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The Voice of the LORD Will Shatter Assyria

30: 27-33

The voice of the LORD will shatter Assyria DIG: What images, names, and verbs are associated with God? What do these teach you about who the LORD is, what He does, and why? What will happen to Assyria at Topeth (see Jeremiah 7:31-32, 19:12-14)? How did the LORD shatter Assyria?

REFLECT: When we pray Your Kingdom come, what does that imply about those who resist God and are not part of His Kingdom? Should one rejoice at the thought of God's judgment? Why or why not? Knowing the LORD's judgment is certain, how does that strengthen you to keep on following Him? God intended to deliver Judah even while she persisted in rebellion. What hope does that offer you (see Romans 5:8)?

These verses combine the “now” and the “not yet” of the believer's life in an important way. The “now” that **Isaiah** spoke of was for **him** and **his** generation, prophesying that **the Assyrian** army, which was surrounding **Jerusalem**, would be defeated (**37:36**). This occurred in 701 BC. **ADONAI**, in **His raging anger**, would rush against **His** enemies. But in addition to this **near historical prophecy**, **Isaiah** and **his** generation also looked forward to the ultimate protection of **Messiah** in the Messianic Kingdom.

We experience the blessings of today, all the time knowing that there are incredibly greater blessings to come on the other side of the grave. This is the “not yet” aspect in the life of a believer. However, the modern secular view denies that there is any other world than this one. The secularist believes that the physical-material world is all there is. But the biblical world is markedly different. It insists this is a real world, where real decisions of great consequence are to be made. We may choose to make our lives here and now better, or we may choose to make them worse. But why is this world real? Because it is the product of the invisible Creator, and that leads us to the realization that as real as this world is, it is only of a larger reality that includes the unseen world.

Thus, believers live in two worlds. We live here and now and confront “the Assyrians” of our everyday life. We seek to live as obedient subjects of the Kingdom of **God** this very day. But

at the same time, we know that there is more to come. Just because “Assyria” is defeated today does not mean that there are no more “Assyrians” ahead. And we see a world where the kingship of **the Creator** is not yet fully worked out. So, we live faithfully and confidently today, looking to the last day when all **God’s** enemies will be defeated forever, and when **He** will ascend **His** throne and rule **His** happy subjects forever.¹⁰⁸

Isaiah catapults us back to the present situation that presented itself to **Judah**. With respect to **the Assyrian** threat, would **she** trust **ADONAI** or **Egypt**? **God’s** prophet prophesied that **the Assyrian** army (**30:31**), which was surrounding **Jerusalem**, would be defeated (**to see link click Gw - Then the Angel of the LORD Put to Death a Hundred and Eighty Five Thousand Men in the Assyrian Camp**). **God** is shown as coming from a great distance on the wings of a storm. **See, the Name of the LORD comes from afar, with burning anger and dense clouds of smoke; His lips are full of wrath, and His tongue is a consuming fire** to overcome **His** enemies (**30:27**). Neither **Assyria**, nor **her** king, could escape the wrath of **ADONAI**.



The Name of the LORD points specifically to **God’s** character as redeemer (see my commentary on **The Exodus Bz - Redemption**). It is important to understand that this appearance of **Him** should begin with **His Name**. For **His** character and **His Name** had been slandered by both the leaders and people of **Judah** by trusting in **Egypt**. **He** would vindicate **His Name** by delivering **Jerusalem** from the very **Assyrian** army that had sent **them** to **Egypt** for help.

His breath is like a rushing torrent, rising up to the neck (30:28a). This speaks of wadis, or gulches, which are normally dry but can be a **rushing torrent** in a matter of minutes as a result. Therefore, because **His Name** was slandered by **the king of Assyria (37:9-13)**, **he** and **his** nation will be shaken by **the strainer of destruction**. **He places in the jaws of the peoples a bit that leads them astray (30:29b)**. Each of these figures leads to destruction: the **rushing torrent** of drowning, **the strainer** to divide the good

grain from the useless chaff, and the **bit** that leads an unbreakable horse to its death.¹⁰⁹
They will be up to their neck in trouble.

The defeat of **Assyria** would result in a new Passover song for **Isra'el**. **ADONAI** said through **His prophet**, “**And you will sing as on the night you celebrate a holy festival**” (30:29a). At the time of **Isra'el's** national salvation there will be a song in **the night**. **Their hearts will rejoice as when people go up with flutes to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel (30:29b)**. This joy of **God's** judgment is also seen in **Psalm 91:2-3**. It is not odd **Assyria's** destruction should be compared to a time of feasting. Biblical **feasts** were first and foremost times of rejoicing over **ADONAI's** acts of deliverance. It was as if **God** was saying, “You have abandoned **Me** because you thought **I** could not help you. That abandonment will bring destruction upon you. But despite bringing **the Assyrians** against you, I have not abandoned you. The proof is that one day you will be able to rejoice over what I have done.

Theirs was the song, but **His** is the victory. **The LORD** alone **will cause men to hear His majestic voice and will make them see His arm coming down with raging anger and consuming fire, with cloudburst, thunderstorm and hail (30:30)**. **Judah** would be a joyous spectator to these acts. **Isaiah** prophesied that **God** would fight **Assyria in battle with the blows of His arm (30:32)**. Here **Isaiah** introduces the concept of **the arm of the LORD**. It will be developed further in the book as **Isaiah** expands our understanding of this phrase. This is the first of nine times it is used by **Isaiah (40:10, 50:2, 51:5 and 9, 52:10, 53:1, 59:1 and 16, 62:8, 63:5)**.

Merely by the command **of His voice, ADONAI will shatter Assyria; with His scepter He will strike them down (30:31a)**. **Assyria** had claimed to hold the **scepter** of the world; but in reality, **ADONAI** held that **scepter** and would shortly strike down the imposter outside the gates of Jerusalem. The point is, what **God** will do in the future against all the nations, **He** will now do to **Assyria**. This would cause **Judah** to rejoice. **Every stroke the LORD lays on them with His punishing rod will be to the music of tambourines and harps (30:31b)**. The reference to **tambourines and harps** reminds us of Jehoshaphat's defeat of the Edomites (**Second Chronicles 20:13-30**). All **Isra'el** had to do was to praise **God** in confidence and receive **His** blessing.

God's war is specifically against the Assyrian **king** who will be defeated. **Topeth has long been prepared; it had been made ready for Sennacherib, the king. Its fire pit has been made deep and wide, with an abundance of fire and wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of burning sulfur, sets it ablaze (30:33)**. The result is the

preparation of **Topeth**, which is the same as the Valley of Ben Hinnon, a valley on the southern side of **Jerusalem**. In Greek, it was called the Valley of Gehenna. It was a place where human sacrifices were offered by the kings of **Judah** to the god Molech (**2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chro 28:3, 33:6; Jer 7:31-32, 19:2-14**). The people of **Jerusalem** dumped **their** garbage there and burned it. Therefore, it was a place of continual burning. Later, the homeless dead, with no one to claim their bodies, were thrown in the fire. It eventually became a symbol of hell. **Isaiah** says that hell is already prepared **for the Assyrian king**.

The expression: **Topeth has long been prepared** means *has been prepared since yesterday*. Hell *has been prepared since yesterday for the king of Assyria*. It is from this expression of *yesterday* that **the rabbis came up with the theory that hell was made on the second day of creation. Because that was the first day that could have a yesterday. For this reason, they said that no blessing could be pronounced on that day. Every other day God said it was good, but He doesn't say that on the second day (because, the rabbis would say, hell was not good)**. Once again **Isaiah** is counseling **His people** that **they** need not seek an alliance with **Egypt** because of **their** fear of **Assyria**. What **they** really needed to do was to draw closer to the One who truly held **Assyria's** destiny in **His** hand.