

Isaiah 31:1–9 — “When You’re Tempted to Run to Egypt”

Setting

Assyria was advancing, and pressure groups urged King Hezekiah to buy protection from Egypt. Isaiah called that strategy what it was: misplaced trust. The chapter is a loving but firm summons to stop leaning on human saviors and return to the LORD.

Misplaced Trust Exposed (Isaiah 31:1–3)

*“Woe to those who go down to Egypt¹ for help,
And rely on horses,
Who trust in chariots because they are many,
And in horsemen because they are very strong,
But who do not look to the Holy One of Israel,
Nor seek the LORD!” (Isaiah 31:1)*

*“Now the Egyptians are men, and not God;
And their horses are flesh, and not spirit.
When the LORD stretches out His hand,
Both he who helps will fall, and he who is helped will fall down;
They all will perish together.” (Isaiah 31:3)*

Plain sense: Strategies are not sinful; God-less strategies are. Numbers, speed, funding, and connections cannot replace seeking the LORD. The book of Proverbs clearly warns:

There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death. (Proverbs 14:12 NKJV)

This verse reminds us that people often assume their way is right, yet the path they choose can end in ruin and even death. It underscores the danger of leaning only on our own judgment and the necessity of seeking wisdom higher than ourselves—trusting in God and grounding our lives in His Word.

Practical application

- Before you make a big move (job, legal, financial, relational), seek the LORD first—Scripture, prayer, godly counsel.
- Identify your “Egypt” (the thing you reflexively trust). Name it, then place it under Jesus’ lordship.

God Fights for Those Who Trust Him (Isaiah 31:4–5)

*“For thus the LORD has spoken to me:
‘As a lion roars,
And a young lion over his prey
(When a multitude of shepherds is summoned against him,*

¹ See addendum at the end of this study

*He will not be afraid of their voice
Nor be disturbed by their noise),
So the LORD of hosts will come down
To fight for Mount Zion and for its hill.
Like birds flying about,
So will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem.
Defending, He will also deliver it;
Passing over, He will preserve it.”* (Isaiah 31:4–5)

Word Pictures: The LORD is both lion (unyielding strength) and mother bird (tender protection). His people are safest when He is their shield.

Practical application

- When fear shouts, slow down rather than speed up. Ask, *“Am I acting like God is absent, or like He fights for me?”*
- Build a habit of “quiet confidence” (Isaiah 30:15)—five unhurried minutes morning and evening to return, rest, and entrust the day to Him.

4) The Call to Come Back (Isaiah 31:6–7)

*“Return to Him against whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted.
For in that day every man shall throw away his idols of silver and his idols of gold—
sin, which your own hands have made for yourselves.”* (Isaiah 31:6–7)

Balanced, non-partisan truth: God initiates with mercy and warning; we must respond with repentance and trust; and God sustains those who return. Not fatalism; not self-salvation—a living relationship.

Practical application

- Do an idol audit: *What am I counting on to make me safe, valuable, or whole besides Jesus?*
- “Throw it away” (v. 7): remove, unsubscribe, delete, confess—take a concrete step today.

God Finishes What He Starts (Isaiah 31:8–9)

*“Then Assyria shall fall by a sword not of man,
And a sword not of mankind shall devour him.
But he shall flee from the sword,
And his young men shall become forced labor.
He shall cross over to his stronghold for fear,
And his princes shall be afraid of the banner,’
Says the LORD, whose fire is in Zion
And whose furnace is in Jerusalem.”* (Isaiah 31:8–9)

Point: The threat that terrifies you is not bigger than the LORD. He can end it in a way no human could script.

Practical application

- Pray specifically about the “Assyria” you face. Ask God to act “by a sword not of man”—in a way clearly from His hand.
- Keep your eyes on the LORD, not the headlines. Let Scripture set your horizon each morning.

Walk It Out This Week

- **Seek first:** Open with a psalm before any news or email.
- **Surrender daily:** “Lord, I renounce my ‘Egypt’s’ and trust You for counsel and covering.”
- **Small obedience:** One concrete step that shows trust (apology made, budget adjusted, screen time cut, prayer meeting attended).

Invitation: Return to the One who Fights for You

The deepest “Egypt” is sin—living life on our own terms. The good news is that Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again. Through Him you can have **peace with God** and learn the **peace of God** day by day.

Pray from your heart:

“Lord Jesus, I return to You. I have trusted in my own ‘Egypt’s.’ Please forgive my sins. Thank You for dying for me and rising again. I surrender to You as Lord. Teach me to seek You first and to walk in quiet confidence. I choose to trust You today and every day. Amen.”

If you prayed sincerely:

- Tell a mature believer, be baptized in water, and join a Bible-teaching study group.
- Begin a daily rhythm in God’s Word (read Isaiah 31 again; then John 14).
- Each morning, through prayer give Jesus your fears and your plans—and watch Him defend, deliver, and preserve.

ADDENDUM

The Bible frequently uses Egypt not only as a literal nation in history but also as a spiritual picture. Let's walk through this step by step.

1) Egypt as the Place of Bondage

- Israel spent 400 years in Egypt, where they were eventually enslaved under Pharaoh (Exodus 1:11–14).
- Egypt thus became a symbol of bondage, oppression, and helplessness without God's deliverance.

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."
(Exodus 20:2)

Parallel with sin and the world:

- Just as Israel could not free themselves from Pharaoh's grip, we cannot free ourselves from the bondage of sin (Romans 6:17).
- Sin is an enslaving power that promises comfort but delivers chains.

2) Egypt as a Place of Idolatry and False Gods

- Egypt was filled with idols and false religion (Exodus 12:12).
- God judged these gods in the plagues—showing His supremacy over their idols sinful wisdom.

Parallel with sin and the world:

- The "world" offers false securities—wealth, pleasure, success—that people worship (1 John 2:15–17).
- Trusting in them brings disappointment, just as Israel would have been destroyed if they had remained in Egypt.

3) Egypt as a Tempting Refuge

- When Israel was under pressure (like in Isaiah's day), leaders wanted to return to Egypt for help (Isaiah 30:1–3; Isaiah 31:1).
- Even after God delivered them through the Red Sea, the people looked back longingly:

"We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic." (Numbers 11:5)

Parallel with sin and the world:

- Believers are tempted to go back to old habits when trials come.
- Egypt represents the pull of our “old life”—comforts mixed with slavery.

4) The Exodus as Salvation

- God brought His people out of Egypt with the blood of the lamb on their doorposts (Exodus 12:7, 13).
- He parted the Red Sea, delivering them once and for all from Pharaoh’s army (Exodus 14:30).

Parallel with salvation in Christ:

- Jesus is our Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7).
- By His blood, God saves us from judgment and brings us out of sin’s bondage.
- Water Baptism is pictured as passing through the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 10:1–2)—leaving the old life behind.

5) Egypt as the World System Opposed to God

- Egypt in the Bible often represents the world’s power, wisdom, and pride apart from God (Isaiah 19:1–3; Revelation 11:8).
- Egypt trusted in armies and idols, not the LORD.

Parallel with the world:

- The Bible warns us not to love “the world” in its system of rebellion against God (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15).
- Like Egypt, the world looks strong but cannot save.

6) Personal Application

- Egypt = Bondage of sin, false worship, worldly dependence.
- Israel’s Exodus = A picture of our salvation in Christ—redeemed, set free, and called to walk with God.
- The wilderness = Our journey of faith—learning to depend daily on the Lord.
- The Promised Land = Life of victory and inheritance in Christ.

Invitation

The Bible shows Egypt as a vivid picture of sin and the world system. You may be living in “Egypt” today—bound by habits, fears, self-wisdom, or idols. But just as God delivered Israel by the blood of

the lamb, He offers you freedom through Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Will you leave “Egypt” behind?

Will you step into the freedom Jesus offers?

Pray sincerely:

“Lord Jesus, I confess I have been living in bondage to sin. I don’t want to return to Egypt. Thank You for dying for me and rising again. Deliver me, cleanse me, and lead me into the life You have promised. I give You my heart and choose to trust You daily. Amen.”