

He Waits to Be Gracious

Isaiah 30:1 – 31:9

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Introduction:

With chapter 28, we came to the first of a collection of “woes” that Isaiah pronounces.

- A woe is a pronouncement that disaster is coming...
- These are woes pronounced against God’s own covenant people...
 - covenant people who were doing the very same things that God’s covenant people do today!
 - In chapter 28, we saw them trying to escape God by giving themselves to wine and distractions.
 - They wanted to pretend that they were secure from God’s threat of chastisement, so they turned to wine to calm their fears.
 - They numbed themselves to His Word so as to avoid Him.
 - In chapter 29, we saw them trying to avoid God by hypocritical worship.
 - That’s right, people whose hearts are far from God and who disregard Him in their daily lives pretend that by going through the motions of external worship, they will please Him.
 - They act as if God does not see how they live and where their heart is as long as they worship Him and “go to church.”
- Isaiah is making it known that trouble (woe) is coming upon such people, the very thing they want to avoid and deny.
 - But we saw something very wonderful about these woes...
 - We saw that even though great judgement would fall upon God’s people, God’s judgement would not negate His promise!
 - In both cases, we saw that the LORD by His unspeakable grace brought forth out of His sinful apostate people a people who turned to Him...
 - And that upon those people, He poured out a rich blessing!
 - That is how our gracious God works!

And today, as we come to the woe pronounced in chapter 30 & 31 against those God calls His rebellious children,

- we shall see once again that though judgement falls, His grace still breaks forth and gathers out a people to be blessed!
 - Without further introduction, let us jump into this passage and see what it has to say to us as God’s people!

I. See here the foolish foolish separation of from God to Egypt!

- This is about as stupid as it gets!
- These are God's people who had been taken **out** of Egypt to be His own children!

A. And now they looking to Egypt for their help!

1. The LORD had delivered them from Egypt centuries before and had told them never to go that way again...

- Yes, my brothers and sisters, Things have not changed.
 - Are you baptised?
 - Then you are numbered with the children of God.
 - You have been brought out of Egypt to live as the sons and daughters of God.
- To you the promises and the adoption and the covenants and the Spirit and the redemption of Jesus Christ belong!
 - These are yours by birthright if you will not reject them!
 - These bring you forgiveness of sin and new life in Jesus Christ—
 - so that you are able to love God and live to God and be filled with His Spirit and to be reconciled to your brothers and sisters in the LORD,
 - so that you grow together in love and in Jesus Christ and become adorned with God's grace and wisdom...
 - You become a reflection of His glory, not only as an individual, but together with your brothers and sisters as you learn to love one another.
 - And as you behold more and more the glory of God that is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ...
 - what riches you have as God's people!
 - You are brought out of death and bondage in Egypt, and into the glorious kingdom of God!

2. So what is this about going back to Egypt? for help? without even asking the LORD?

- What reason could you have to seek another kingdom when you have been brought into His kingdom?
- This is (as verse 2 says) to *add sin to sin!*
 - What a slam to your heavenly Father!
 - How better to dishonour Him and show contempt for Him!
 - What a way to show your ingratitude to Him for all He has done!

- Listen—do you really think you will find what you need in Egypt?
 - God brought you out of Egypt that He might bring you into His kingdom.
 - The sons of God in Isaiah’s day actually thought that they would find the strength they needed to fight off Assyria from Egypt!
 - Egypt had lots of horses and chariots—the very things God had warned His people not to trust in!
- Look now, I want you to think about your life...
 - *What are you looking to for your blessing and your strength?*
 - It is easy to say that you are looking to the LORD, but are you really?
 - Is your life really about Him?
 - Is it really about pleasing Him?
 - Is your expectation found in obtaining His blessing—not just to get what you want from Him—but to find life in serving Him and loving Him and doing His will?
 - Are you willing to work through difficulties to obtain His blessing—to wrestle and sacrifice for Him...
 - Are you striving to enter the narrow gate?
 - Are you willing to do the hard things He calls you to do?
 - Or is your expectation set on other things...
 - Do you suppose that you must have something from Egypt before you will be happy?

TRANS> These people to whom Isaiah speaks must have thought Egypt could bless them...

3. Look at all the trouble they expend to obtain Egypt’s help!
 - a. They are sending piles of treasure to the.
 - Isaiah actually feels sorry for their beasts of burden who have to carry all their treasures down to Egypt to bribe them to help...
 - The poor donkeys and camels!
 - Look at verse 6 & 7.
 - It describes them going to Egypt in the same terrible wilderness that God had brought Israel through when He brought them out...
 - How they grumbled and complained in those days...
 - But now they are so eager to get help from Egypt that they are quite willing to face lions and snakes and other dangers.
 - b. It’s bad enough to entertain some hope that Egypt can help you...

- But it's even worse to *weary* yourself in seeking Egypt's help!
 - to put yourself in danger and to spend up all that you have—all for what is not the kingdom of God!
 - All because you think Egypt has what you need!
4. But look at what the LORD says about Egypt!
- Look and be wise!
- a. In verse 3-5 He says that trusting in Egypt will lead to shame!
- It will lead to shame because Egypt will not be able to help them...
 - Indeed what a shameful thing it is to go to all this effort to get something from Egypt when you are among the people that have God as your Father!
 - The burning question is why did you go to Egypt?
 - Why Egypt when you have a loving, gracious, almighty Father like the LORD who has more than all you need?
- b. Isaiah keeps repeating the point that no good is going to come from Egypt.
- He has to repeat it because we are so thick headed...
 - Once we get our eyes on what we have to have from the world, we get a sort of glaze over our eyes—we smitten—enamoured.
 - Isaiah keeps repeating that Egypt will not help...
 - In verse 6, he calls them a people who shall not profit.
 - And in verse 7, he says that the Egyptians shall help in vain and to no purpose.
- c. And then at the end of verse 7 he gives Egypt a name that really clinches it...
- He calls Egypt: Rahab-Hem-Shebeth.
 - Rahab refers to a boasting dragon, and is often a nickname from Egypt.
 - Hem-Shebeth means “one who sits still” or “one who is idle.”
 - So the picture is that God's people are going to all this trouble to take all their treasures down to feed a boasting-do-nothing dragon.
 - The dragon is very happy to feast on their treasures—“bring them on!”
 - But he doesn't have the least intention of helping them.
 - He is impressive! He is big and strong! But he is not going to lift a finger for Israel!
 - How much the world takes!
 - How much the world promises!

- How little the world delivers!
- So go ahead, spend all that you have on what cannot profit!
 - Give the boasting do nothing dragon all that you have and see what comes of it.

TRANS> But you will say to me,

- “How do I know if I am looking to Egypt instead of to the LORD?”
 - Well I will tell you one sure indication of it—
 - How eager are you to have God’s word get fully into your life?
 - It is always the case...

B. Those who look to Egypt have very little regard for the pure word of God.

1. Look at how Isaiah describes them in verses 9...

- He calls them rebellious people and lying children *who will not hear the word of God.*
 - a. God had nourished and brought them up, delivering them from Egypt to live in His kingdom,
 - but now they are rebelling against Him.
 - They are not feeding upon His truth, living by His counsel.
 - They are not behaving as His children who are under His care and authority, members of His household.
 - b. They are lying children because they had entered into a covenant with Him.
 - They had made promises and taken vows when they entered the church...
 - And they had promised that they and their children would obey.
 - They were bound by this covenant.
 - But they have proven to be liars.
 - They have broken God’s covenant.
 - c. The refuse to hear God’s Word.
 - This is how you can tell the person who seeking God’s kingdom from the one who is not...
 - The one who is seeking God will be eager not only to learn what God says, but to apply it to his life!
 - I’m not talking about a guy who falls in love with theology—I’m talking about someone who hungers to be transformed by the Word.
 - He wants the Word of God to come to him and tell him what is true about God...

- And he wants the Word of God to lead him into the new life of righteousness that God gives to His children.
2. Just look at the raunchy attitude toward God's Word of those who are looking to Egypt!
- Isaiah goes on to describe it.
 - a. He says that they tell those who preach the Word to change the message!
 - Look at verse 10:
 - Isa 30:10: Who say to the seers, "Do not see," And to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us right things; Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits.
 - You get the idea.
 - They look for preachers who will not challenge them!
 - They do not want the Word of God to confront them where they live.
 - They do not want to be told that they need to change.
 - They don't want to be told to love their enemies, to forsake their lusts, to worship God only as He commands, to go to their brother and reconcile with him.
 - Why do you think there are so many preachers who are full of fluff today?
 - It's because listeners demand to have that kind of preacher.
 - They love preachers like Robert Schuler who told other preachers something along these line (in a very whiny voice),
 - "Don't talk about Hell. People don't want to hear about that. Don't tell them that they are sinners. That is going to discourage them. Preachers are supposed to help people, not harm them. You are harming them when we preach about sin."
 - b. Isaiah says that these persons who despise God's Word actually despise God!
 - He tells us what they really want!
 - They want the Holy One of Israel to cease from before them!
 - If He were not holy, it would be fine...
 - because then they would not have to change.
 - But He is holy and that is what they don't like about Him!
 - He is so holy that sinners must have their sins atoned for by the blood of the covenant that He has ordained...
 - And that means that if they come to Him for forgiveness,
 - they will have to admit that there is a whole lot wrong with them...

- that such drastic measures as the blood of Christ should be necessary...
- And if they admit that, they will have to change—they will have to repent—they will not be able to go on as they are.

c. So I must ask you...

1) Where do you put your energy and effort?

- Do you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness?
 - Are you hungry for God's word—for it to teach you and fill you?
 - Are you earnest in your prayers to Him?
 - Do you yearn to have the new life that He gives?
 - Are you willing to suffer for His kingdom and be laughed at because you are His disciple?
 - Are you seeking to serve others and lead them into His kingdom, or are you ashamed to be a believer?

2) Do you trample over His commandments in your pursuit of the things of this world?

- Do you cheat in your business?
- Do you break the Sabbath for your own pleasure and profit?
- Do you feed your lust with unclean thoughts, with pornography, with illicit sexual relationships?
- Do you covet the treasures of this world, or are you seeking to serve and to put the interests of others above your own?
- Do you grumble and complain as if God has cheated you when you ought to be giving thanks?

TRANS> To whatever extent this is true, you are looking to Egypt for your blessing.

- to Egypt—this world—Rahab Hem Shebeth.

3. God instructs Isaiah to write down how rebellious these people are!

- Look at verse 8:
 - Isa 30:8: Now go, write it before them on a tablet, And note it on a scroll, That it may be for time to come, Forever and ever: that this is a rebellious people.
 - The Lord wanted this to be written down—posted on a tablet in the public square and written in a scroll for posterity...
- a. He wanted them to see what they were doing as in a mirror and see what He had said—that Egypt would not profit them!
- God gives us His word and has ordained that it be read and preached in public so that we, His people, might see our sin and where it will lead us.

- We look as in a mirror and see what we are like so that we might repent.
- b. And He also has it recorded for the future...
- So that all will see that it happened just as God said... they went to Egypt and Egypt did not help them.
 - He has this written so that future generations might learn from history...
 - Ps 78:7-8: That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments; and may not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not set its heart aright, And whose spirit was not faithful to God.

TRANS> But I say, if you are busy looking to find life in Egypt, you will have no use for the word of God.

- You will want to push it away...
 - You do not want to hear about the Holy One.

C. So what does the Holy One say about this rebellion?

- about this “despising” of His Word and this reliance and trust in “oppression and perversity”?
 - See verse 12 and following...
1. He says that it will make His people to be like a wall that is about to collapse from its own weight.
 - That is what the sin of apostasy does.
 - The sin of turning away from our God and looking to Egypt instead.
 - It ruins us.
 2. And look at how complete the ruin is!
 - a. Verse 14 says that the broken wall will be like a potter’s vessel that is so completely shattered that you can’t even use a shard to pick up a coal or to scoop up a bit of water.
 - Understand it well!
 - Broken pottery often had some uses in those days, but when a sinner is broken by apostasy, there is nothing left.
 - Sin will leave him completely destroyed.
 - b. Verse 15-17 show the same thing...
 - 1) Here are the people who were offered quietness and security if they would only return to the Lord and rest in Him...and they turn from this!

- What a thing to turn away from!
- What a thing to walk away from!
- How much worse this makes their rejection!
- Here is the living God ready to bless them with promises of blessing...
 - The God who will go so far as to sacrifice His Son for them...
 - and they will have none of it!

2) Instead they will flee from the danger by hiring horses in Egypt...

- Isaiah tells them that indeed they will flee—in desperation!
 - Isa 30:16-17: And you said, "No, for we will flee on horses" —Therefore you shall flee! And, "We will ride on swift horses" —Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift! One thousand shall flee at the threat of one, At the threat of five you shall flee, Till you are left as a pole on top of a mountain And as a banner on a hill.
- See to what they will be reduced as a people—
 - a pole on top of a mountain.
 - Only the flag is left standing, as a warning to others of the complete destruction that comes from seeking Egypt!
 - Why, why, why do people turn from the word of God?
 - Why do we look to the world for our help?

TRANS> But this is not the end of the story!

II. The Lord's grace will not be stopped!

- What a God He is!
 - Just look at verse 18!
 - Isa 30:18: Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you.

A. He waits to be gracious!

1. This speaks of the eagerness He has to pour out His grace on His people!
 - This conveys the idea of longing—it is something that the Lord delights to do.
 - But He will wait until He has finished His work of judgement to humble His people...
 - All the while He is humbling them and judging them, He has this end of mercy for His people in view...
 - All through the ages of apostasies and foolishness and sin...
 - through all the ages of chastisement and affliction and suffering,
 - He has His gracious end in view for the elect.
 - Who is like our God?

2. Two of the tenderest words of the OT are used here:
 - The word *gracious* is *hanan* which speaks of a heartfelt response from a superior to one who has no claim of gracious treatment—
 - merit is not considered...only the need.
 - The word *mercy* is *racham*.
 - This word speaks of a deep, inward pity or compassion of one who considers the needs of others as His own.
 - This is the great God who had been slighted by His people and whose offers had been so long ignored and even resisted!
 - Here He is, eager to come to His people in their distress—a distress of their own making—and be most gracious and kind toward them!
 - I say, who is like our God!

3. Notice that it says He will be *exalted* that He may have mercy.
 - a. The word *exalted* means simply that He will arise to show mercy.
 - In other words, He is going to rise up to do something!
 - Unlike the boasting idle dragon, He is going to act for them!

 - b. And my brothers and sisters, let us consider how God did indeed rise up to act in grace and mercy for all His people in every age!
 - His grace and mercy have been openly displayed in our dear Lord Jesus Christ!
 - We were ruined beyond repair, but our Lord would leave it so!
 - He sent Jesus to turn us from our sins.
 - He sent Him to redeem us by the shedding of His own blood.
 - He sent Him to die for us and then to rise for us that we might have new life from Him.
 - He sent Him to pour out His Spirit upon us so that we might be holy.

 - c. He is a God of justice, and His whole plan is to wait until the right time... and then to act in purity and justice...
 - The time of His Son who alone was able to bring salvation to a people like us without any betrayal of justice.
 - Do you understand what He did?
 - Do you understand that God's wrath was poured out on Him when He hung on the cross because of **our** transgressions?
 - Justice was perfectly satisfied—
 - God came to us in the fullness of grace and mercy at the proper time and now we have everything in Jesus Christ.

4. Blessed are those who wait for Him!
 - That's what it says at the end of verse 18...
 - Yes indeed—we wait because we know that He is waiting to be gracious...
 - The people in the Old Testament waited for the fullness of time when Jesus should appear with salvation.
 - The elect whose heart was prepared waited for Him because they knew that He would be true to His promises.
 - They knew that He was a God of mercy and grace...
 - But they did not even know the half of it—
 - that God should actually send His Son to be the bloody victim on the cross—for us!
 - We have seen this open display of mercy and grace, but we also must wait.
 - For our LORD has told us that we must suffer much tribulation before the kingdom of God is fully come...
 - We wait, knowing that God will do all that He has promised...

B. And just look at all that He will do in His mercy and grace!

1. First, He will bring us to dwell in His house.
 - Verse 19 says that we will dwell in Zion at Jerusalem without weeping!
 - Zion at Jerusalem!
 - That is God's house!
- a. We shall be brought to live here with the Father and the Son...
 - 1) to behold the glory of Christ that is always revealed in God's house,
 - It was revealed in the Old Covenant by the sacrifices representing Christ...
 - It has been revealed in the New Covenant by the cross of Jesus and all that it teaches us about God...
 - And it will be revealed at the last day when we shall see Him as He is, and see the glory that Christ had with Him before the foundation of the world.

TRANS> And not only do we behold the glory of Christ when we come to dwell in God's house at Zion...

 - 2) We also shall be conformed to His likeness as His children—beautiful children, full of love for each other and love for God—just like Jesus.
 - In the Old Testament, they had His law to guide them...
 - And in the New Testament, we have besides that the example of Jesus and the outpouring of His Spirit in a great fullness...

- And in heaven we shall be fully conformed to His likeness because we shall see Him as He is.
- b. In every age from the beginning of the world until the end,
- God waits for His people until the time that He has brought them to repentance—
 - and then He is gracious to them brings them into His house to dwell...
 - where they behold His glory...
 - And where they are changed into His likeness.
- c. And look, there is no weeping in this house...
- God is eternally happy and blessed and so are all His children when they are finally with Him...
 - There is no cause for sorrow ever again!
 - This too, is experienced by degrees as God brings us from glory to glory who are the true sons and daughters of His house.
 - the joy of the people was full when God brought them out of Egypt and out of Babylon.
 - It was made even more full when Jesus rose, having conquered sin and death...and secured God's pardon for our sins.
 - It will be even more full when we are brought to see Him face to face.

TRANS> How excellent to be brought into His house!

- But that is not all He does...

2. Secondly, we are told that He answers our prayers... as an attentive father!
- It says that He will be *very gracious* (*hanan* again) to us such that He will answer us as soon as we cry out to Him.
 - He deals so kindly and gently with us a Father that pities us such that He quickly responds to us as soon as we cry out.
 - We have already seen that He waits to be gracious...
 - He is eager to show His mercy...
 - And that is seen by His immediate response as soon as we cry to Him.
 - Is this not true?
 - As soon as we wake up like the prodigal son and come to our senses and realise how foolish we have been, we find our father waiting for us,
 - eager and ready to receive us.

TRANS> Verses 20-22 shows us the third thing that He does in His mercy and grace:

3. He restores His word to us again!
 - a. During the time of apostasy, we saw how the people pushed their teachers away and told them to speak smooth things to them...
 - The teachers were driven into a corner, as verse 20 suggests...
 - But when we come back to the LORD, we see our teachers again and we hear God's voice through them, speaking into our lives again!
 - And the Word gets into our lives to guide us and show us how to live beautifully as God's children, and to comfort us in the LORD.
 - It is a divine work, not dependent on the preacher, but on the grace of God—using His word supernaturally.
 - We are no longer aimless and directionless.
 - We are no longer without hope from God's promises.
 - We are corrected as soon as we start to go off the path because the word is in us and we hear our shepherd's voice.
 - We also have teachers who watch over us and care for us and come after us when we go astray—being sent by the LORD Himself.
 - b. And even though we still have the bread of affliction and the water of adversity for a time...
 - Jesus Himself told us that we will have much tribulation in this world...
 - Yet it is a very little thing to us because we have the Word of God restored to us...
 - and through that Word we have communion with our Lord even in our affliction...
 - We come to know Him better even through tribulation...
 - We even learn to glory in tribulation because it is a vehicle that He uses to strengthen our communion with Him.
 - And we know from His promise that when His work is complete we will be entirely freed from it.
 - c. Verse 22 shows how the Word gets into our lives and changes us!
 - It penetrates us changes us so that we hate the idols we used to love!
 - We cannot stand all the things we once leaned on because we see that they are the very things that kept us from God...
 - We see that inasmuch as we were joined to idols, we were separated from our gracious God.
 - So there is a zeal and vengeance to destroy all those idols!
 - to toss them out as an unclean thing that we want nothing to do with.

- This is the reformation that comes to us when God restores His Word to us again.
 - Do not be deceived.
 - If God's salvation has come to you, you cannot continue as you were.
 - There is always a repentance that leads to a reformation of life.
 - You can't be what you were because God's Spirit has come!
 - And the word continues to wash you more and more as you go on!

TRANS> What a blessing to be cleansed and renewed by the Word of God.

- That is the third thing the Lord does when He comes to us in His mercy and grace...
 - Now consider the fourth...

4. He sends a bountiful blessing upon the land!

- That's right, the curse fell upon the whole creation so that it groans...
 - but when God restores, the creation itself is blessed.
- a. Verses 23-26 show that all creation participates in the blessing.
 - The blessing reaches from the ground to the heavens and is described in that order...
 - 1) First, that the rain comes and enriches the ground so that it brings forth abundantly...
 - The soil below is blessed and the crops above the ground are blessed.
 - There is an abundance of produce!
 - 2) Next, the animals who tread the ground are mentioned—
 - They are seen to eat food that is fit for human consumption—
 - that which has been winnowed and had the chaff removed...
 - The prodigal son was prepared to eat the husks that animals eat, but here are animals eating the corn that man eats!
 - 3) Next the blessing is seen to reach to the mountains and hills—
 - Usually mountains are not good farmland—lacking water...
 - yet, even these shall have rivers and streams so that they bring forth abundantly...
 - Under God's curse, the valleys were dry, but when His mercy comes even the mountains are well watered!

- And notice at the end of verse 25 that all this is said to happen in the day of the great slaughter when the towers fall...
 - The day of the slaughter of the Assyrians as we shall in a moment...when their siege works are brought down.
 - In their place, God brings in this great fruitfulness and blessing of the land...

- 4) And finally, in verse 26, we come to the blessing of the heavens!
 - Yes, God's blessing even affects the sun and the moon in the day that He restores His people so that the moon is as bright as the sun...
 - and the sun is seven times brighter—a Sabbath brightness to accompany the brightness that the LORD gives!

- b. Now you may look at all this and say,
 - “Well that is just the blessing of the land in the OT and does not pertain to us.”
 - But this is not so!
 - God has dealt exactly the same way with every nation that has turned to Him in the gospel.
 - He turns lands that were once barren into fruitful fields!
 - There is often a period of much suffering for God's people when the Gospel is first planted in a new land,
 - but after it takes root for a few generations, there is bounty.
 - This is God's way!
 - And besides that, no matter what our present lot may be...
 - We know God is preparing a place for us in paradise!
 - He is bringing us to a beautiful city and beautiful garden with the tree of life and the river of life...
 - And we will bask in the glorious sunshine of His grace forever and ever.
 - We are bodily creatures and our bodies will be raised up in perfection and we will have food and abundance forever in God's house.
 - We do not follow Plato who despises the body as the prison house of the soul,
 - but Jesus Christ who raises up the body and puts it in a golden city and a lush garden where there are pleasures forevermore!
 - God redeems the whole creation—His grace is so full!

TRANS> So we have now seen four things that His grace does when it reaches us, the grace that He eagerly waits to bestow on us until we are ready to receive it...

- We have seen...
 - That He brings us to dwell in His house at Mount Zion...
 - That He answers our prayers...
 - That He restores His word to us so that we receive it and are changed...
 - That He renews the creation to be a blessing to us...
 - And now we come to the fifth thing He does...in the day that He restores His people.

5. He comes with holy vengeance to destroy all our enemies!

- At the same time that He restores us, He destroys our enemies.
 - Rarely does God speak of His blessing of us without also speaking of the destruction of our enemies.
 - This is presented in verses 27-33.
- a. Verse 27-28 show Him coming with burning anger and fierce indignation...
 - This is a display of His holy love to His people!
 - The restoration of paradise demands the removal of rebels.
 - He is furious with those who continue to spoil His creation and to oppress and tempt His people away from truth.
 - This is the same picture that we are given in the book of Revelation when our LORD comes with zeal for us and destroys Babylon forever.
 - He seizes Satan and all who are in league with Him,
 - all who are in rebellion against the living God,
 - and casts them into the Lake of Fire.
 - Here in verse 28, it speaks of Him putting a bridle in their nose and dragging them away to ruin.
 - This same vengeance is frequently described by our LORD Jesus in His teaching, and it is described by Paul and Peter and James in their epistles.
 - For some reason, many modern day Christians deny that such is found in the New Testament, but this is very false!
 - God's glory is seen in the destruction of His enemies.
 - His holiness is seen when He brings them to justice and the whole creation beholds how great a thing it is to offend the Holy One.

TRANS> And look at the response of God's people when they see all this!

- b. There is a solemn festival of gladness and rejoicing.
 - Verse 29 speaks of a night festival...
 - Israel's night festival was the Passover.
 - The death angel came through, God's enemies were destroyed, God's people were set free, and the judgement did not fall on them.
 - What gladness that they should be spared—that though they are sinners, God's judgement does not reach them!
 - And what gladness that at last the one who had so long oppressed them, even Assyria, is destroyed forever.
 - This is a solemn, holy joy, not a vain frivolous joy.
 - This is the completion of God's blessing of His people...
 - The crushing of the serpent's head, the destruction of their enemies.
- c. In verse 33 we see that God has prepared a place for His enemies.
 - It is a place called Tophet.
 - This, brothers and sisters, is located in the valley of Hinnom (Gehenna) to the south of Jerusalem.
 - This is the same place Jesus speaks of as the place of everlasting punishment... Gehenna, or Hell as it is translated in the NT.
 - Jeremiah tells us in Jer 7:31-32 that unbelieving Israelites offered their sons and daughters to Molech in this Valley.
 - King Ahaz had led the way by offering his own son and daughter here, according to 2 Kings 16:3.
 - And Hezekiah had destroyed the images to Molech and turned the place into a garbage dump where refuse was burned continually.
 - Now we are told that *this place* has been prepared of old for the king of Assyria.
 - Though it was but a narrow place, we are told that God has made it deep and large,
 - and that He has furnished it with much wood for the burning of His enemies,
 - and that the fire will be kindled by the breath of LORD as a steam of brimstone—
 - brimstone is sulphur that is found in the Palestine in deposits that sometimes catches fire and runs in burning streams down the ravines spreading suffocating fumes all over the place.

- What a dreadful place this is!
 - This is the place that is prepared for the King of Assyria and for Satan himself.
 - It is not Egypt, but the LORD who is able to bring His and our enemies to this end.
 - What zeal He has for His Holy name!
 - What love He has for us.

TRANS> So there you see the completion of the blessing of God's people.

- He brings us into His house as our final rest and then He destroys all our enemies.

III. But consider well, my brothers and sisters, that this blessing only comes to those who turn to the LORD for His promised mercy.

- It is not enough merely to be baptised or to have an outward profession of faith.
 - Woe is pronounced on those covenant people who are looking to Egypt.
 - Blessing is pronounced on those who cast away their idols and turn to the Lord.
- This is brought out in chapter 31 which summarises chapter 30.
 - In conclusion, I will now read it, making comments as I go...

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 who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, Nor seek the LORD!

- Here you see that woe—disaster—is pronounced against those who rely on Egypt instead of on the LORD.
 - You cannot rely on both.
 - You must choose one or the other, and even though you pretend to rely on the LORD, if you are looking to Egypt, you have turned from the LORD.
 - As our LORD Jesus said, no one can serve two masters, for you will hate the one and love the other.

2 Yet He also *is* wise and will bring disaster, And will not call back His words, But will arise against the house of evildoers, And against the help of those who work iniquity.

- Here is a bit of sarcasm for those who think Egypt is so wise—has such counsel as will protect them from Assyria...
 - God is wise too!
 - He also is able to bring disaster on His enemies and He will do it...

- Now a little reasoning is needed. In verse 3, the prophet gives the people a little lesson about the nature of God and the nature of the Egyptians...

3 Now the Egyptians *are* men, and not God; And their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out His hand, Both he who helps will fall, And he who is helped will fall down; They all will perish together.

- How foolish we are to trust in men when we have the LORD!
 - He is mighty and by the mere stretching forth of His hand can destroy both us and those we have looked to for our help!
 - What makes us look to other helpers?
 - Is it that we are not sure of the Lord's power or of His concern?
 - Look at verse 4 & 5 and learn...

4 For thus the LORD has spoken to me: "As a lion roars, And a young lion over his prey (When a multitude of shepherds is summoned against him, *He* will not be afraid of their voice Nor be disturbed by their noise), So the LORD of hosts will come down To fight for Mount Zion and for its hill.

- Here you see that the LORD has plenty of power to protect us, His people.
 - He is like a fearless lion coming against enemies that a bunch of shepherds try to scare off—but the lion is not the least bit frightened.
 - No one is a threat to the LORD...
- But does He care?
 - Is He concerned enough for us to help us.
 - Indeed He is!
 - It is Egypt that does not care!
 - Have you ever seen birds fluttering about their nest to defend their young from enemies?
 - What zeal they have, what concern, what danger they put themselves in...
 - The LORD is compared to such birds here:

5 Like birds flying about, So will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem. Defending, He will also deliver *it*; Passing over, He will preserve *it*."

- How foolish to ask if the one who spared not His only Son for us is concerned about us!
 - Of course He is! As long as there is crucified Saviour, you can ever use the excuse that He does not seem to care!
- So what must you do if you are trusting in Egypt? In this world?

- You must return to Him...
- Look at verse 6-7:

6 ¶ Return *to Him* against whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted.

7 For in that day every man shall throw away his idols of silver and his idols of gold—sin, which your own hands have made for yourselves.

- There is nothing complicated about this...
 - If you have been trying to find your life in the world instead in the Lord and in His kingdom,
 - You need to cast away whatever you have been trusting in, whatever foolish things you have been looking for,
 - and you must turn to the LORD.
- And you see what happens when you turn...
 - Then the LORD begins to deal with your enemies—the enemies that would otherwise devour you.

8 "Then Assyria shall fall by a sword not of man, And a sword not of mankind shall devour him. But he shall flee from the sword, And his young men shall become forced labor.

9 He shall cross over to his stronghold for fear, And his princes shall be afraid of the banner," Says the LORD, Whose fire *is* in Zion And whose furnace *is* in Jerusalem.

- Our LORD is waiting to be gracious to all those who turn to Him.
 - Satan (represented here by Assyria) is our great enemy.
 - He will destroy us and the world (represented by Egypt) cannot deliver us.
 - It is time to turn to the LORD.
 - Turn to Him through Jesus Christ. Then you will be blessed.