

EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #18

Isaiah 10:5-34

Any student of history who has any real interest in truth ought to ask this question - "How is it that ancient powers that once controlled the whole world all have disappeared?" Why did the Assyrian Kingdom or the Babylonian Kingdom or the Persian Kingdom go away? What happened to a power that at one time controlled the world? **The truthful answer to this question is that God took them out and the reason He took them out is because they dared to go up against Israel.**

No power that has ever turned against Israel has ever lasted no matter how great the power. No power who has ever turned against Israel has ever survived. These powers may have been fooling around in other parts of the world, accomplishing this or that, but **the moment they set their sights in Immanuel's land, down they went.** Take a good look at history, Mr. President. Take a good look at history, Mr. Prime Minister. Take a good look at history, Mr. Dictator. Turn against Israel and down you go. That certainly is what you see when you come to this text in Isaiah.

We come now to one of the great prophetic sections in the book of Isaiah. In these three chapters we see some amazing contrasts between the powerful Assyrian Kingdom and God's Millennial Kingdom. **What is described here in chapter 10 is a prelude to God's Kingdom in the land of Israel which is described in chapter 11 and a prelude to an amazing praise service in Israel which is described in chapter 12.** So, this is not just prophecy about a king in Assyria, this is a prophetic glimpse of the final political dictatorial king who will dominate the world. This gives us important data concerning the coming Antichrist, the Beast of the Sea (Revelation 13), who will seek to destroy Israel just before that Messianic Kingdom is established.

What is absolutely mind-boggling about this text is that God is the One who actually would whistle for the Assyrian king to come and bring his army into His land as a punishment against Judah and Jerusalem (Isaiah 8:7-8).

When you see a reference to "the king of Assyria" (**Isaiah 10:12**), it is good for us to realize that in prophecy there is a near application and a far application. This title, king of Assyria, may refer to several different individuals which God will use over a period of time, which ultimately will culminate with one political leader that will be so diabolical that he literally will try to destroy all Jews in the entire world. We may understand this by saying something like this: God will use the President of the United States for many purposes in regard to Israel. Naturally we would ask which one? The ones we have had, the one we have now or one that will be in the future? We could legitimately refer to all of them until the final who is in power when the United States ends. **We have a legitimate Biblical right to view this as referring literally to the king of Assyria and prophetically to the final king of the world the Antichrist.** What is so amazing about this prophecy is that when God has used this power to punish His own people, He will destroy that same power for daring to arrogantly attack His people.

There is a serious warning that all the nations of the world need to hear:

ANY PERSON, POWER OR NATION WHO TRIES TO DESTROY ISRAEL WILL BE EVENTUALLY DESTROYED BY A JUDGMENT OF GOD AND THIS FINALLY WILL BE FULFILLED WHEN THE ANTICHRIST TURNS AGAINST ISRAEL.

What people and political powers ought to do is to realize that Israel is God's elect nation and even though we may think we have some legitimate case against her, we are far better off leaving her to God rather than turning against her ourselves. We should take the approach that David took concerning Saul: I will not raise my hand against God's anointed (I Samuel 24:6). I think the same principle is true for individual believers. We are God's property. If someone starts turning against and attacking God's property, he will pay a very high price.

There are three key prophetic observations we want to make:

OBSERVATION #1 – God is the One who sends the political power against His people as a punishment. **10:5-11**

I just recently heard a Jewish holocaust survivor say that during the time when Hitler was trying to exterminate the Jews, the prevailing thought among many Jews was this, “God, we have been your nation long enough; would You please select another nation to be Your people.” Well, God isn't going to ever select another nation. He selected the nation Israel because this was the nation He wanted.

Now one might ask why God would permit His own nation to undergo such severe trouble:

- 1) Because she trusts in foreigners rather than trust and rely upon her God. **Isaiah 10:20**
- 2) Because she worshipped foreign gods, so God lets her land be filled with foreigners.
Jeremiah 5:19
- 3) Because she refuses to listen to the Word of God or law of God. Jeremiah 6:19
- 4) Because she continues to worship God hypocritically. Jeremiah 7:8-11

If Israel would amend her ways and respond to the truth of God, God would bless her in her land right now (Jeremiah 7:3). But she refuses, so God says, “I'll bring nations against you to humble you and punish you.” **This is not a popular theme, but God can and does use godless people and powers to discipline His own rebellious people.**

However, what those godless people and powers need to realize is that **the most dangerous assignment that can be given to any non-Jewish person or power by God is the assignment of being used to punish His own people, because tampering with God's people is serious business.** In fact, we may notice that **verse 5** begins with a “woe” judgment, not against Israel but against Assyria.

There are two facts brought out about this prophecy of Isaiah:

Fact #1 - God gives the mission to the Assyrians. **10:5-6**

There is a question among Bible interpreters as to whether or not the king of Assyria actually received a direct prophetic message concerning his assignment described in **verse 6**.

Since it is God who is doing the sending and the commissioning, it is very possible that He did reveal to the Assyrian king, who at the time was Tiglath-pileser, exactly what He wanted done. We do know that Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, did in fact receive a message from God (Isaiah 36:1, 10) and was well aware of it during the days of Hezekiah.

Assyria was God's rod and staff of chastisement because He was angry at Israel. God sent the Assyrians against His own people because His own nation had become a "godless" nation (**10:6**). Regardless of how much Assyria actually knew, they should have realized that they were being used as an instrument of God in the Promised Land and they should have realized, as all nations should realize, that they were highly accountable to God for what they did in regard to Israel and her land. God is a sovereign God and He permits powers to rise and fall. Every nation needs to sense its own accountability to God, especially as it relates to Israel.

Israel, as a nation, is in a covenant relationship with God and all other nations of the world are not. This covenant relationship with God guarantees her a specific land, a Davidic King and a political kingdom that will one day be honored by all the nations of the world. All the other nations of the world had better realize this. If you send ambassadors into Israel, you better send those who have some Biblical wits about them or you are putting your nation on a course of disaster.

Now the specific assignment that God gave to Assyria was to go into His northern land, Israel land, and to capture things, seize things and trample things. These were the legitimate parameters that God set for judgment against His own people to the north. Had Assyria stuck to her job, things would have been good for her; but she didn't stick to her job.

Fact #2 - God knows the motives of the Assyrians. **10:7-11**

What we learn here in **verses 7-8** is that the king was not content with his mission. **His motive was not to do what God intended, rather to totally destroy Israel and then move south into Judah and Jerusalem and then take over the world (10:7).** He considered all of his princes to be kings and wanted all the kings of the world to be his servants (**10:8**). He wanted to be "the king of kings" ruling the world. Every now and then we see this arrogant mindset surface in some world leader. We saw it with Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini and Khrushchev and there is one yet to come who will surpass them all.

According to **verses 10-11**, this world leader would hold himself up higher than any deity. He would travel all through the land, specifically Samaria the capital of Israel and Jerusalem the capital of Judah, and exalt himself above all that is called God (II Thessalonians 2:4). These are words of arrogant defiance against God, not a humble submission to God. This is not just a reference to the king of Assyria but to the future king of the world, the Antichrist.

One of the things God will use the Antichrist to do is to rid the world of any concept of God. In a good sense, he'll rid the world of Islam, Buddhism, Mormonism and Scientism; but he, of course, will set himself up to be higher than the only true God.

Now the specific order of places named in **verses 9-11** describe a movement from north to south under various kings. The movement starts far away from Jerusalem and moves closer and closer to it. The first four cities mentioned were fortress cities in Syria. All of the cities mentioned here were conquered by 717 B.C. Various Assyrian kings were used in the conquest of these places over a period of 35 plus years - Tiglath-pileser (735 B.C.), Sargon (720 B.C.), Sennacherib (700 B.C.). The order is:

- 1) Calno (also Calneh - Genesis 10:10) (Amos 6:2) was taken by Tiglath-pileser in 738 B.C. located about 200 miles straight north of Jerusalem
- 2) Carchemish on the Euphrates was taken by Sargon II (Is. 20:1) in 718 B.C. located 360 miles north/east of Jerusalem
- 3) Hamath in upper Syria in the valley of the Orontes was taken by Sennacherib in 720 B.C. II Kings 18:13, 34 - 250 miles north of Jerusalem
- 4) Arpad was taken by Tiglath-pileser in 740 B.C.-720 B.C. - 120 miles north of Jerusalem
- 5) Samaria was taken by Sargon in 722 B.C. - 40 miles north of Jerusalem
- 6) Damascus was taken by Tiglath-pileser in 732 B.C. - 150 miles north of Jerusalem

Isaiah is giving prophecy about specific places that would be conquered for Judah to see. In 739 B.C. this was predicted by Isaiah before they happened.

God is in total sovereign control over everything that He is permitting to happen in regard to His people. The Assyrian leadership was not motivated by a desire to do God's will, but their own. This question of what motivates any of us to do what we do is still a good question to ask.

OBSERVATION #2 – God is the One who will punish the political power who turns against His people. **10:12-19**

During WWI, Americans were warned not to speak or say anything negative about France or England because they were our allies. I want you to remember that when Isaiah makes this bold prophecy, Assyria is Judah's ally. King Ahaz was totally relying upon Assyria for deliverance from Aram and Israel. So this was a bold prediction that Isaiah makes. It took tremendous courage for Isaiah to speak against Assyria, but that is precisely what he does right here.

Any political power that does harm to His covenant nation Israel will eventually pay a severe price. It is true that God permitted the Assyrians to have their arrogant heart for a while against His people, but remember this, **God will always have the last word.** God permitted Assyria to plunder His land and then He would plunder and punish them for their arrogance in stepping over their assigned boundaries.

When God uses us for anything, we should humbly acknowledge the greatness of God in using us and never should we become puffed up with pride or arrogance and go beyond what God has decreed for us.

Punishment Point #1 - God will punish the Assyrian power for its pride . **10:12-14**

Instead of Assyria recognizing the Sovereignty of God, she wanted her own sovereignty; as **verse 13** says, she relied on her own strength and wisdom. In fact, when you look at **verses 13-14** in Hebrew, there are ten personal “my” and “I” pronouns used (“my hand,” “my wisdom,” “I did,” “I have understanding,” “I removed,” “I plundered,” “I brought down,” “my hand,” “I,” “I gathered”). This is pure egotism. The focus is not on God but on self.

Instead of her humbly seeking God as to what He wanted her to do, and giving Him glory, she decided to do what she wanted to do. **Every political leader needs to recognize that the earth is not their earth, it is the Lord’s (Psalm 24:1) and the part of the earth that He has permitted him to govern is a sovereign grant from Him.** If a political leader uses his power to arrogantly turn against Israel, God will eventually destroy that power.

The level of arrogance described in these verses is at the ultimate and certainly has never been fulfilled yet to this day. This world leader will redivide the geographical boundaries of nations of the world (**10:13**; Daniel 11:39). He can redivide geography, but only Jesus Christ can change topography (Zechariah 14:10). Look carefully at the language he uses in **verse 14**; this world leader gathers the people of the world according to their wealth as a bird gathers her eggs into a nest. He sees the world as an unprotected nest and he will take what he wants.

This image is truly the Antichrist, for the true Christ wanted to gather Israel as a hen gathers her chicks (Matthew 23:37). This arrogant leader will gather the world to himself according to wealth and then will remove boundaries and re-divide and restructure the world.

Punishment Point #2 - God will punish the Assyrian power by destroying the empire.
10:15-19

In **verse 15**, God compares this leader to being nothing more than an arrogant axe, saw or club that doesn’t admit that it takes a far higher power to cause the results. Someone must chop with the axe, saw the wood or swing the club. That someone was God.

In **verse 16**, God promises that He would destroy their strong soldiers with a terrible disease. We cannot help but think what happened in 701 B.C., when the Assyrian soldiers surrounded Jerusalem and in one day God caused 185,000 to drop dead (**Isaiah 37:36-37**). Sennacherib was left with just a small number of soldiers that a child could count them and write them down (**10:19**), so he had to turn around and go back to Assyria.

This same kind of thing will happen one day to Russia when she moves against Israel during the Tribulation (Ezekiel 38-39). God will destroy Russia by His own hand and drop her like flies in the mountains north of Jerusalem. In fact, **verse 18** is a clear reference to the Antichrist that God Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, promises to destroy, both body and soul (Revelation 19:20; Daniel 8:25). The Holy One of Israel will burn him and what will be left of him and his kingdom could be counted and written down by a little child.

OBSERVATION #3 – God is the One who will preserve a remnant of His people. **10:20-23**

Isaiah uses a portion of the Hebrew word, which is that name of one of His sons, “Shear” in **verse 20**, which means “a remnant” and in **verse 21**, he uses his full name - “Shear-jashub which means a remnant of Israel will survive and return to their hope and trust in the “Mighty God” the “El Gibbor.” Isaiah wanted to assure God’s people that no matter how threatening or arrogant the power against Israel, a remnant of Israel will always survive and will one day turn back to God.

Notice carefully from **verse 20** that the emphasis of time is “in that day.” Typically this has a far reaching prophetic time scope in that it refers to the Tribulation. God has always promised that a remnant of His people from Israel will survive. He promises that to O.T. Israel; He promises that to the N.T. Church (Romans 11:25-26); He promises that to those in the Tribulation . (Revelation 7:4-8). In any dispensation of time, God promises to preserve Israel.

Prophetic Point #1 - God’s remnant of Israel will survive . **10:20-23**

God has decreed that a complete destruction come upon Israel because she refuses to rely upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. The judgment God sends against Israel will be a righteous judgment. According to **verse 23**, it will be a judgment that will cover all of the Promised Land. It will bring ‘complete destruction to the whole land’ and only a small number of Jews will survive it. This is a clear reference to the Tribulation and specifically to the final 3½ years of the Tribulation, which is the time of Jacob’s trouble (Jeremiah 30:7).

But those Jews that do survive it will be in a wonderful relationship with God, for their total trust will be in Him.

Prophetic Point #2 - God’s remnant of Israel need not fear . **10:24-34**

God does not want His people living in a state of fear against political powers and forces like Assyria.

Now there are at least four reasons why God’s faithful remnant need not fear:

(Reason #1) - Because God’s wrath against His people is only for a short time. **10:25**

The time of Jacobs’s trouble will last for only 3½ years or as Revelation says 1260 days (Revelation 12:6), 42 months (Revelation 13:5). It is a good thing to know that whenever God disciplines His people, it is time-regulated and typically it is shorter rather than longer. God will not ever permit godless unbelievers, who are being used to chastise His own people, to go beyond the boundaries of His sovereign time or purposes.

(Reason #2) - Because God will deliver His people from massive enemy numbers. **10:26**

Whether it was the massive Egyptian army with their chariots or the massive number of Midianites against Gideon or the massive number of Assyrians against Israel or the incalculable number of the Antichrist, they are no match for Almighty God. God’s people have nothing to fear, for God is always on the side of His people. **Don’t let threatening numbers get you down.**

Again, I cannot help but think of what happened in the days of Hezekiah when God dropped 185,000 Assyrians in one night (Isaiah 37:36-37). When we carefully study the context, we learn that the thing that prompted God to do this was that King Hezekiah finally turned to Isaiah and to God for help (Isaiah 37:2, 5). Oh, if God's people would only learn this lesson. When the numbers against you are great, turn to your great God, for you have nothing to fear; their numbers are nothing to Him.

(Reason #3) - Because God will lift the burden and yoke off His people. **10:27**

Israel has carried a burden on her neck from the days of Ahaz until now. One day this burden will be dropped. One day Israel will be seen as the wonderful, blessed nation of God. The blessings of God will be so poured out on Israel that every burden will be removed. The picture here in Israel is of so many blessings that the yoke bursts because of a fatness of blessings.

(Reason #4) - Because God controls the route His enemies take and will drop them before they can harm His people. **10:28-34**

The actual route described in these verses is a northern route that the Assyrian king could take to Jerusalem; it will probably be a route traveled in the future by Russia and one that will also be traveled by the Antichrist. In fact, scholars have debated to this point whether or not this route has completely been used even to this day, which would make this very prophetic. It is a rugged route and filled with many obstacles, but that will not stop these arrogant powers from coming against Israel, especially during the Tribulation.

Aiath (Ai) was the northern boundary of Judah (**verse 28**) located about 15 miles north of Jerusalem. Migron (**verse 28**) was south of Ai and was the pass where Jonathan got victory over the Philistines (1 Samuel 14), and it was the place where Sargon, king of Assyria, dropped his supplies because movement was hindered with them. Gebah and Ramah were located about six miles north of Jerusalem and Nob (**verse 32**) was located about two miles north of Jerusalem on the slopes of Mt. Scopus and overlooked Jerusalem. He would stand in eyesight of Jerusalem and God would not let him take it (**verse 32**). He would shake his fist at the city and at God. This could be the very spot where the Antichrist will be dropped by Jesus Christ. **The point to see here is that even though God's people may be surrounded by intimidating enemy forces, God controls how far they go and He does not permit His people, His family, His nation to be destroyed.**

Verses 33-34 describe how God will deliver Israel by the glorious second coming of Jesus Christ. He is coming and will come to rescue His nation.

What God is saying here is that even though there was and will be a tremendous threat against His people Israel, that threat will not succeed.

What is so encouraging here is that God is monitoring everything in regard to His people including the precise movement of those against His people. John Oswalt said these verses are about "the Lordship of God over history" especially as that history relates to Israel (*Isaiah*, p. 178). He will not let Israel's enemies succeed. He will let them get just so far and then with a "terrible crash" He will drop them and cut them down.

There are four messages that clearly need to be seen here:

Message #1 - The message to Israel - you need to turn to Jesus Christ right now. If as a nation, Israel would turn to the Holy One of Israel, she would find the mercy and blessings of God (Jeremiah 3:12-17; Romans 11:23).

Message #2 - The message to the nations - you need to be very careful what you do in regard to Israel and in regard to your attitude toward God. Pride = punishment. You may think that you have powerful numbers as a nation; they are nothing to God. Wise is the nation that fears God and honors His covenant nation Israel.

Message #3 - The message to believers - God time-regulates trouble and we need to rely on Him and His Word during those times.

Message #4 - The message to unbelievers - you need to turn to the only One who can save you from your sins, Jesus Christ. If you turn to Him, He will lift the burden of your guilt and sin from you and wash you whiter than snow.