

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Isaiah: Jahweh Is Salvation

Part XLVII: God's Woe On Those Who Trust In Material Might Versus God's Spiritual Power (Isaiah 31:1-9)

I. Introduction

- A. Judah's bent on trusting in Egypt for protection from Assyria arose from an underlying spiritual problem.
- B. Isaiah 31:1-9 addresses that problem, and we view this passage for our insight and direction today:

II. God's Woe On Those Who Trust In Material Might Versus God's Spiritual Power, Isaiah 31:1-9.

- A. Though Isaiah had already pronounced judgment on those in Judah who sought a treaty with Egypt to guard against Assyria (Isaiah 30:1-17), he had not yet addressed an underlying spiritual problem that led to that sin.
- B. Thus, Isaiah 31:1-9 addressed this problem, one that distorted Judah's view of **both** Egypt **and** Assyria:
 1. God critiqued Judah for relying on Egypt's material power over trusting in His Spirit's power, Isa. 31:1-3:
 - a. The Lord pronounced a woe on the pro-Egypt party in Judah who went to Egypt for help as they relied on Egypt's materially powerful horses, many chariots and strong horsemen instead of relying on the Holy One of Israel or consulting the Lord for advice regarding the threat of Assyrian invasion, Isaiah 31:1.
 - b. Since God does not decline to fulfill His words of judgment, being wise and bringing disaster on sinners, He would arise against the evildoers and against those who worked iniquity in disobeying Him in seeking help from Egypt against His Word, Isaiah 31:2 with Deuteronomy 17:16 with 28:15.
 - c. The underlying effort of the pro-Egypt party to seek Egypt's help was their reliance on material power, and God critiqued this errant trust in Isaiah 31:3: (1) The Egyptians were but men, not God; (2) their horses were but flesh, not spirit. (3) Thus, when the Creator God Who had initially formed both men and horses by His Spirit in Genesis 1 (cf. Genesis 1:2) stretched out His spiritual power to judge, Egypt as the helper of Judah would stumble and Judah as the dependent on Egypt would fall, with both alike perishing!
 2. God critiqued Judah for fearing Assyria's material power over trusting in His Spirit's power, Isaiah 31:4-9:
 - a. Continuing the thought of the superiority of the Creator God's spiritual power over the created material power of all the things that exist in the world, Isaiah noted that the Lord had told him that just as a great lion that growls over its prey, and a band of shepherds is called together against him with him not being at all frightened by the shouts or disturbance of the shepherds, so the Lord Almighty would come to do battle as a fearless Great Lion against energetic but helpless Assyria on Mount Zion and its heights, Isaiah 31:4.
 - b. Like birds hovering overhead, the Lord Almighty would shield Jerusalem and deliver it from Assyria, for He would "pass over" it and rescue it, Isa. 31:5 NIV. The verb "pass over" (**pasah**, Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 651), though here depicting God's passing overhead like a protective bird, also carries a second meaning as it is used elsewhere in the Old Testament only in Exodus 12 of God's 'passing over' Israel's homes in Egypt that were marked with the lamb's blood on the door posts -- the time when God **spiritually** defeated the **material** flesh of the firstborn in Egypt! (Ibid.) It was thus foolish for Judah now to seek **material** Egypt's protection from the **material** Assyrians when God by His **spiritual** power had slain the **material** Egyptians at the first "Passover" to deliver helpless Israel from Egyptian bondage, Exodus 2:23-25!
 - c. Isaiah thus called on the people of Judah to turn to the Lord from Whom they had so deeply revolted, for the day would come when they would all cast away their idols that they had sinfully made, Isaiah 31:6-7.
 - d. Applying this lesson to the dreaded Assyrians, God claimed that they too would fall by a sword, but not by man's sword, that the spiritual sword of the Lord would destroy them, Isaiah 31:8a.
 - e. The Assyrians would flee from the sword with their young male survivors being put to forced labor, a helpless group of men in contrast to their initially being so threatening to Judah's people, Isaiah 31:8b.
 - f. God claimed Assyria's stronghold of trust in its own power would pass away in terror with its military officers deserting the standard of their troop divisions. This claim came from the Lord whose fire on the Assyrians would be in Zion and Whose furnace of destruction for them would be in Jerusalem, Isaiah 31:9.

Lesson: *Judah's pro-Egypt party failed to trust in God's spiritual power over the material threat of Assyria and the material protection of Egypt, a futile way of thinking as God's Spirit powerfully created all such material entities, Genesis 1:2. Isaiah thus called Judah to return to the Lord and abandon all false idols and crutches for security.*

Application: *(1) May we view God's infinite creative spiritual power as superior to all material things. (2) May we then (a) neither dread anything material nor (b) trust in anything material versus revering and trusting in God.*