

ISAIAH: JUDGMENT AND HOPE

11. Isaiah 10:5-34

The Judgment of Assyria — The Restoration of Israel

REVIEW

In our last study we walked through Isaiah 9:8-10:4 in which God pronounced coming judgment on the Northern Kingdom. In those eighteen verses God proclaimed a string of **searing indictments** against the Northern Kingdom along with the pronouncement of **certain judgment**.

Before we launched into those eighteen verses, we made note of the fact that those searing indictments and the promise of certain judgment are preceded by two of the most amazing verses in the entire Bible!

*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.*

There is never anything in the Bible that is out of place. 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 *steadfast love* 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.

Last week we saw how God gave **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 closed with the same declaration

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

Our studied ended in verse 4 of Isaiah 10 with God saying

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

crouch = to sink, to drop, to bring low, or to subdue.

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.

The section ended with the fourth and final declaration

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

The rest of Isaiah 10 addresses *The Judgment of Assyria and the Restoration of Israel*

Here we go!

Isaiah 10

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.**

1. Assyria was God's Instrument of Judgment.

God was the one in charge of this ancient geopolitical event! The Assyrians were actually fulfilling God's will. We struggle when those who are evil succeed. But the fact that God declares that the Assyrians are the instrument of His judgment gives us context. The Assyrians, who were truly evil seems to defy justice, but in reality, they were God's instrument — serving the ends of God's justice. ¹

QUESTION — Since Assyria was an instrument in God's hand, since they were doing the will of the LORD, does this excuse their brutality and their total disregard for human life in their attack on Syria, Israel, and Judah? The answer is no. Here's why

⁷**But 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;**

They didn't for a moment consider themselves to be instruments of God's justice. They weren't acting out of obedience to Him. They didn't care at all about God's will, God's justice or God's glory. All they wanted to do was to destroy and cut off as many nations as they could to satisfy their lust for power and their love of brutality.

¹ 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. 641). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

Psalm 76:10 (ESV) Surely the wrath of man shall praise you; the remnant of wrath you will put on like a belt. (the Message- All that sputtering rage—now a garland for God!)

God can use the wickedness and carnality of man to further His will, *without ever approving of the wickedness or carnality* and He is totally justified in *judging* the very wickedness and carnality that He used!

We see this over and over through the Scriptures. Joseph’s brothers raged against him out their envy and threw him in pit and were going to leave him there to die until they saw they could sell him as a slave to be carried off to Egypt. But God used it for His purpose, and disciplined Joseph’s brothers. Saul sinned against David, but God used it for His purpose, and judged Saul. Judas sinned against Jesus, but God used it for His purpose, and judged Judas.

When we wrestle with “*How can God bring any good through this evil that was done to me?*” — this passage tells us that He will. When we wrestle with “*Doesn’t God care about what they did to me?*” this passage tells us that He does care, and He will execute His perfect justice according to His perfect will and in His perfect time.

God defines and condemns the arrogance of Assyria

⁸for he says: “Are not my commanders all kings?”

Assyria was so arrogant — had such an inflated view of themselves — that they thought their rank and file commanders were as great as the kings of other nations.

⁹Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad? Is not Samaria like Damascus?

Isaiah 10:9 (NLT) We destroyed Calno just as we did Carchemish. Hamath fell before us as Arpad did. And we destroyed Samaria just as we did Damascus.

The order is meant to show that the Assyrians were unstoppable. They carved a path of destruction from Carchemish on the Euphrates down to Samaria. Systematically those cities came under Assyrian control between 740 and 721 B.C..

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?"

The point is that none of the gods of these areas had provided the slightest help.

Isaiah 36:19 (NLT) What happened to the gods of Hamath and Arpad? And what about the gods of Sepharvaim? Did any god rescue Samaria from my power?

Samaria (the capital of the northern kingdom) was given over to gross idolatry. Jerusalem (the capital of the southern kingdom) still maintained *some* worship of YHWH. Assyria thought that YHWH was nothing more than one of the idols that they had conquered in [Calno](#), [Carchemish](#), [Hamath](#), [Arpad](#) and [Samaria](#)

The Assyrians were in for a rude awaking!

By the way — we want to remember that the southern kingdom of Judah had recruited the Assyrians to help them fight against the northern kingdom and Syria. But the Lord would actually use the Assyrians to judge the idolatry in Judah and Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles 28:20–24 (NLT) So when King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria arrived, he attacked Ahaz instead of helping him. ²¹Ahaz took valuable items from the Lord's Temple, the royal palace, and from the homes of his officials and gave them to the king of Assyria as tribute. But this did not help him.

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.

One of the dominant themes of the book of Isaiah is that God brings low what is lofty.

After God used Assyria to judge the southern kingdom God would judge the king of Assyria because of his pride.

DON'T MISS THIS — The arrogance and pride in the heart of the king of Assyria was exposed by his haughty looks. The Bible says that pride in the heart can be revealed by a haughty look!

Psalm 18:27 For you save a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down.

Psalm 101:5 Whoever has a haughty look and an arrogant heart I will not endure.

Proverbs 6:16–17 There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: ¹⁷haughty eyes...

Proverbs 30:13 (NET) There is a generation whose eyes are so lofty, and whose eyelids are lifted up disdainfully.

Here God also says that Pride is also revealed in a person's words!

¹³**For 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;**

He can't stop talking about his strength and wisdom! In two verses he said **I** five times — three times he said **my**.

1 Corinthians 4:7 (NLT) For what gives you the right to make such a judgment? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift?

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.”

The king of Assyria says that he is so powerful that he was able to take other nations and their wealth as easily as a person takes eggs from a nest. He saw himself as unstoppable.

¹⁵Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it?

The questions beg the obvious answer — The instrument is not above the one who uses it. The scalpel doesn't boast over the surgeon. The scalpel doesn't take credit for excising a tumor! As amazing as it is to be an instrument in the hand of God, the instrument deserves no special glory.

As if a rod should wield him who lifts it, or as if a staff should lift him who is not wood!

The king of Assyria was used by God. God would not be used by the king of Assyria. By the way — a lot of churchgoers look at what they do for God as putting them in the place using God.

WE DON'T WANT TO MISS THIS — If it is easy for an unknowing instrument of God to become proud, it is not beyond a Jesus loving, Bible believing, willing instrument of God to become proud. Jesus said we should have a different attitude:

Luke 17:10 (NET) So you too, when you have done everything you were commanded to do, should say, 'We are slaves undeserving of special praise; we have only done what was our duty.'”

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.

God's wrath would come upon this arrogant nation and its army like a wasting disease and a blazing forest fire. He would cut them down like trees in the forest (10:33–34).

In 701 B.C. — during the reign of Hezekiah — God wiped out 185,000 of the Assyrian soldiers

Isaiah 37:36–37 And the angel of the Lord went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. ³⁷Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home and lived at Nineveh.

Ultimately — in 609 B.C. the Assyrian Empire fell to Babylon. The fall of the Assyrian Empire is a prototype of the fall of all who oppose God and His plans for His covenant people. In the fall of the Assyrian Empire we see the contrast between the failed empires of man and God's millennial kingdom.

Revelation 11:15 (NKJV) Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

Beginning in verse 20 God pronounces comfort and promises hope for His people

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.

In that day often refers to **the last days** when the Lord will punish the wicked and set up His righteous kingdom.

Isaiah 4:2 In that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel.

Here it seems to refer to the immediate judgment inflicted by the Assyrians.

In all of my reading I found zero consensus as to whether *the remnant of Israel* and *the survivors of the house of Jacob* are referring to the Northern Kingdom — or to the 12 tribes descended from Jacob. We'll see in a moment why I believe God is speaking to Judah but the promise of a remnant is for **all** the descendants of Abraham.

God is speaking to Judah

²⁰In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them

The terms Israel and Jacob are commonly used to speak of the Northern Kingdom. But the Northern kingdom made an alliance with Syria to conquer the Southern Kingdom. The Southern Kingdom leaned on — placed its trust in — the Assyrians to defend them against the combined forces of the Northern Kingdom and Assyria.

The ones Judah had leaned on and trusted in to save them ended up striking them.

Isaiah 10:24–25 Therefore 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.

We saw back in **Isaiah 7** that YHWH told Judah to not trust in Assyria as their deliverer when they Syria and Israel threatened them. The LORD promised that He would deliver them from Syria and Israel, and that they did not have to trust in Assyria.

But as we noted earlier (and read in our Bible Bus reading today) Ahaz, king of Judah, refused to listen to God's counsel and chose to trust Assyria to be his functional savior.

The LORD would use Assyria to defeat Syria and Israel as He had promised — but He would also use Assyria to judge Judah.

²¹A remnant will return,

Remnant shall return" is the translation of the name of Isaiah's older son, Shear-jashub.

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.

This is for sure a reference — **not** to the Northern Kingdom, but to all the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Genesis 22:17; 32:12 — 2 Samuel 17:11

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.

When we read these verses, we see why *Amazing Grace* is not a cliché! This really is amazing grace. The steadfast love of the Lord is truly radically relentless.

The LORD would have perfectly just if He said, "*Please yourself! You want to trust in the Assyrians and not in Me? Fine. You're on your own. Good luck!*" But even when the Assyrians are bringing on them the judgment they deserved, God wants to **comfort** His people and **bring** them hope.

²⁴Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts: “O my people, who dwell in Zion (Jerusalem), 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,

The LORD is telling His people, “*Judgment and correction are coming, and it will hurt. But I have a plan, so don’t be afraid.*” This is a hard word to believe. By their very nature Judgment and correction is painful! It hurts! Faith is making the decision to trust in the LORD, even when it hurts.

As I was going over this in the Welcome Room tonight two words jumped out at me and I actually said — WOW — out-loud.

*be not afraid of the Assyrians when they strike with **the rod** and lift up **their staff** against you as the Egyptians did.*

My mind raced to Psalm 23

*Psalm 23:1–4 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. ³He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. ⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; **your rod** and **your staff**, they comfort me.*

Remember the language God used about Assyria in verse 5? **Remember** how God said that the king of Assyria thought he was having his way — doing what he wanted to do. But he was actually **the rod** and **the staff** in the hands of YHWH — the shepherd of Psalm 23.

When your boss — your teacher — someone in power is using their power — having their way — inflicting pain on you, does your mind — does my mind — race to Psalm 23?

²⁵For in a very little while my fury will come to an end,

God has prescribed limits to His judgment!

²⁵For in a very little while my fury will come to an end, and my anger will be directed to their destruction (Assyria). 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.

In **Judges 7:25** describes Gideon's victory over the Midianites at the rock of Oreb. God's judgment on Assyria would be **as miraculous** and **complete** as Gideon's victory was.

Exodus 14:16 describes how the LORD used the rod of Moses to divide the Red Sea. In the same way, He would do something totally miraculous against Assyria. **2 Kings 19:35** describes how God simply sent the angel of the LORD, and killed 185,000 Assyrians in one night. When the people woke up, there were 185,000 dead Assyrian soldiers.

The LORD even took care of the arrogant king of the Assyrians. **2 Kings 19:36–37** describes how when the king of the Assyrians returned home after attacking Judah, that he was murdered by his own sons as he worshipped in the temple of Nisroch his god.

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."

Isaiah 10:27 (NKJV) It shall come to pass in that day That his burden will be taken away from your shoulder, And his yoke from your neck, And the yoke will be destroyed **because of the anointing oil.**

When I read that translation I couldn't help but think of Jesus the Messiah — Jesus the anointed one — who destroyed the yoke of our bondage to sin and death.

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.

This describes the route the Assyrian invaders would take in trying to defeat Judah in 701 B.C.. Starting from the northern boundary of Judah at Aiath (another name for Ai), about eight miles north of Jerusalem, southward to Nob, about two miles north of Jerusalem. The sites of 8 of the 12 towns are known.

But Assyria would not succeed in its plan to take 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.

After Isaiah foretells the beginning of the end of the Assyrian Empire Chapter 11 talks about the righteous rule of the Messiah and the nature of the Messianic Kingdom