

Rebels and Repenters

Isaiah 29-31 (read Isaiah 31:1-7)

Introduction

- A. In this sermon I aim to give the sense of Isaiah 29-31. My title is **Rebels and Repenters** because those are the only two options for Isaiah and Israel--and for us.
 - 1. Isaiah 7-39 are summed up effectively with this one brief statement from Isaiah 36:5:
Isaiah 36:5 (ESV) In whom do you now trust?
 - 2. Everyday we each trust someone(s) for something(s). To trust God (and not ourselves or our money or our things) is to bring God great pleasure and glory. He loves to be trusted.
- B. But, the people of God (referred to in Isaiah 29 as the house of Jacob) are choosing to place their faith and trust in themselves (their strength and ability).
 - 1. The leaders have attempted to form an alliance with Egypt so that they will be able to stand against Assyria. The help of Egypt is worthless.
 - 2. This action reveals their heart toward God. They believe God is worthless.
- C. Therefore, God refers to them as a rebellious people. They are rebels. Here in Isaiah 29-31 they are invited and commanded to repent.
 - 1. Jerusalem will come under siege and they will be delivered from the Assyrians by the hand of God. Sadly, this deliverance will not endure. They will not ultimately be repenters.
 - 2. I have two main points. Here in Isaiah 29-31 we learn what a rebel looks like (or be reminded). We will also learn what a repentor looks like (or be reminded).

I. Seven Signs of a rebel (perhaps older). The Bible teaches that as we resist God our conscience and our heart hardens. Our resistance to God intensifies (not many elderly come to Christ).

- A. One, a rebel is in a spirit of deep sleep. This is similar to Rom 1 where we read that "God gave them up" because they did not honor God or give thanks. It is the activity of God.

Isaiah 29:10 (ESV) For the Lord has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes (the prophets), and covered your heads (the seers).

- B. Two, rebels are often hypocrites (religious). They use words but their hearts are far off.

Isaiah 29:13-14 (ESV) And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden."

- 1. Jesus quoted Isaiah 29:13 to the Pharisees in Mark 6:6-7. The Pharisees obeyed external laws (think SS trash can) but lost weighty matters like justice, mercy and faithfulness.

Ex: David Kinnaman in his book *unChristian* says the church has a problem. Problem #1 is that we are hypocrites. We say one thing and do another (porn, divorce, lie, steal).

2. We are not hypocrites when we confess our sins. We are hypocrites when we put on airs that do not match reality.

- C. Three, rebels hide from the Lord by seeking to do deeds in secret because they think God does not see.

Isaiah 29:15 (ESV) Ah, you who hide deep from the Lord your counsel, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, "Who sees us? Who knows us?"

- Ex: How would you counsel this person: I once had a friend say they are afraid that God looks on and sees everything they do (judge or father matters but spot on).

- D. Four, rebels believe God lacks understanding.

Isaiah 29:16 (ESV) You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, "He did not make me"; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?

1. God made you! And, God has understanding. God is the Sovereign One and He is directing the affairs of nations and peoples. He is trustworthy.

- E. Five, rebels carry out their own plan, they make alliances with pagans, adding sin to sin, and in this case seeking shelter and shade in Egypt.

Isaiah 30:1-2 (ESV) "Ah, stubborn children," declares the Lord, "who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; [2] who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!

1. Egypt represents sin and bondage and slavery. Israel knew God had delivered them out of Egypt by the power of His right arm. They want to go back? Be friends?

Ex: C.J. Mahaney in his New Attitude sermon on adoption shared the adoption story of Russell Moore (Russian orphanage, squalor, reaching back). I see myself.

- F. Six, the downhill slide continues to the point that rebels do not want to hear the instruction of the Lord, they desire smooth things, let us hear no more about God.

Isaiah 30:9-11 (ESV) For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord; [10] who say to the seers, "Do not see," and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, [11] leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel."

- G. Seven, rebels refuse to turn and repent. Therefore, they perish.

Isaiah 30:15-16 (ESV) For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, "In returning [repentance] and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength." But you were unwilling, [16] and you said, "No! We will flee upon horses"; therefore you shall flee away; and, "We will ride upon swift steeds"; therefore your pursuers shall be swift.

- H. Rebels, then, look everywhere and anywhere for help except God.

1. Israel is a tragic picture. Many of you know folks who fit the bill. They once seemed to desire God but they left God behind. What happened? God was not enough.

2. We all start life as rebels. Not good, not even neutral, but enemies of God.

- I. Is there any good news? Yes! There is a merciful God who gives grace. It is a gift, it cannot be earned, and it is the activity of God on our behalf. God gives sovereign grace.

II. Three Signs of a repentor (a Christian). The activity of God is evident through these two-fers:

- A. One, the deaf shall hear and the blind shall see. How can a deaf person hear? How can a blind person see? Someone opens their ears and their eyes (conversion).

Isaiah 29:18 (ESV) In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see.

1. We are a people of this book (the Bible). The words of this book are living and active, sharper than a sword. They do not return void. It contains promises that are certain.

Ex: Ez 37; in the valley of dry bones - can these bones live? Lord, you know! Very dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord. God breathes life, bones rattle, life!

- B. Two, the meek obtain fresh joy and the poor exult in God.

Isaiah 29:19 (ESV) The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the Lord, and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.

1. Meek is good (modern dictionaries say compliant, docile, spiritless ... we mean not easily provoked under injury, or irritated but patient and humble).
2. Meek is good because we get fresh joy. Joy is fruit from walking by and in the Holy Spirit, not by walking according to the flesh.
3. The poor among mankind are those who become aware of their sin. But they don't wallow in their sin, they marvel at God's grace in the gospel at the cross (God exalts Himself!).

Isaiah 30:18-19 (ESV) Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him. [19] For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you.

Ex: When do you check on a child (maybe when quiet!)? At the sound of their cry.

- C. Three, repentors know the voice of the Lord and junk their idols.

Isaiah 30:21-22 (ESV) And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. [22] Then you will defile your carved idols overlaid with silver and your gold-plated metal images. You will scatter them as unclean things. You will say to them, "Be gone!"

1. Jesus says that His sheep know His voice. They are no longer deaf.
2. You slay your idols. You actually live differently because you have new life.

Faith and repentance are but ... two handles of the same plow. Repentance has well been described as a heart broken for sin and from sin. It may equally well be spoken of as turning and returning. It is a change of mind of the most thorough and radical sort. It is attended with sorrow for the past and a resolve of amendment in the future. Charles Spurgeon in *All of Grace*, p 128-129

Repentance is a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ. Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*, p 713

3. Faith and repentance are two sides of one coin. They are inseparable. Where you see faith you will see repentance.
- D. Repentance is not primarily focused on being sinless. The Pharisees believed they were sinless. Repentance is about turning to Christ, the one who opens eyes and ears by His Spirit.

To repent is to change your mind about sin and Christ and all the great things of God. There is sorrow implied in this, but the main point is the turning from sin to Christ. Charles Spurgeon in *All of Grace*, p 92

There is a Sunday School acrostic which expresses it perfectly: F-A-I-T-H - Forsaking All, I Take Him. J.I. Packer in *God's Words*, p 127

Close

- A. You don't want to be a rebel. Spiritually deaf and blind, lacking joy and peace, no hope of eternal life, lots of idols that don't satisfy, no Christ.
- B. You want to be a repentant (turn and keep turning). You want Christ!

Isaiah 31:6 (ESV) Turn to him from whom people have deeply revolted.

1. What if you're not there? Today is the day of salvation. Repentance is only possible because of the gospel (the law brought a curse ... death).
2. Seek God and think on the cross of Christ. Cry to God asking Him to open your eyes, open your ears, and give you joy inexpressible full of glory.

Ex: Don't give up on rebels (Wales Revival of 1904-05 ... remember that rebel?).

Communion

- A. As we considered what a rebel is like many of us remembered the way we were. You will want to celebrate communion because now you are a repentant.
1. Your life has changed.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (ESV) Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, [10] nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. [11] And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Discussion Questions

Where are you inclined to place your trust in difficult seasons?

What were your chief characteristics as a rebel?

Where are you tempted to be a hypocrite?

Describe how you can grow in meekness.

Recount your conversion and explain how you came to see and hear the gospel.