

ISAIAH: JUDGMENT AND HOPE

10. Isaiah 9:8-10:4

The Hand of the Lord Stretched Out Still

Tonight, we pick up our study of the Book of Isaiah in Chapter 9, verse 8. Isaiah 9:8 through the end of Isaiah 10 is made up of two major sections

In Isaiah 9:8-10:4 God pronounces coming judgment on the Northern Kingdom. The New Bible Commentary titles this section ***The Shadow Over Samaria.***

We don't want to miss context here. The eighteen verses we are going to look at tonight contain a string of **searing indictments** against the Northern Kingdom along with the pronouncement of **certain judgment**. But the two verses before tonight's text contain one of the most amazing prophecies in all of Scripture

Isaiah 9:6–7 (ESV) For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

This is by divine design!! We see this same contrast throughout the book of Isaiah because the Lord wants us to see and understand that His judgment is real — and yet — in the face of man's rebellion and failure He offers hope to our broken world. Hope rooted in the fact that He is a promise keeping God. Time and again throughout the Old Testament we're told from every possible angle and every type of person that the steadfast love of the Lord endures forever! That word steadfast is the Hebrew word *chesed*. That is the word God uses to describe His loyal, unfailing, relentlessly pursuing, covenant keeping love. In a very special way that Hope is offered, presented and promised in the book of Isaiah as being wrapped up in the Messiah. In the New Testament we were given the name of this promised Messiah — Jesus! Jesus Christ means Jesus the Messiah.

Those two verses preceding the promise of judgment promise the glorious hope of God becoming man to rescue and restore those made in his image and ultimately to renew everything He had made. The government of the promised Messiah will be marked by justice and righteousness (9:6–7; 11:4; 16:5; 28:6, 17; 32:16; 33:5; 42:1, 3–4; 51:5). Isaiah is pronouncing judgment on the Northern Kingdom because that kingdom, those rulers and those citizens were rotted out by unrighteousness and injustice.

In this section God gives four reasons for the judgment that is coming.

In **9:8-12** Pride and arrogance

In **9:13-17** Wicked leadership and the willingness of the people to follow them

In **9:18-21** Life without God results in self-inflicted judgment

In **10:1-4** Legalized injustice

Each of these indictments closes with the same declaration

For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.

ISAIAH 9

Isaiah was a prophet to the Southern Kingdom of Judah and to the city of Jerusalem. But the Lord moves Isaiah to speak prophetically about the Northern Kingdom and its capital city, Samaria, to warn Judah and Jerusalem that God is not distant and disinterested in the affairs of His people. In reality — He's totally engaged and active in the affairs of His people. The proclamation of the judgment of God on the Northern Kingdom was an object lesson. Judah needed to realize that she would face the same judgment if she persisted in the very things that brought judgment on her sister to the north.

Isaiah 9:8–12 **Pride and arrogance**

⁸The Lord has sent a word against Jacob, and it will fall on Israel; ⁹and all the people will know, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, who say in pride and in arrogance of heart: ¹⁰“The bricks have fallen, but we will build with dressed stones; the sycamores have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place.” ¹¹But the Lord raises the adversaries of Rezin against him, and stirs up his enemies. ¹²The Syrians on the east and the Philistines on the west devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.

⁸The Lord has sent a word **against Jacob and it will fall on Israel;**

The LORD brought a word **against** the Northern Kingdom — it would fall on them — like an 18 wheeler dropped from the sky.

⁹and all the people will know,

This wasn't going to be like bombers in World War II dropping tons of munition over a target hoping that a few would do damage. His Word was going hit like a laser guided bomb — It would be “direct hit” — everyone would know!

Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, who say in pride and in arrogance of heart: ¹⁰“The bricks have fallen, but we will build with dressed stones; the sycamores have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place.”

THIS is the pride and arrogance that brought the judgment of God on them. They refused to face the facts. They had a very real history of the very real God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. They had a very real history of the very real God who delivered the descendants of Abraham from bondage and death in Egypt. In fact God constantly reminded the Israelites of how He did that for them as the basis for being faithful to Him and keeping His law. They had a very real history of His very real word and His very real works.

They'd been experiencing God shaking their world like tremors before the BIG ONE. As God was shaking their world in response to their rebellion and idolatry — bricks had fallen. Their world / their lives were in shambles. But instead of humbling themselves before God and taking to heart everything He had been saying about the BIG JUDGMENT to come they said — *“We’re not afraid! Whatever is torn down, we can rebuild it! In fact — when we’re finished it will be better than before — stronger than before.”*

¹¹But the Lord raises the adversaries of Rezin against him, and stirs up his enemies. ¹²The Syrians on the east and the Philistines on the west devour Israel with open mouth.

THIS IS HUGE — Their arrogance and their pride didn't make God think — *Wow, they're calling my bluff — I should fold.*

Remember — The Northern Kingdom hired Rezin as an ally in their attempt to conquer Judah. They were going to be squeezed by the enemies of their ally.

¹¹But the Lord raises — stirs up.

This was the Lord's doing. God would stir up successive waves of enemies against Israel.

HERE WE HAVE the FIRST of the chorus repeated four times. Each time it **underscores** and **intensifies** the certainty of continued judgment.

For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.

The judgment against Israel's pride and arrogance was not the end. There was still more sin to judge.

ISAIAH 9:13-17 Wicked leadership and the willingness of the people to follow them

13The people did not turn to him who struck them, nor inquire of the Lord of hosts.

Each episode of judgment was followed by Israel's refusal to turn to the LORD. I don't believe that Isaiah relished these words! I believe he lamented over having to say it. Here's why I say that.

Ezekiel 18:23 (NLT) "Do you think that I like to see wicked people die? says the Sovereign Lord. Of course not! I want them to turn from their wicked ways and live.

14So the Lord cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed in one day—

Isaiah 9:14 (NLT) Therefore, in a single day the Lord will destroy both the head and the tail, the noble palm branch and the lowly reed.

14So the Lord cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed in one day— 15the elder and honored man is the head, and the prophet who teaches lies is the tail;

The Bible Knowledge Commentary makes this note about Verses 14 and 15

This is merism, a figure which gives opposite extremes to include the whole spectrum.¹

God is going to judge the Northern Kingdom from top down and everyone in between.

Judgment begins with leaders

¹ Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1054). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

James 3:1 (NLT) Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly.

¹⁶For those who guide this people have been leading them astray, and those who are guided by them are swallowed up.

¹⁷Therefore the Lord does not rejoice over their young men, and has no compassion on their fatherless and widows; for everyone is godless and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly.

Guides and those who are guided — including young men

God was also going to judge two categories of people that hold a special place in His heart — the fatherless and widows! The reason: *for everyone is godless and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly.*

¹⁷ For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.

God wasn't ready to stop His work of judgment. The judgment against Israel's wicked leaders and those who followed was not enough. There was still sin to judge.

ISAIAH 9:18-21 Life without God results in self-inflicted judgment

¹⁸For wickedness burns like a fire; it consumes briars and thorns; it kindles the thickets of the forest, and they roll upward in a column of smoke.

God says that the wickedness of Israel was like a raging wildfire that was unstoppable — devouring everything in front of it. When I read this, I see it as such an apt description of our culture.

Isaiah shifts the imagery of wickedness being like a fire in the Northern Kingdom to the wrath of God being like a fire in the Northern Kingdom.

¹⁹Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts the land is scorched, and the people are like fuel for the fire;

Which is it? Is wickedness the fire or is the wrath of God the fire?

FIRST — The wickedness of the Northern Kingdom fuels the fire of God's judgment. If the wickedness was taken away, the fire would have no more fuel.

SECOND — The wicked person not only fuels the fire of God's judgment — they are burnt up and destroyed by the fire they have fueled.

New Bible Commentary — *Sin, doubly destructive, first reduces society to a jungle, then spreads its fires through it—as our modern strifes still bear witness. But self-inflicted judgment is still God's judgment*²

Isaiah speaks in gruesome detail of the carnage of sin and idolatry within culture

¹⁹... no one spares another. ²⁰They slice meat on the right, but are still hungry, and they devour on the left, but are not satisfied; each devours the flesh of his own arm, ²¹Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim devours Manasseh; together they are against Judah.

Here's the way God judged them — God merely let the evil, hateful passions of men burn wild among themselves. God did not need to start the fire, or fan the flames; He simply took away the "fire retardant"! It is the mercy of God that carnage of sin and idolatry is held in check by God. But there comes a point where God says — *I'll let you have the life you want — the world you want!* And that life will consume the individual and those around them.

² Kidner, F. D. (1994). Isaiah. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 640). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

In their sin and idolatry the people of the Northern Kingdom were devouring one another but they would soon be devoured and defeated by Assyria.

And Again —

²¹...For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.

ISAIAH 10:1-4 Legalized injustice

DON'T MISS THIS — Spiritual revolt leads to social injustice.

In utter contrast with the Messiah's justice and righteousness, the leaders in Israel were perverting the cause of justice and righteousness.

¹Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression, ²to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey!

The **NLT** is a perfect commentary on these verses

***Isaiah 10:1–2 (NLT)** What sorrow awaits the unjust judges and those who issue unfair laws. ²They deprive the poor of justice and deny the rights of the needy among my people. They prey on widows and take advantage of orphans.*

The Israelites were supposed to care for each other as those redeemed from bondage and death in Egypt by their God.

God is judging the Northern Kingdom because they had totally revolted against the purpose of God in choosing Abraham in the first place.

***Genesis 18:19 (ESV)** For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to **keep the way of the Lord** by*

doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.”

Bruce Waltke — *“The righteous are willing to disadvantage themselves to advantage the community; the wicked are willing to disadvantage the community to advantage themselves.”*

EXAMPLES —

³What will you do on the day of punishment, in the ruin that will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your wealth?

When you have forsaken others in their time of need, who will you go to for help when you are in need?

QUOTE: Adam Clarke — *“As the people had hitherto lived without God in worship and obedience; so they should now be without his help, and should perish in their transgressions.”*

⁴Nothing remains but to crouch among the prisoners or fall among the slain.

God is saying — You thought you were standing tall when you refused to bow your hearts to Me and to My Word — But without Me you will bow down in humiliation and degradation before your enemies

When the Assyrians conquered other nations they took perverse pleasure in humiliating and subjugating foes. They would do everything they could to bring them low.

⁴...For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.

CLOSE —

One of the Hebrew words commonly translated worship in the Old Testament is *shachah*. It means to bow down, to reverently bow or stoop, to pay homage. But there's another Hebrew word for bow down: *kara*. This word = to sink, to drop, to bring low, or to subdue.

HERE'S THE DEAL — THAT is what sin does! THAT is what idols do! They promise to exalt — but they make us drop to the floor — they bring us low — they subdue us.

We can bow in down to the LORD in worship, or we will be brought low and subdued by the idols we worship.

⁵Woe to Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury!
⁶Against a godless nation I send him, and against the people of my wrath I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. ⁷But he does not so intend, and his heart does not so think; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few; ⁸for he says: "Are not my commanders all kings? ⁹Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad? Is not Samaria like Damascus?
¹⁰As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols, whose carved images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria, ¹¹shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols as I have done to Samaria and her images?"
¹²When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes. ¹³For he says: "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding; I remove the boundaries of peoples, and plunder their treasures; like a bull I bring down those who sit on thrones. ¹⁴My hand has found like a nest the wealth of the peoples; and as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken, so I have gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved a wing or opened the mouth or chirped." ¹⁵Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it? As

if a rod should wield him who lifts it, or as if a staff should lift him who is not wood! ¹⁶Therefore the Lord God of hosts will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors, and under his glory a burning will be kindled, like the burning of fire. ¹⁷The light of Israel will become a fire, and his Holy One a flame, and it will burn and devour his thorns and briers in one day. ¹⁸The glory of his forest and of his fruitful land the Lord will destroy, both soul and body, and it will be as when a sick man wastes away. ¹⁹The remnant of the trees of his forest will be so few that a child can write them down. ²⁰In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. ²¹A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. ²²For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. ²³For the Lord God of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth. ²⁴Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts: "O my people, who dwell in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrians when they strike with the rod and lift up their staff against you as the Egyptians did. ²⁵For in a very little while my fury will come to an end, and my anger will be directed to their destruction. ²⁶And the Lord of hosts will wield against them a whip, as when he struck Midian at the rock of Oreb. And his staff will be over the sea, and he will lift it as he did in Egypt. ²⁷And in that day his burden will depart from your shoulder, and his yoke from your neck; and the yoke will be broken because of the fat." ²⁸He has come to Aiath; he has passed through Migron; at Michmash he stores his baggage; ²⁹they have crossed over the pass; at Geba they lodge for the night; Ramah trembles; Gibeah of Saul has fled. ³⁰Cry aloud, O daughter of Gallim! Give attention, O Laishah! O poor Anathoth! ³¹Madmenah is in flight; the inhabitants of Gebim flee for safety. ³²This very day he will halt at Nob; he will shake his fist at the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem. ³³Behold, the Lord God of hosts will lop the boughs with terrifying power; the great in height will be hewn down, and the lofty will be brought low. ³⁴He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an axe, and Lebanon will fall by the Majestic One.

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