” in the Gospels is usually “geenna” for “Gehenna”, this firepit where the refuse of Jerusalem is burned
4. At the end of the Book of Isaiah:

Isaiah 66:24 *And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind."*

Jesus spoke of hell in this manner:

Mark 9:47-48 *And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where "their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."*

V. The Gospel of Jesus Christ in Isaiah 30

A. The Danger We Face: Not Assyria, But Death, Judgment and Hell

Revelation 20:11-12 *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.*

Revelation 20:15 *If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

Revelation 14:10-11 *he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night*

B. We Face the Same Choice: Make a Plan to Escape, or Humble Ourselves Before God

Isaiah 30:1 *"Woe to the obstinate children," declares the LORD, "to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin;*

C. God Makes the Same Invitation to Us:

Isaiah 30:15 *This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength*

Matthew 11:28-30 *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

D. This Invitation is Based on the Same Grace from God

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!

E. The Promises of the Guidance of the Spirit Come to Us Only Through Christ

Isaiah 30:21 Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it.

John 14:16-17 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

F. The Consummation of the Land Will Be the New Heaven and New Earth

Romans 8:19-21 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

VI. Applications

A. Come to Christ!!

B. Learn to Face Your Daily Trials by the Same Faith by Which You Hope to Live on Judgment Day

1. When financial trials come upon you, what is your recourse? Is it “repentance and rest, quietness and trust” or is it anxiety, irritability, frustration, a better financial plan, a better paying job, what??
2. How are you making “alliances but not by God’s Spirit” to solve the trials and afflictions you are facing?

C. Learn to Delight in ALL of God’s Prophetic Message!!

1. Don’t be like the people who said “Tell us PLEASANT THINGS, prophecy Illusions”
2. Delight in the entirety of the prophetic message... even the convicting parts

D. Learn to Hate the Idols in Your Life as The Passage Commands... to Hate the Created Things You Are Putting Faith in

E. Learn to Walk More and More by the Power of the Spirit as He Teaches You the Word

Isaiah 30:21 Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it.