

The End is Near  
The Unseen Realm Fights Back...Unsuccessfully  
Isaiah 30:27–33

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Judah will be redeemed. There is no doubt about the future that YAHWEH has for them. Geopolitically though, the now for Judah is the Assyrian Empire. The previous administration under King Ahaz literally consorted with the devil and other fallen divine beings and all of that has come home to roost.

How badly did Ahaz mislead his people?

*2 Chronicles 28:25*

*“He made pagan shrines in all the towns of Judah for offering sacrifices to other gods. In this way, he aroused the anger of the LORD, the God of his ancestors.” (NLT)*

And that isn't all.

*2 Chronicles 28:16–23*

*“At that time King Ahaz of Judah asked the king of Assyria for help. The armies of Edom had again invaded Judah and taken captives. And the Philistines had raided towns located in the foothills of Judah and in the Negev of Judah. They had already captured and occupied Beth-shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, Soco with its villages, Timnah with its villages, and Gimzo with its villages. The LORD was humbling Judah because of King Ahaz of Judah, for he had encouraged his people to sin and had been utterly unfaithful to the LORD. So when King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria arrived, he attacked Ahaz instead of helping him. Ahaz took valuable items from the LORD's Temple, the royal palace, and from the homes of his officials and gave them to the king of Assyria as tribute. But this did not help him. Even during this time of trouble, King Ahaz continued to reject the LORD. He offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus who had defeated him, for he said, “Since these gods helped the kings of Aram, they will help me, too, if I sacrifice to them.” But instead, they led to his ruin and the ruin of all Judah.” (NLT)*

At the end of the day, King Ahaz was a 16-year continuing disaster. He personally sacrificed his own sons to Baal. He rejected YAHWEH and the proposed help of YAHWEH for the nation and the Davidic line. He never repented. Now his son Hezekiah is King.

Hezekiah is the complete opposite of his dad. He loved the Lord. *“He did what was pleasing in the LORD’s sight, just as his ancestor David had done. In the very first month of the first year of his reign, Hezekiah reopened the doors of the Temple of the LORD and repaired them.” (2 Chronicles 29:2–3, NLT)*

He restored Temple worship, had the priests and the Levites reconsecrated to the service of YAHWEH and reinstated Passover. *“When the festival ended, the Israelites who attended went to all the towns of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh, and they smashed all the sacred pillars, cut down the Asherah poles, and removed the pagan shrines and altars. After this, the Israelites returned to their own towns and homes.” (2 Chronicles 31:1, NLT)*

Things were turning around in Judah. The people were seeing the outbreak of revival and blessing because the King, the leader of their nation, was making a stand for the Lord. Sounds rather familiar these days doesn’t it. The enemy though does not give up easily. I am not referring to an earthly enemy here but fallen members of the unseen realm and those who are held prisoner by them.

*Ephesians 6:12*

*“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” (ESV)*

Hezekiah, a good and Godly King, began to do all of things normally expected of a King to protect his people from the enemy.

*2 Chronicles 32:1–3*

*“After these things and these acts of faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah and encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them for himself. And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and intended to fight against Jerusalem, he planned with his officers and his mighty men to stop the water of the springs that were outside the city; and they helped him.” (ESV)*

Here is the issue, the text in 2 Chronicles does not tell us that he sought the Lord first regarding preparations. Man’s wisdom is being used here.

This is the background leading up to chapter 30. The “deep state” has begun to move against Hezekiah. Jerusalem and Judah will be subjected to judgment. Yes, Hezekiah is a good King, but the people have had 16 years of idolatry being politically correct and they have willingly taken part. Even the Priests were no longer consecrated to Temple service.

Chapter 30 has been a response to some of the preparations taking place, pending and future judgments, and a forward look to the redemption of the nation, both near and far. Before all of that happens though, another word from YAHWEH through His prophet, Isaiah.

*Isaiah 30:27–33*

*“Behold, the name of the LORD comes from a remote place; Burning is His anger and dense is His smoke; His lips are filled with indignation And His tongue is like a consuming fire; His breath is like an overflowing torrent, Which reaches to the neck, To shake the nations back and forth in a sieve, And to put in the jaws of the peoples the bridle which leads to ruin. You will have songs as in the night when you keep the festival, And gladness of heart as when one marches to the sound of the flute, To go to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel. And the LORD will cause His voice of authority to be heard, And the descending of His arm to be seen in fierce anger, And in the flame of a consuming fire In cloudburst, downpour and hailstones. For at the voice of the LORD Assyria will be terrified, When He strikes with the rod. And every blow of the rod of punishment, Which the LORD will lay on him, Will be with the music of tambourines and lyres; And in battles, brandishing weapons, He will fight them. For Topheth has long been ready, Indeed, it has been prepared for the king. He has made it deep and large, A pyre of fire with plenty of wood; The breath of the LORD, like a torrent of brimstone, sets it afire.” (NASB95)*

This prophecy will have a near and far fulfillment.

From hence to the end of the chapter is a very full account, by way of prophecy, of the destruction of the Assyrian army by the Lord; and which is to be considered as a type of the destruction of antichrist, by and at the coming of the Lord Jesus. (Gill 1810, 176)

Is this a prophecy pointing to the soon coming assault from Assyria within the next year or is this pointing to the end of the age? Yes, to both. Let's unpack this.

*Isaiah 30:27–28*

*“Behold, the name of the LORD comes from a remote place; Burning is His anger and dense is His smoke; His lips are filled with indignation And His tongue is like a consuming fire; His breath is like an overflowing torrent, Which reaches to the neck, To shake the nations back and forth in a sieve, And to put in the jaws of the peoples the bridle which leads to ruin.” (NASB95)*

The message to Judah from YAHWEH through Isaiah has been consistent, the Egyptians are not the ones who are going to save you. In order to demonstrate this, His message begins with something seen elsewhere in scripture, a theophany, a visible manifestation of God, in judgment.

*Psalms 17:8–16 (LXX) (Psalm 18:8-16)*

*“And the earth was shaken and was trembling. And the foundations of the mountains were stirred up and shaken, because God was angered with them. Smoke went up with his wrath, and fire burst into flame before him. Coals were kindled from him. And he bent the heavens and came down. And darkness was under his feet. And he mounted upon cherubim and flew; he flew upon the wings of the wind. And he set darkness concealing him in a circle around him; his tent is a dark water in clouds of sky. From the brightness before him, the clouds go through, hail and coals of fire. And the Lord thundered from the heavens, and the most high gave his voice. And he dispatched arrows and scattered them, and he multiplied lightning strikes and confounded them. And the running waters of the rivers were seen, and the foundations of the inhabited world were uncovered from your censure, O Lord, from the breathing of the wind of your wrath.” (Lexham Press 2020, Psalm 17:8-16)*

Here, God is in the earthquake, is in the thunderstorm, is in the flood. The Lord's arrival is impossible to ignore, and the Lord comes to rebuke (v.15). (Jacobson and Tanner 2014, 198)

Here in Isaiah 30, “God is depicted as coming from a great distance on the wings of a storm. With whirlwind, cloudburst, and pelting hail he destroys his enemies.” (Oswalt 1986, 565)

Other similar theophany's can be seen in Psalm 50:3, Nahum 1:3-8 and Habakkuk 3:3-15 and that is not all of them.

In Isaiah 8:8, this imagery was used of Assyria who was to be used by YAHWEH as a tool of His judgment on the northern kingdom. Now, it is used as a description of judgment on Assyria.

*Isaiah 8:7–8*

*“Now therefore, behold, the Lord is about to bring on them the strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates, Even the king of Assyria and all his glory; And it will rise up over all its channels and go over all its banks. Then it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass through, It will reach even to the neck; And the spread of its wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.” (NASB95)*

There, the prophetic warning to Judah was that they would indeed sweep down to you as well. Now, that is about to take place, but YAHWEH has promised that He would take care of the problem Himself. Thus, the theophany now is directed towards Assyria. This is also a picture of how He will deal with “the Assyrian” at the end of the age.

The language of the theophany would have been understood by the pagan nations around Judah. The imagery would speak to them and their pagan traditions and stories of their gods and how they would appear. If an Assyrian were to read verse 27 and 28, they would understand what it is saying. This is a very real existential threat to them from the God of Israel, YAHWEH.

Isaiah begins the picture of judgment on Assyria with the arrival of the King who will be subjecting them to this judgment. Again, this is not just for the near future, but is also speaking to that day at the end of the age when “the Assyrian” and his armies surround Jerusalem and Messiah arrives to deliver His people. “Behold, the name of the Lord comes from a remote place...”

A close reading of scriptural references to God’s name shows that “the name” (Hebrew, ha-shem) is another way of referring to God himself. For example, Isaiah 30:27–28 uses “the Name” as a substitute for “Yahweh” and personifies “the Name.” (Heiser 2018, 59)

One should note that he does not say that the Lord himself will come, but the name of the Lord, thereby alluding to the Christ of God, concerning whom it has been said: “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.” (Eusebius of Caesarea 2013, 155)

This is YAHWEH specifically referring to the second power in Heaven. The Angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Christ.

His name is not just an arbitrary label, but the revelation of who he is. On the occasion celebrated here, he will reveal that nature again. In light of the strong language he uses to convey God’s judgment, Isaiah emphasizes that such actions reveal a fundamental aspect of who he is. As in the time of Egyptian bondage, God cannot redeem his people without defeating their oppressors. (Briley 2000-, 42)

*Isaiah 37:36*

*“Then **the angel of the LORD** went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, all of these were dead.” (NASB95)*

In the near term, it is the Angel of the Lord who deals with Assyria.

Perhaps the most well-known angel in the Old Testament is the one described specifically as the mal’āk YHWH, the “angel of the LORD.” This figure is actually Yahweh himself in the visible form of a man. Consequently, the angel of Yahweh is central to the concept of a Godhead (God being more than one person, each person being the same and not ontologically greater or lesser). This concept is at the heart of the ancient Jewish teaching that the Hebrew Bible bore witness to two Yahweh figures—“two powers” in heaven, one invisible and the other visible. (Heiser 2018, 57)

Considering that Isaiah 30:27 is pointing to the end of the age as well and the final battle of Armageddon where “the Assyrian” and his armies are ultimately destroyed, this fits as well.

*Revelation 19:11–19*

*“Then I saw heaven standing open, and there was a white horse! Its rider is named Faithful and True. He administers justice and wages war righteously. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many royal crowns. He has a name written on him that nobody knows except himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God. The armies of heaven, wearing fine linen, white and pure, follow him on white horses. A sharp sword comes out of his mouth to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod and tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and his thigh he has a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS Then I saw an angel standing in the sun. He cried out in a loud voice to all the birds flying overhead, “Come! Gather for the great supper of God. Eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of commanders, the flesh of warriors, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, both free and slaves, both unimportant and important.” Then I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army.” (ISV)*

The first half of verse 27 also says He is coming from a remote or distant far-off place. Hosea pinpointed the location for us.

*Hosea 5:15*

*“I will return again to my place, until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress earnestly seek me.” (ESV)*

He is at the right hand of the Father where He has been preparing a place for us. *“Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.” (Hebrews 8:1–2, ESV)*

The picture we see is that of the Son, as the Angel of the Lord and the Avenger of Blood defending His people and providing judgment on the Assyrian.

*Isaiah 30:27*

*“Behold, the name of the LORD comes from a remote place; Burning is His anger and dense is His smoke; His lips are filled with indignation And His tongue is like a consuming fire;” (NASB95)*

Burning with his anger is literally “his nose is burning,” which is a common Hebrew expression for showing anger (see, Num 11:1, for example). (Ogden and Sterk 2011, 818)

“...dense is His smoke”. “The burden thereof is heavy.” Some would render, “the smoke is dense.” But the other version is to be preferred, and implies that a heavier burden would alight on the oppressor than those on the people he had oppressed. (Birks 1878, 157)

His anger is severe and the burden on those who He is judging will be much heavier than what it is they did to Judah. This is vengeance and justice coming from YAHWEH.

*Isaiah 30:27b*

*“...His lips are filled with indignation And His tongue is like a consuming fire;” (NASB95)*

His tongue is His Word. This picture is also provided for us in the book of Revelation. *“In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword. His face was like the sun when it shines with full force.” (Revelation 1:16, ISV).*

This is also in Revelation 2:16, 19:15 and 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

*John 1:1–3*

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” (ESV)*

*2 Thessalonians 2:8–10*

*“Then the lawless one will be revealed, **whom the Lord will destroy with the breath of his mouth**, rendering him powerless by the manifestation of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be accompanied by the power of Satan. He will use every kind of power, including miraculous signs, lying wonders, and every type of evil to deceive those who are dying, those who refused to love the truth that would save them.” (ISV)*

This takes us to how the Lord judges the Assyrian at the end of the age, with a word. His tongue is a consuming fire.

*Isaiah 30:28*

*“His breath is like an overflowing torrent, Which reaches to the neck, To shake the nations back and forth in a sieve, And to put in the jaws of the peoples the bridle which leads to ruin.” (NASB95)*

His breath = His spirit. His spirit is like a gushing torrent.

The picture here is of an overflowing stream which overwhelms all who it flows over and forces all into a specific type of sieve. Those who pass through are doomed. The picture being given implies that those who are sifted out are then bridled in such a way as to guide them to their own destruction. About the type of sieve referenced here.

The word used is נָפֶת (nafa). "The two types of sieves used by Israelite farmers gave them different results. The kebara (Amos 9:9) had large holes that caught stones and other large objects as the worker shifted it back and forth. The sieve in this passage, the nafa, had smaller holes and was meant to separate out the smaller items from the grain through a swift up-and-down motion." (Matthews, Chavalas and Walton 2000, Is 20:28)

This idea of separating out good wheat from sand, chaff and other things from the wheat also carries into the New Testament.

*Matthew 13:36–42*

*"Then, leaving the crowds outside, Jesus went into the house. His disciples said, "Please explain to us the story of the weeds in the field." Jesus replied, "The Son of Man is the farmer who plants the good seed. The field is the world, and the good seed represents the people of the Kingdom. The weeds are the people who belong to the evil one. The enemy who planted the weeds among the wheat is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world, and the harvesters are the angels. Just as the weeds are sorted out and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the world. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will remove from his Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. And the angels will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (NLT)*

Yahweh will destroy his enemies like someone sifting worthless material from good material and destroying the worthless part. (Ogden and Sterk 2011, 819)

This verse also has the scope expanding beyond Assyria to the nations. This continues the theme from Genesis 11 and Deuteronomy 32. The nations, those peoples who have not been reconciled to the King, are the ones who will be compelled to come and attack Jerusalem at the end of the age.

*Zechariah 14:2–3*

*"And I will gather together all nations against Jerusalem for war, and the city will be conquered, and the houses will be snatched away, and the women will be defiled, and half of the city will go out in captivity; but the rest of my people will not be utterly destroyed from the city. And the Lord will go out and set up an army against those nations, just like the day of his arrangement in a day of war." (Lexham Press 2020, Zech 14:2-3)*

What these nations have in store for them is the wrath of the Lamb. This wrath, this judgment is being described here in Isaiah and an example of it is in what it is the Angel of the Lord does to the Assyrian army camped around Jerusalem.

*Zechariah 14:12–13*

*"But this will be the nature of the plague with which the LORD will strike all the nations that have fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh will decay while they stand on their feet, their eyes will rot away in their sockets, and their tongues will dissolve in their mouths. On that day there will be great confusion from the LORD among them; they will seize each other and attack one another violently." (NET)*

Which comes with great swiftness and force, bearing all before it, breathing out nothing but the fire of divine wrath, before which there is no standing; nor could the Assyrian army stand before it, but suddenly, in a moment, was carried away with the force of it: thus our Lord will consume the man of sin with the spirit or breath of his mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of his coming... (Gill 1810, 177)

In the near term, the Assyrian army came to take spoil, but suddenly, overnight, they were done. This is also what will happen at the end of the age.

*Isaiah 30:28*

*“And his breath like a raging torrent Reaching halfway up the neck— To set a misguiding yoke upon nations And a misleading bridle upon the jaws of peoples,” (Jewish Publication Society of America 1917, Is 30:28)*

This idea of driving those who are to be judged to the place where this will take place is also alluded to in the book of Ezekiel, there the term is used in relation to the Gog Magog war.

*Ezekiel 38:1–6*

*“This message from the LORD came to me: “Son of Man, turn your attention toward Gog, from the land of Magog, the chief noble of Meshech, and Tubal. Prophecy this against him: ‘This is what the Lord GOD says: “Watch out! I’m coming after you, Gog, chief ruler of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. I’m going to turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and bring you out—you and your whole army—along with your horses and cavalry riders, all of them richly attired, a magnificent company replete with buckler and shield, and all of them wielding battle swords. Persia, Cush, and Libya will be accompanying them, all of them equipped with shields and helmets. Gomer with all its troops, and the household of Togarmah from the remotest parts of the north with all its troops—many people will accompany you.” (ISV)*

*Isaiah 30:29*

*“You will have songs as in the night when you keep the festival, And gladness of heart as when one marches to the sound of the flute, To go to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel.” (NASB95)*

Because of the salvation of Jerusalem, there will be songs and praise. The picture is compared to the songs associated with Passover. Just as the Lord protected His people overnight in Egypt as the destroyer passed over their homes because of the blood applied, so they will celebrate as a result of the Angel of the Lord dealing with the Assyrians overnight and Messiah dealing with the armies of the Assyrian at the end of the age. Some Jewish teachers even go as far as to believe the Assyrians were destroyed on Passover.

### Jerusalem Talmud

[II:1 A] Said R. Yohanan in the name of R. Simeon b. Yehosedeq, “It is written, ‘For you, there shall be singing as on a night when a festival is hallowed’ (Isa. 30:29 [taken to be referring to Passover night]). [The obligation to recite the Hallel psalms on] Passover evening comes to teach [that in a similar way the Hallel psalms are to be recited] upon the downfall of Sennacherib.

[B] “And it turns out that from it [the downfall of Sennacherib, the following] is learned [regarding Passover:] Just as this [the occasion of Sennacherib’s downfall] requires [the recitation of] the Hallel [psalms], so that [the eating of the Passover offering at night] requires [the recitation of] the Hallel psalms.” [Since the verse is understood to compare the rejoicing at the downfall of Sennacherib with that of Passover evening, i.e., the first Passover, we can learn that Hallel must be recited in the evening, when the first Passover offering is being eaten, in accordance with M. 9:3C, not just in the afternoon when it is being slaughtered, as is required for the second Passover, M. 9:3D]. (Neusner and Zahavy 2008, y. Pesah. 9:3, II.1.A)

It is a common notion of the Jews, that the slaughter of the Assyrian army was on the night of the passover; that it was in the night is certain, 1 Kings 19:9 but that it was on the night of the passover is not certain... (Gill 1810, 177)

Praise and singing among those of His people saved. This praise and worship continues as well into the future as a remembrance on Passover, which is a remembrance of the blood applied, what Jesus Christ achieved on the cross.

Thus the Passover meal was not only a memorial, but also a sacrificial meal involving the feeding upon lambs which had been offered to make atonement for the forgiveness of sins. This Passover meal was replaced in the new covenant by the Lord's Supper which was instituted by Christ while eating a Passover meal with his disciples on the night in which he was betrayed. (Keidel 1974, 320)

The deliverance achieved by Messiah at Armageddon will also be a subject of memorial, worship and praise as well. Isaiah has already alluded to that.

In the word *châg* (feast), which is generally used with special reference to the feast of tabernacles, there is here an unmistakable allusion to the passover, as we may see from the introduction of "the night," which evidently means the night before the passover (*lêl shimmurîm*, Ex. 12:42), which was so far a festal night, that it preceded and introduced the feast of unleavened bread. The prophet has taken his figure from the first passover-night in Egypt, when Israel was rejoicing in the deliverance which it was just about to receive, whilst the destroying angel was passing through the land. (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 326)

Those who are being judged by the Lord though will experience His burning anger, His indignation, His judgment. The next verse shows us what they experience.

*Isaiah 30:30*

*"And the LORD will cause His voice of authority to be heard, And the descending of His arm to be seen in fierce anger, And in the flame of a consuming fire In cloudburst, downpour and hailstones." (NASB95)*

Since the time that Jonah went through Nineveh resulting in the repentance of the city, the Assyrians have not listened to the voice of the Lord. They were used by YAHWEH to judge the Northern Kingdom, but they went beyond what it is He wanted them to do. They would hear his voice of authority on the hills of Judea.

At the end of the age, we are told that it is His voice, His word that is the cause of the demise of the Assyrian and his armies. *"From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty." (Revelation 19:15, ESV)*

The Lord is acting according to His word, His voice. The reference to His arm is significant as well. A Jewish reader would remember that it is that arm that brought the people out of Egypt (Deuteronomy 4:34, 5:15, 7:19, 11:2). Jeremiah tells us it is that His arms made the heavens and the earth (Jeremiah 32:17.) Only one descending arm is needed to deal with Assyria.

*Isaiah 30:30b*

*"...And in the flame of a consuming fire In cloudburst, downpour and hailstones." (NASB95)*

One of the plagues which was seen in Egypt involved this strange combination of fire and hail, a clear sign of judgment.

*Exodus 9:23–24*

*"When Moses extended his staff toward the sky, the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire fell to the earth; so the LORD caused hail to rain down on the land of Egypt. Hail fell and fire mingled with the hail; the hail was so severe that there had not been any like it in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation." (NET)*

This also shows up as the first trumpet judgment in Revelation 8.

*Revelation 8:7*

*"The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up." (NASB95)*



Part of this theme is hail. Hail shows up multiple times in the Bible as a form of judgment usually tied to judgment on those who have blasphemed.

The term blasphemy normally refers to verbal slander against God. However, acts of slander can also count as blasphemy. (Bock 2013, 84)

Sennacherib blasphemed YAHWEH as did his officials. The penalty for blasphemy is stoning. That is a penalty that carries through into the Tribulation. As we examine the new testament, we see Jesus telling the Pharisees, who had just attributed His work through the power of the Holy Spirit, to Satan. Jesus tells them *“For this reason I tell you, people will be forgiven for every sin and blasphemy, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.”* (Matthew 12:31, NET)

In Revelation 16, we see the torrent on those who have been sifted out.

*Revelation 16:17–21*

*“Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, “It is done.” And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. **And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.**”* (NASB95)

*Isaiah 30:31–32*

*“For at the voice of the LORD Assyria will be terrified, When He strikes with the rod. And every blow of the rod of punishment, Which the LORD will lay on him, Will be with the music of tambourines and lyres; And in battles, brandishing weapons, He will fight them.”* (NASB95)

Sennacherib's own court records have been recovered, and while he boasts of taking 200,150 Jewish prisoners and shutting Hezekiah up in his city “like a bird in a cage,” he never claims to have taken Jerusalem. The records are silent about the loss of his army, but that is not surprising since conquerors do not boast about their defeats. It is interesting, however, that the Greek historian Herodotus reports that Sennacherib did suffer massive losses—supposedly due to field mice who ate the army's weapons and left the men exposed to destruction by an unnamed enemy. (Richards 1997, 41-42)

Herodotus is the historian who reported that mice were behind the destruction of a significant piece of the Assyrian army. Josephus reports that this was done by God.

The Assyrian ruler reports moving on Jerusalem, taking money from Jerusalem, but he does not say he took Jerusalem, fought a battle, or won. Instead, he tries to explain away why Hezekiah, who rebelled, is still alive and on the throne.

The picture provided in verse 29 & 30 shows the dramatic difference between those who rely on God and those who do not. His people are rejoicing and singing while at the same time, judgment is falling upon those who do not follow God. For many today, this is disturbing, but it is not a new concept. This is not a new picture. Verse 31 tells us the praise is taking place as the judgment is.

This picture was seen earlier in Judea with King Jehoshaphat. A military invasion in that case came from Ammon, Moab and Edom. Judah prays. God responds. The people mobilize but sing worship songs while God deals with the enemy.

#### 2 Chronicles 20:14–17

*“With respect to Uzziel the son of Zechariah, from the sons of Eliel, the son of Mattaniah, the Levite from the sons of Asaph, a spirit of the Lord came upon him in the assembly. He said, “Hear, all Judah and the ones who dwell in Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat. Thus, says the Lord to you: ‘Do not fear them nor be scared from the face of this large crowd, because the line for battle is not for you but rather it is for God. Tomorrow go down upon them. Look, they are going up according to the ascent of Ziz, and you will find them upon the pinnacle of the river in the desert of Jeruel. It is not for you to make war. Take note of these things and observe the deliverance of the Lord with you. Look, even Jerusalem, be neither scared nor afraid of this, to go out to meet them, and the Lord will be with you.’ ”” (Lexham Press 2020, 2 Chron 20:14-17)*

#### 2 Chronicles 20:20–22

*“They arose early in the morning and went into the desert of Tekoa, and when they went out, Jehoshaphat stopped and shouted, “Hear me, Judah and the ones who dwell in Jerusalem! Trust in the Lord, your God, and you will be trusted. Trust in his prophet, and you will be successful.” He planned with the people and placed psalmists and those who praise to acknowledge and to praise the sacred things when they went out before the army and said, “Acknowledge the Lord, because his mercy is for eternity.” When they began the acknowledging praise of him, the Lord made the sons of Ammon make war upon Moab and Mount Seir, who were coming out against Judah, and they were put to flight.” (Lexham Press 2020, 2 Chron 20:20-22)*

What do we learn from all of this? For us as believers in the 21st century, the takeaway is rather simple, but it is hard to do. The outline is found in Proverbs 3:5 & 6.

1. Trust in the Lord and no one else
2. Do not rely on your own understanding of the situation
3. Acknowledge and praise Him
4. Let Him do it.

We revert to our fallen nature and want to work things out. We want to be in control. Waiting on the Lord is hard but necessary for God is still on the throne.

For the Assyrian army, destruction is assured. They are doomed. Over the course of one night the army will be decimated. Isaiah has prophesied this more than once by this time.

Is the faith there? Diplomats have already left King Hezekiah's court and gone to Egypt to work out a deal.

Historians look at this and try to reconcile what happened. They put more weight in the words of Sennacherib than the word of God. The search is on for a reasonable explanation that is not driven by a belief in the supernatural. If you read what happened and take it at face value, the question is easy...what will you do with the God of Israel?

### Herodotus

[4] So he trusted the vision, and together with those Egyptians who would follow him camped at Pelusium, where the road comes into Egypt; and none of the warriors would go with him, but only merchants and craftsmen and traders. [5] Their enemies came there, too, and during the night were overrun by a horde of field mice that gnawed quivers and bows and the handles of shields, with the result that many were killed fleeing unarmed the next day. (Herodotus 1920, Herodotus, Hist. 2.141.4)

## Josephus

5. (21) “Now when Sennacherib was returning from his Egyptian war to Jerusalem, he found his army under Rabshakeh his general in danger [by a plague], for God had sent a pestilential distemper upon his army; and on the very first night of the siege, a hundred fourscore and five thousand, with their captains and generals, were destroyed, (22) So the king was in a great dread, and in a terrible agony at this calamity; and being in great fear for his whole army, he fled with the rest of his forces to his own kingdom, and to his city Nineveh; (23) and when he had abode there a little while, he was treacherously assaulted, and died by the hands of his elder sons, Adrammelech and Seraser, and was slain in his own temple, which was called Araske. Now these sons of his were driven away, on account of the murder of their father, by the citizens, and went into Armenia, while Assarachoddas took the kingdom of Sennacherib.” And this proved to be the conclusion of this Assyrian expedition against the people of Jerusalem. (Josephus 1987, Antiquities 10.21. 267)

As God judges Assyria, God's people praise Him. Just like under King Jehoshaphat.

The verse announces the identity of YHWH, celebrated in Jerusalem's worship, with God who controls the giants of history. Every military blow against Assyria will coincide with representations in the temple's worship. (Watts 2005, 475)

As we have also already seen in Isaiah 26, there are two sides to the judgement of YAHWEH, those whom He loves and protects versus those whom He punishes. Joy brought on by faith versus suffering brought on by self-will.

*Isaiah 26:20–21*

*“Come, my people, enter into your rooms And close your doors behind you; Hide for a little while Until indignation runs its course. For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; And the earth will reveal her bloodshed And will no longer cover her slain.” (NASB95)*

*Isaiah 30:33*

*“For Topheth has long been ready, Indeed, it has been prepared for the king. He has made it deep and large, A pyre of fire with plenty of wood; The breath of the LORD, like a torrent of brimstone, sets it afire.” (NASB95)*

Topheth תֹּפֶת - Place of burning; burning; a place abhorred; place of graves; detestable. (Smith and Cornwall 1998, 240)

Topheth was just down the hill from the Temple in the Hinnom valley.



(Bolen 2012, Used with Permission)

Ancient Jewish tradition has it that there were many drummers and musicians who drowned out the screams of the young consigned to the flames, so that the parents of these wretched children would not perceive their terror. (Muldur 2006, 754)

...the author says that Assyria's funeral pyre, like the Lord's rod, has stood ready from ancient days. All it wants is the Lord's breath to kindle it into flame (cf. 31:9). So again Isaiah is counseling his people that they need not go to Egypt out of fear of Assyria. What they should do is to move even closer to the only One in the universe who truly holds Assyria's destiny in his hand. (Oswalt 1986, 569)

Judah wound up having to deal with thousands of dead bodies. The logical place for them to burn them would have been the Hinnom valley, literally Topheth, the same place that was used by Ahaz and later by Manasseh for worship and sacrifice to Molech. It was in this valley that much of the Assyrian army would have camped as it is direct across from the City of David. This valley carried such a history with it that Jesus referred to the valley as well when He discussed Hell. The term He used was Gehenna, which derives from the valley of Hinnom.

This is also a problem to be faced at the end of the age as well.

*Ezekiel 38:22*

*"With pestilence and with blood I will enter into judgment with him; and I will rain on him and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire and brimstone."*  
(NASB95)

God deals with the gathered hordes with the same elements Isaiah discussed in verse 30 and doubles down on fire by also including sulfur as well. The supposed weapon of choice for Baal was fire, there is a reason why the God of the universe is making the statements He is making about using fire. This recalls the judgment God rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah. The destruction, at the end of the age, of this large army will again require a large number of burials to take place.

### Ezekiel 39:11–15

*“On that day I will give Gog a burial ground there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea, and it will block off those who would pass by. So they will bury Gog there with all his horde, and they will call it the valley of Hamon-gog. For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land. Even all the people of the land will bury them; and it will be to their renown on the day that I glorify Myself,” declares the Lord GOD. “They will set apart men who will constantly pass through the land, burying those who were passing through, even those left on the surface of the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search. As those who pass through the land pass through and anyone sees a man’s bone, then he will set up a marker by it until the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog.” (NASB95)*

There is a lot more going on here than just clogging up a valley with a lot of bodies. It also speaks about the final judgment on the demons and the Rephaim and the location is in the Valley of the Travelers. An unidentified valley E of the Dead Sea in which, during the latter days, the Israelites would bury Gog and his hordes after they had been slain by Yahweh (Ezek 39:11). Subsequently, the valley would be called the “Valley of Hamon-gog (i.e., Valley of the Multitude of Gog). (Ferch 1992, 653)

This verse has a lot going on in it.

Another way to look at this last verse is that Topheth, which is in Hinnom, is tied later, by Jesus, to describe hell. “In hell, the fire is the wrath of God; the wood or fuel ungodly men: the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it; the pile of fire and wood. The Targum is, “the word of the Lord, like an overflowing torrent of brimstone, shall kindle it;” it shall be done by his order, at his word of command. In hell, the wrath of God will be like a continual stream of brimstone, keeping up the fire of it, so that it shall ever burn, and never be quenched; hence it is called a lake burning with fire and brimstone; into which Satan, the beast, and false prophet, and the worshippers of antichrist, will be cast, Rev. 14:10 and 19:20 and 20:10 and 21:8. The allusion is to the fire and brimstone rained by Jehovah, from Jehovah, upon Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. 19:24.” (Gill 1810, 178-179)

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