

EXPOSITORY NOTES ON THE PROPHET ISAIAH

by

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ISAIAH CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

REMONSTRANCE WITH PROMISE OF FUTURE BLESSING

IT SEEMS evident that the message of the previous chapter made little or no impression upon the king and the nobles of Judah. Therefore, the Lord again sent His servant, Isaiah, to warn them against the folly of still looking to Egypt for help, and so we have the fifth woe, which is practically the same in character as the fourth, already considered.

“Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord! Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words: but will arise against the house of the evildoers, and against the help of them that work iniquity” (verses 1, 2).

With a stinging rebuke, the Lord reproves those who in the time of national danger turn to Egypt for help instead of looking to Him who had of old brought them forth triumphantly out of Egypt and had given them His holy covenant, promising blessing and deliverance so long as they walked in obedience to His Word. This they failed to do, and so when emergencies arose, they sought help from that power which had formerly enslaved them, and which, as we know, speaks to us typically of the world from which Christ delivered us by giving Himself for us on the Cross. For a Christian today to turn back to that world, rather than to depend on the living God, is to dishonor the name of Him who has thus redeemed us to Himself. He has promised never to fail the soul that trusts Him, but we all know how easy it is to forget this when difficulties arise which seem to put us in jeopardy, and so in our desperation we seek help where it is not to be found instead of turning directly to Him who has said, **“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”** Whether He speaks in grace or in judgment, He will never go back on His word, but this we are slow to believe, often fancying in our folly that He will be better than His word or fearing that He may not carry out His promises of blessing. His faithfulness abides whether we believe it or not.

“Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the Lord shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fall together” (verse 3).

We are told elsewhere, **“It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.”** To Israel, Egypt seemed to speak of great strength and power which if acting on their behalf would meet the opposition of the Assyrian and effectually prevent his taking possession of Jerusalem and the land of Judah. But their hopes were vain, for only in God was true power to be found and the Egyptians knew Him not nor did God recognize them as His direct agents at this time. For the people of Judah to put their dependence upon Egypt was to make the mistake of supposing that the arm of flesh could save. By so doing they ignored the arm of the Lord which was mighty in power. Egyptian cavalry might make a brave showing, but their horses were flesh and not spirit, therefore not to be depended on in the day of battle.

“For thus hath the Lord spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them: so shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof. As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it” (verses 4, 5).

While the Assyrian armies seemed almost invulnerable and, therefore, the help of Egypt appeared to be necessary, the Lord Himself still had His people in mind and would soon demonstrate His omnipotence in the destruction of the mighty host that came up against Jerusalem. Undoubtedly the prophecy referred directly to that of which we read later on when the army of Sennacherib was destroyed in a night, and that not by weapons of war but by the breath of the Lord. A greater fulfillment will take place in the future when God will arise to destroy all who come up against Jerusalem in the last days.

The hosts of all nations will, as we know, be gathered together against that devoted city, but when it appears as though all hope is gone, the Lord will arise in His might and go forth to fight against them as when He fought in the day of battle. When He shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God, the enemies of Israel will melt away at His presence and their leaders be dealt with in summary judgment.

In view of this, the Lord again calls upon His people to turn to Him in repentance, acknowledging their sins and putting away all their graven images and turning from all idolatrous practices.

“Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted. For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin. Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man; and the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him: but he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited. And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear, and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign, saith the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem” (verses 6-9).

When Judah shall thus turn to the Lord and do works meet for repentance by cleansing the land of all their evil practices, God Himself will act on their behalf, and the enemy whose power they dreaded will become subservient to them, recognizing them as the chosen of the Lord.

Instead of hating or despising them and seeking their ruin, the Gentile powers will acknowledge them as the favored of the Lord and will seek their favor, as many other scriptures testify.

~ end of chapter 31 ~

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