In time of need/trouble look and depend upon the LORD for help! Is.31-33! Rv.

The book of Isaiah is a spectacular book about God, about how God's people should live, and about his purposes for His people. Chapters 31-33 appear midway through Isaiah's lengthy book. They are addressed originally to the people of Jerusalem-the people of Zion-during the reign of Hezekiah. This is sometime around 701 B.C. The background for Isaiah's message in these three chapters is the looming and threatening invasion of Jerusalem by Sennacherib. The main theme throughout these three chapters is the call by Isaiah to the people of Zion to turn to Yahweh. It is a call for the people of Zion to look to and to rely upon their God to help them in their time of desperate need.

Along with this theme to turn to God, Isaiah calls for God's people to stop relying upon their own resources or to stop relying upon other people to help them. Recent events have clearly shown that human resources are woefully inadequate to help them. Yet in this current threatening situation which seems hopeless from a human perspective, Isaiah addresses the people of Jerusalem with an encouraging word. God has not abandoned them! In these three chapters, Isaiah calls God's people to look to Yahweh for help and protection. Yahweh cares! Yahweh, not Egypt, has the resources and can be counted upon to help and deliver them in a time of desperate need. These three chapters function to drive home this important truth. These chapters also address key factors that Isaiah hopes will enable his skeptical hearers to accept his message and to turn to Yahweh for the help that they need.

I. Isaiah calls upon the people of Jerusalem to depend upon the LORD. (Ch. 31) Chapter 31 is the first of three chapters calling upon the people of God to look to and depend upon the LORD for help that they need in this desperate time. Isaiah makes two points to support this main point. 1) The foolishness of trusting merely human resources to deal with their threat. 2) The LORD is the Holy One of Israel. He is God. Thus, he alone has supernatural resources at his command to protect and deliver his city and his people from Assyria's threat.

A. Egypt cannot be depended upon to help Zion against the impending threat. (31:1-3) Recall that Isaiah has strongly condemned the Jerusalem leaders for turning to Egypt for military help. (30:1-5). The politicians thought that this was a prudent move on their part. Isaiah thought that it was both foolish and rebellious, declaring that the anticipated help from Egypt will prove to be "useless". Isaiah in these first three verses of chapter 31 attacks the very ground of the leaders' confidence or the wise decision to turn to Egypt for help. Egypt from a human point of view, looked strong and possessed the necessary resources needed to help Judah in her time of need. Isaiah declares that this perception is ultimately false. Despite the "multitude of her chariots and the great strength of her horsemen" Egypt's help is useless. Despite appearances she will not be of any help to Judah. Egypt would not be a dependable source of help. Why? Isaiah tells us. "But the Egyptians are men and not God. The implication is that their strength is human-their resources are human as well. Thus their resources are limited. Besides verse three also implies that the LORD is not only not limited as the Egyptians because He is not human. This is true. Yet, Isaiah declares that Yahweh is also actively working against the Egyptians, causing the Egyptians to suffer defeat. "He stretches out his hand against them." (vs. 3)

B. The LORD -Israel's Holy One- is God. He is dependable. He will come down and fight for his people. (31:4-9) In contrast to the uselessness of turning to Egypt for help, Yahweh is presented as a reliable source of help that the people can turn to in their hour of desperation. Overall the next six verses seek to portray the LORD as the mighty King of heaven having incredible resources at his disposal to come down and intervene to fight and rescue his people. "So the LORD Almighty will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and on its heights... the LORD Almighty (Yahweh of Hosts) will shield and deliver
Isaiah pictures the LORD as a mighty warrior fighting and shielding his people. Isaiah also pictures God to be like a fearless lion roaring against shepherds who have come to drive the lion away. Isaiah declares: "he is not frightened or disturbed by the clamor of their shouts." Point: God is not in the slightest way intimidated by the threats Assyria is making against his people. Why? Because Sennacherib and the Assyrians are mortal men. They are human. They have only metal swords. God has his supernatural resources at his command. Assyria will fall due to supernatural means. ""Assyria will fall by a sword that is not of man, a sword, not of mortals will devour (or consume them). " God who is a consuming fire " whose fire is in Zion" will destroy Assyria. Isaiah in verse 6 holds out this amazing hope to the people of Jerusalem. The people in response must turn to the One who alone has the necessary resources that they need because God alone has the supernatural resources at his disposal to deliver them from their threat.

II. Learning to be and become noble rather than being a fool. (Ch.32) In my introduction to chapters 31-33, I asserted that the three chapters 31-33 all were focused upon the central theme of looking to and depending upon the LORD for help. A quick reading of chapter 32 might call this viewpoint into question, since there is not one single reference to "depending upon the LORD". Perhaps I am wrong! But overall, I see that this section is not unrelated nor irrelevant to what Isaiah has been talking about so far. The teaching of this chapter, like the previous chapters, seems to have been given by Isaiah at a time just prior to Sennacherib’s impending invasion of Jerusalem. I submit that the 2nd half of the chapter (9-20) focuses upon the foolishness and danger that stems from having ones trust and security in a misplaced or in the wrong source. Whereas verses 1-8, condemns the current foolish leadership of Jerusalem for being blind and refusing to listen to God or to rely upon Him to help them in their time of need.

A. One Day noble leaders will reign over Jerusalem. (1-8) Abruptly, Isaiah changes his subject which had been his focus in chapter 31. Isaiah moves from announcing the threat of the complete destruction which is about to come upon Assyria by God, to suddenly talking about a king (who will come and who will reign in righteousness. Those associated with this coming righteous king’s rule will also rule with justice. (vs.1) This is a theme that Isaiah has declared from the beginning of his book. Jerusalem will be restored to become a faithful city- a city of righteousness. (C1:26) This theme of a coming righteous ruler is further elaborated in chapters 9 & 11 as we have previously observed. There Isaiah looked forward to a coming day when a righteous king would come and rule with righteousness over God’s people. (C 9:7). Now once again Isaiah seems to be picking up this theme once again. Verse two singles out two key related results that stem from the rule of a king who rules rightly: The people under this king’s righteous rule would enjoy security & relief from threats against them. Note the poetic language that Isaiah uses to impress this idea upon us. " Each person ( the coming ruler(s)) will be like a shelter or shield from the wind and a refuge from the storm." the dominant idea in both statements of shelter and refuge is protection. This king will also be like "streams of water in the desert." The idea here is that water provides satisfaction or relief from the need of oppression of thirst. This is followed by the picture of the king’s rule providing "the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land." Again the idea is relief or protection from oppressive heat. This is what a righteous or noble king does by his righteous or noble rule. In contrast to the noble king’s rule, the rule of a fool or someone who is not righteous is described by Isaiah in verses 3-8. The implied point is this is Isaiah’s evaluation of the current leadership including Hezekiah. They are fools. They are not righteous. The results of their foolish thinking, speaking, and decisions are seen by the current crisis that threatens Jerusalem.

B. The foolish characteristics of the current vs future noble leaders. (3-8) In the next 5 verses Isaiah spells out but does not explicitly target by name the current leaders who are responsible for the
current crisis. But the significant expression "then the eyes who see will no longer be closed " is a clue to understanding that not only will the future leader or leaders not be guilty of having these qualities; but this statement reveals what the current leadership including Hezekiah is characterized by: they are condemned for being fools. 1) the leaders think that they are wise and have understanding. Isaiah declares: Their eyes are closed. The current leaders do not know God or his ways. They refuse to listen to God. ( vs.3) 2) These rulers are highly respected and called noble. The reality is that they are fools who speak, act, and think senselessly or foolishly. (vs.6) 3) The leaders are not only guilty of thinking senselessly or stupidly, but are guilty of being evil. (vs.6). This caught me by surprise. Isaiah emphasizes strongly that those who were supposed to be righteous and practice justice in their leadership are guilty of wrongdoing and evil. The verses beginning with verse 6 paint a vivid picture of the current leadership being not just fools; but fools bent on doing evil. "His mind is busy with evil." "He practices ungodliness." "He spreads error concerning the LORD." "The hungry he leaves empty." The thirsty he withholds water." This is a damning description of the leadership of Jerusalem. This is what was contrary to the picture demanded of a righteous or noble leader.

C. The Women of Jerusalem are condemned for their foolishness as well. (vs.9-20)

The issue here also seems unrelated and not relevant to the overall issue of relying upon the LORD and not upon oneself or anyone else. Yet upon a closer look of this section will reveal that this section also contributes to saying something we should remember and take to heart. What is the central issue of these twelve verses? Security. Where did Jerusalem—where do we place our ultimate security in or upon? Isaiah addresses this issue and how it affects the women of Jerusalem. But the women only serve as an example for the entire people, since both men and women are affected by the issue raised in this section. I want you to see that from the beginning of this unit until the end, the theme of security especially is found in the idea of who or what one places one’s trust or confidence in, and the resulting sense of security that the trust brings. This is the unifying and dominant concern of the section.

1) The danger of a misplaced trust. Right from the beginning of this 2nd unit of chapter 32, Isaiah addresses the women of Jerusalem as "those who feel secure" [three times in three verses]. These women are also at the same time described as being complacent (vs.9, 11) or being at ease or comfortable. They are enjoying life. The harvest is good. They have no worries. Other people have problems, but they do not. Their homes are filled with merriment. They feel at ease and complacent. So what is wrong with that? Isaiah does not explicitly tell us. We must dig a little in order to get an answer. I see the following three points that Isaiah seems to want us to see. 1) Isaiah condemns the women for being blind and not listening to God. The men were deemed fools for not listening to God and putting their trust in the wrong things. The women of Jerusalem are fools for thinking that their present circumstances of peace and security would last indefinitely. The women were likewise guilty of enjoying their state of security and ease for the wrong reason. Their security was not based upon the LORD. They were not trusting Him for their security.

2) Disaster is coming. "In little more than a year" the fruitful vines and pleasant fields of crops will end. "grape harvest will fail" "land will be overgrown with thorns. It will become a wasteland or desert." No reason is cited. Perhaps due to Assyria. Perhaps due to a blight. Ultimately God is the one making the land a desert. The women are challenged to tremble and to mourn and do what? According to Isaiah earlier words Turn back to God. Rely upon Him. Repent of their wrong doing. (31:6)

3) God promises to make Jerusalem flourish and secure once again. (32:15-20) After declaring doom and disaster coming upon Jerusalem and describing how the city will be abandoned and the land becoming a desert; Isaiah in the final five verses declares that the city and land will be restored,
thrive and be secure once again. "The desert will become a fertile field" and the "fertile field will become a forest." (v.15) Note the emphasis on security. "My people will live in peaceful dwelling places in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest." (vs, 16) Note the implied emphasis of urging the people to believe that the impossible will happen. "though hail flattens the forest, and the city is leveled completely, how blessed you will be." But this begs the question: How? God will make it happen. He will pour out His Spirit from on high. (Vs.15) This is what makes the desert flourish once again. This is what assures God's people that they will live in peace and security. But note also that recurring emphasis upon God's righteousness prevails in this renewed land, city, and people. "Justice will dwell in the desert. and righteousness in the fertile field." This too is a result of God pouring out his Spirit from on high. Note also and ponder Isaiah point between righteousness and security. "The effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. (vs.17)

III. Listen Up Everyone: God is about to rise up to Fight and Deliver his people in Jerusalem.(C33)

Chapter 33 is the third and concluding chapter that focuses upon the theme of **God being a dependable source of help for his people**. This chapter like the previous two chapters is set against the background of Assyria's impending invasion of Jerusalem. This threat seemed overwhelming. The leaders had exhausted all other means to protect themselves from Assyria advance. An alliance with Egypt had failed. Lastly, Jerusalem sent a sizable monetary tribute to Sennacherib in order to buy off his attack. Sennacherib took the silver and gold and decided to attack Jerusalem as well. 1 Against this background Isaiah concludes his book to this point. Isaiah conveys key ideas that he wants his listeners to know, remember, and take to heart. The chapter can be divided into the following sub units. 1. Introduction and Summary of Isaiah main points of the chapter. (vs. 1-6) 2. The promise that God will intervene on his people's behalf. (vs.7-16) 3. The results of God's intervention. (vs.17-24)2

A. Announcement that the exalted lord of heaven is about to take action. (vs. 1,3, 4) On a quick reading it may appear that there is no focus or unity to the first six verses of this chapter. Not so! The chapter is focused upon God getting ready to take action to save and fight for his people once again. The image of God as a warrior who is the LORD of armies-the LORD almighty who will come down from heaven and do battle on Mount Zion. He is the one who was previously depicted in chapter 32 as stretching out his hand and fighting his enemies with a supernatural sword (31:3.8). Here Isaiah adds to this existing picture of God by declaring that "at the sound or thunder of your voice, the peoples flee; when you rise up the nations scatter. 3 When God rises up to take action- watch out Assyria! Assyria's boasting and vaunted military might is powerless against God and his might. This is what Isaiah declares in verses 1 and 4. The Assyria kings boasted of taking plunder from their enemies and having easily defeated enemies in battle. Sennacherib fully believes and scornfully boasts about destroying Jerusalem as seen by his words in both verses. This will not happen. Instead, Isaiah pronounces: Woe to Assyria, for she will be plundered and destroyed by the LORD of armies.

Core Confession (5-6) Isaiah is convinced that the LORD can and will help his people. These two succinct verses embody the core ideas of the chapter even perhaps Isaiah's entire message concerning what he wants God's people to see concerning the LORD. It is worth putting into print these verses. "The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness. He will be a sure foundation for your times a rich store of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to

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1 2 Kings 18:13-19
2 The overall outline of this chapter and its heading borrowed from Oswalt, John The Book of Isaiah Grand Rapids, MI. WB Eerdmans Pub. 1986 p.595
3 This may be an allusion to the images of God rising up to take action and to fight and deliver his people as portrayed in Ps. 68.
"This treasure." This is a summary confession of who the LORD is. He is the only reliable help for his people. He intervenes on behalf of his people who respond to him in awe, reverence and trust. This confession reminds us that God is not like us; but is a supernatural being who dwells in heaven. He is the Holy One with unlimited power over everything. He is righteous. He is opposed to evil and wrongdoing. He is gracious. He longs to help his people by providing what they need like wisdom, help, knowledge, protection, strength, daily provisions. God’s people need to respond by being aware of his exalted nature and responding in trust by asking him daily for strength, help, or whatever act of God’s intervention to help them in "their times of trouble. (vs2)

B. Promise that the LORD will deliver his people from their desperate situation (7-16) This central section of ten verses is focused and centered upon God’s intention to rise up- or take action. It is focused upon seeing God as coming down from heaven to intervene and fight for and deliver his people from the menacing destructive threat that Sennacherib represents. Three ideas are presented that make this central theme vivid and memorable. 1) Select details of the hopelessness of the situation that Jerusalem faces. (7-9). 2) God is presented as a consuming fire who is set to go and to take action against Assyria.(10-12) 3) The anticipated response to God coming and intervening as a "consuming fire" (13-16)

1) Description of the hopelessness of the situation. (7-9). The selected details draw attention to the despair and hopelessness in view of the impending invasion that Jerusalem faces. The roads are deserted. No one is travelling. People are hiding. The envoys -the negotiators who bargained for peace sum have been betrayed. The siege of Jerusalem is about to begin. Even brave soldiers mourn at the prospect of what will happen. Even the land is wasted possibly by the Assyrian. This is so bleak. All hope is gone. Except what? The LORD’s help!

2) The LORD through Isaiah vows to take action. "Now I will arise," says the LORD. Now I will be exalted. Now I will be lifted up. Note! God promises to take action now! Did you get that three times God says now. The point is that God vows to take action to help his people in their desperate need. God will rise up come down from heaven and fight once again for his people. By doing so they will see his power and might. He will be honored or exalted by what he accomplishes for his people in delivering them. God’s word through Isaiah is that he fully expects that people should not only hear but acknowledge His saving deeds-his intervention on behalf of his people. "you who are far off, hear what I have done; you who are near acknowledge my power." Point: It is not enough for God to act and help his people in need. The process of saving his people is not complete until He is recognized and honored for his help.

What happens when God rises up to help his people against their enemy! The nations scatter. So does the army of the Assyrians (vs. 3). But even more terrifying is what is depicted in verses 11-12. The army of Assyria like the army of the Egyptians is destroyed. This is pictured as God being a consuming fire whose breath is a fire that burns and consumes his enemies like a thorn bush being cut down or as limestone being burned to dust in a fire.

In light of this picture of a overwhelming fire that consumes anything in its path, the question then becomes...Who then can stand or dwell in God’s presence when he comes? " Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire?" Isaiah responds with the necessary qualifications that the Holy One expects from his people. (15-16) Evangelicals would respond by saying the one who is forgiven. Isaiah would too. "the sins of those who will dwell there (in Zion) will be forgiven." The vision of God in chapter six demonstrates that this was Isaiah experience as well. But these verses found in verses 15-16 strongly argue that God’s people who know they are forgiven will seek to walk, think, and speak righteously. These are the people who can stand unashamed in God’s Presence.
C. A hopeful vision of the future as a result of God’s intervention on behalf of his people. (17-24) This final set of verses concludes chapter 33 and the first half of Isaiah’s vision. This section is focused upon the results that happen as a result of God rising up to fight and save his people. The immediate background seems to be the promise of deliverance from the impending menacing threat of Sennacherib and his armies poised to attack Jerusalem. Yet the language looks beyond the immediate deliverance from Sennacherib- to a coming day- sometime in the future. In this coming day, God will not only save his people but dwell and rule as king in their midst. I see three ideas that Isaiah wants to impress upon us in these closing verses to the first half of Isaiah. 1) Isaiah calls us to see and believe a few things concerning their future. 2) Core elements of what he wants us to see. 3) Basis of his hope.

1) Isaiah strongly calls his listeners to pay attention and to see something. Seriously! This is a major emphasis in his conclusion that Isaiah wants us to notice. Please take a closer look! "Your eyes will see the king in his beauty" and "your eyes will view or see a land stretching afar (great distances)" "You will see those arrogant people no more" "Your eyes will see Jerusalem..." (20) this statement is even prefaced by "look upon Zion..."

2) The Core of the vision that Isaiah wants us to see and notice. Yahweh will intervene and save his people. "It is the LORD who is our king it is he that will save us" This is the core truth that Isaiah wants them to believe and take note of. The poetic language and images beginning with 17 announce a reversal of the current situation of terror and trouble that daily confronts everyone living in Jerusalem. Isaiah in these verses essentially claims that the days of terror, want, and pain are about to end. On one hand, Isaiah pictures the day when the threat of the Assyrian invasion will be only a memory from the past. "In your thoughts you will ponder the former terror: Where is the chief officer? (Assyrian) Where is the one who took our revenue? Answer! They will be gone! And the rest of the Assyrians with their obscure speech will be gone as well. Instead of trouble and terror at the hands of the Assyrians, Jerusalem will be at peace. The city will flourish, be secure, and joyful again. The festivals will be celebrated again. Jerusalem is pictured ideally as a place in days to come will be a place of "broad rivers and streams" This is figurative language pointing to the idea that life will thrive again in the city. And there will be not threat of enemy warships - galleys with oars or mighty (war) ships will not be there either. Rather, Jerusalem will be "a peaceful or untroubled (ESV) abode or place to live. Why?

3) The LORD will be with his people. He will make his abode with them. He will not only save his people but rule over them. "There the LORD will be our Mighty One." (21)