

Not a fair fight (vv32-33): “The divine warrior does not struggle to overcome the Assyrian enemy, as if he were in mortal combat with an equal. Instead, God decrees with his voice (30:30,31), passes his staff over the condemned (30:30,32), and accomplishes his will. Although the defeat of the enemy is not stated in this verse, it is assumed” (Smith 2007: 526). This matches the description of Christ’s return in Revelation 19:11-21: the story jumps from Christ’s arrival to the punishment of the enemies, with no description of a battle.

“**The question is:** Can people control their own circumstances and fulfill their own plans, or should they humble themselves and trustingly submit to God’s plans? When one faces sure death, this is usually not an easy or automatic decision” (Smith 2007: 527).

“But trust in God in such dire circumstances is a risk that is not easy to accept. It puts everything on the line for what often appears to be a nebulous hope that God will act. **What does one have to do to truly trust God?** Isaiah indicates the people need to (a) repent of their present rebellious acts; (b) rest securely in God’s salvation; (c) be calm rather than fearful; (d) rely on God’s heroic strength; and (e) stop trusting in human power (30:15-16). **But how can people be calm and trusting in the midst of a nearly impossible situation that threatens death?** Faith is engendered when one remembers that (a) God acts in compassion and justice; (b) he will answer all who cry out to him for help; (c) he will teach people how to act rightly; (d) he will bless and heal; and (e) in his wrath he will defeat their enemies (30:18-33)....**Faith is not blind acceptance** of something totally unknown; it is a confident relational walk based on spiritual knowledge that directs the will to act in reliance on the character and promises of someone who sovereignly controls this world” (Smith 2007: 527-28).

SOURCES CITED

Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, New American Commentary, 2007.
Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, The Bible Speaks Today, 1996.

ISAIAH 30: THE FOLLY OF TRUSTING EGYPT

OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 1-35

- I. Judah’s sin requires exile, but a remnant will return (1:1-12:6)
- II. The nations will be judged, and therefore they should not be trusted (13:1-23:18)
- III. The Lord will rule over the earth and redeem his people (24:1-27:13)
- IV. **The Holy One of Israel will replace faithless rulers with a righteous king (28:1-35:10)**
 - A. The Lord condemns the leaders of Israel and Judah (28:1-29:24)
 - B. The Lord condemns those who trust in Egypt (30:1-31:9)**
 - C. The Lord will rule in righteousness (32:1-33:24)
 - D. The Lord will destroy the nations and restore Zion (34:1-35:10)

OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 30

- I. It is foolish to trust Egypt to save you because:
 - A. You have rejected God (30:1-2)
 - B. Egypt cannot help you (30:3-7)
 - C. You have rejected God’s prophets (30:8-11)
 - D. Egypt will destroy you (30:12-14)
 - E. God can save you (30:15-18)
- II. It is wise to trust the Lord because:
 - A. He will lead you in righteousness (30:19-22)
 - B. He will provide all of your needs (30:23-26)
 - C. He will destroy your enemies (30:27-33)

NOTES

Difficult Question: What is the historical context of Isaiah 30–31? Is Isaiah warning Hezekiah not to trust Egypt in advance of the 701 BC attack of Assyria (described further in chapters 36–37)? This would seem to be the case, but the difficulty is that Hezekiah is never condemned in the accounts of 2 Kings 18–19 and 2 Chronicles 32 for seeking Egypt. If this is the same event, then Hezekiah’s sin of seeking Egypt was replaced by trust in the Lord, and the writers of Kings and Chronicles glossed over Hezekiah’s previous failure. Some believe that Isaiah 30 is related to another time and king, such as Hoshea of the northern kingdom in 722 BC (cf. 2 Kgs 17:1–6). Another possibility is that this relates to the 701 BC event, but it was other leaders in Judah who were seeking out Egypt, and Hezekiah was not guilty. It is important to note that Isaiah 30–31 never mentions Isaiah nor “the king.” Most, including myself, believe this is related to the run-up to 701 BC attack, but it’s not clear how guilty Hezekiah is.

Summary: “God condemns the people of Judah for not trusting him and instead leaning on Egypt, but he also promises in his grace to defeat the Assyrians (30:31). Such contradictory acts of God are possible because God is gracious and will lead his people to repent and rest in him for salvation (30:15). Then he will eventually transform their sinful world (30:23–26)” (Smith 2007: 508).

What is “Rahab” (v7)? “This final clause uses the name Rahab (51:9; Job 9:13; 26:12; Ps 87:4; 89:11), the great sea monster from ancient Near Eastern legends, as a symbol for Egypt. The final cryptic clause, “Rahab the Do-Nothing” (NIV), interprets “Do-Nothing” as a sarcastic name for this supposedly powerful monster. Beuken prefers to interpret this as Rahab “who sits still,” meaning that Egypt will not come to assist Judah in her conflict with Assyria. Another possible translation is Rahab the dead one. All these warnings argue for a policy that does not depend on Egypt. It makes no sense to trust in a political policy that is sure to fail. It is futile to follow a plan that God opposes” (Smith 2007: 513).

“Tell us pleasant things!” (v10): “There is irony in the prophet’s characterization of their wishes, but what it all boils down to is that these people are in effect demanding to be deceived by false assurances. This desire to optimistically believe that the love and grace of God will somehow make everything work out well in the end is still a false hope that many church attendees rely on today, even though their daily walk demonstrates that they have little interest in following the instructions in God’s Word” (Smith 2007: 514–15).

Blessing turned to curse (v17): “Since the nation did not trust God, his earlier blessing (Lev 26:8; Deut 32:30) will turn into a curse; thus, instead of one from Judah threatening one thousand, the reverse will happen (30:17; cf. Amos 5:2–3). This is a sign of a great military defeat for Judah, for all that will be left of Judah will be a measly flagpole or banner on a hill” (Smith 2007: 517).

God will wait (v18): “Therefore, since they will not wait for him, he must wait for them” (Webb 1996: 128).

v18 **“Scripture does not promise** a life without trouble or testing, but the person who faithfully waits for God to act is described as one who will experience blessed happiness (64:3; see Ps 33:19–21; Hab 2:3–4; Zeph 3:8–20; Dan 12:12)” (Smith 2007: 520).

Where do trials come from (v20)? “The text emphasizes that God “gives” (*nātan*) his people different experiences (also in v. 23; cf. Eccl 3:1–12), including times of adversity or punishment for sin” (Smith 2007: 521).

Teacher or teachers (vv20–21)? “NIV takes these as teachers (probably prophets) who will guide the people in God’s ways, but Oswalt argues that the singular verb points to a divine Teacher, God himself, who will instruct his people” (Smith 2007: 521).

v31 **“There is no need** to depend upon the Egyptians if God will consume the Assyrians in his wrath” (Smith 2007: 524).