

Assyria Judged

Isaiah 10:5-34

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In the previous section (Isaiah 7:1 through 10:4), the LORD revealed that He would use Assyria as an instrument of judgment against Syria, Israel, and Judah. But what about Assyria? Weren't they even more wicked than Syria, Israel, or Judah?

Isaiah 10:5-19 – Arrogant Assyria Also Judged

⁵ *“Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger*

And the staff in whose hand is My indignation.

⁶ *I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.*

⁷ *Yet he does not mean so, nor does his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off not a few nations.*

⁸ *For he says, ‘Are not my princes altogether kings?*

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

¹⁰ *As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols, whose carved images excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria,*

¹¹ *As I have done to Samaria and her idols, Shall I not do also to Jerusalem and her idols?’ ”*

¹² *Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Lord has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that He will say, “I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks.”*

¹³ *For he says: “By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent; Also I have removed the boundaries of the people, and have robbed their treasures;*

So I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man.

¹⁴ *My hand has found like a nest the riches of the people, and as one gathers eggs that are left, I have gathered all the earth; and there was no one who moved his wing, nor opened his mouth with even a peep.”*

¹⁵ *Shall the ax boast itself against him who chops with it? Or shall the saw exalt itself against him who saws with it? As if a rod could wield itself against those who lift it up, Or as if a staff could lift up, as if it were not wood!*

¹⁶ *Therefore the Lord, the Lord of hosts, will send leanness among his fat ones; and under his glory He will kindle a burning like the burning of a fire.*

¹⁷ *So the Light of Israel will be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; It will burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day.*

¹⁸ *And it will consume the glory of his forest and of his fruitful field, both soul and body; and they will be as when a sick man wastes away.*

¹⁹ *Then the rest of the trees of his forest will be so few in number that a child may write them.*

v5 – How was Assyria the rod of God’s anger?

Assyria would be God’s instrument of judgment for Israel, Syria, and Judah but that doesn’t excuse them from their own accountability to God.

- A similar shift in the object of divine judgment occurred in the case of the Babylonians. God raised up the Babylonians to punish Judah (Hab. 1:6-11), and then He announced judgment on Babylon (Hab 2:6-17; Isa. 14:5).

How was Assyria a staff of indignation in God’s hand?

The rod and the staff were sticks used by shepherds to guide and correct their sheep. God is saying that Assyria was like a stick in His hand, used to correct Syria, Israel, and Judah.

v6 – Does God give missions to the ungodly?

All the time... *I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath:* Assyria was on a mission from God. They were doing the LORD's will, when they came against Syria, Israel, and Judah. God gave them permission (*I will give them charge to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like mire of the streets*).

v7 – Did Assyria realize they were on a mission for God?

No... Though they were instruments in God's hand, they did not realize this. They didn't care at all about God's will or glory. Instead, motivation was their own glory to destroy, and *cut off* many nations.

How can God use the ungodly to execute His will?

God is Almighty enough that His will be done using flawed and even adversarial humans. Useful idiots are pretty easy to manipulate.

How else Has God used anti-God motives to execute His will?

The pattern is repeated throughout the Scriptures.

- Joseph's brothers sinned against Joseph, 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.

How can God bring good through the evil that is done to us?

We can't often know in advance exactly how God will bring the good, but we can trust that He will as we continue to yield to Him and seek Him.

v8 – What contributed to the pride of the king of Assyria?

My princes are altogether kings. His conquests have made his loyal princes as kings of other countries. The Romans called them procurators.

- Also, Assyria had such an inflated view of themselves that they regarded their princes to be on the level of the kings of other nations.

v9 – What was the significance of the cities mentioned here?

He had made himself master of the cities of the nations he conquered.

- These cities came under Assyrian control between 740 and 721 B.C., and none of the gods of these areas had provided the slightest help.

v10-11 – What else led to the arrogance of the Assyrians?

As I have done to Samaria and her idols, shall I not do also to Jerusalem and her idols? Here, God describes the proud, arrogant heart of the Assyrians. Samaria as the capital of Israel was given over to gross idolatry. Jerusalem as the capital of Judah still maintained some worship of the Lord. In their pride, the Assyrians thought the God of Judah as nothing more than one of the idols they had conquered in Samaria and other cities.

v12 – What would God do about the arrogant Assyrians?

I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks: The pride of Assyria and her king was found in his arrogant heart, and

exposed by his haughty looks. How much pride can be revealed by a haughty look!

What is a haughty look?

Psalm 101:5 – *The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, him I will not endure.*

It is a physical expression reflecting the pride of the heart.

v13-14 – How else did Assyria exhibit their pride?

By the strength of my hand I have done it: Again, the LORD is revealing the heart of Assyria. They glory in their own strength and wisdom (*by my wisdom, for I am prudent*). They exaggerate their power (*I have gathered all the earth*).

- Julius Caesar had this heart of pride when he said of his military conquests: *Veni, vidi, vici* ("I came, I saw, I conquered").

v15 – How Did God regard Assyria?

Shall the ax boast itself against him who chops with it? The LORD uses the pictures of an ax, a saw, a rod, and a staff to make the point that the instrument should never take credit for what the worker does with the instrument. The scalpel can't take credit for what the surgeon does; the strength and the skill are in the user, not in the instrument.

What principle applies upon realizing that it is easy for unknowing instruments of God to be proud?

If it is easy for an unknowing instrument of God to become proud, it is also easy for a willing instrument of God to become proud. Rather, our attitude should be:

Luke 17:10 – *when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, "We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do."*

As wonderful as it is to be an instrument in the hand of God, the instrument deserves no special glory.

v16 – What would God do about Assyria?

Therefore the Lord ... will send leanness among his fat ones: Assyria sat "fat and sassy" at the time, but God would send leanness to them. His judgment will be like the burning of a fire among them, and it will consume the glory of his forest and of his fruitful field. The Lord will leave Assyria just a shadow of its former self.

v17 – How would God kindle the fire that would consume Israel?

The same God that is a rejoicing light to those that serve him faithfully will be a consuming fire to those that trifle with him or rebel against him.

- The light of Israel will be as a fire to the Assyrians; the same pillar of cloud was a light to the Israelites and a terror to the Egyptians in the Red Sea.

What were the thorns and briers that will be devoured in one day?

They were the Assyrian officers and soldiers, which were of little worth to the king, and yet trouble to Israel and quickly consumed by a devouring fire.

Isaiah 27:4 – Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? They would be so far from stopping the fire that they would inflame it. I would go through them and burn them together

v18 – What desolation will there be from the fire God sends against Assyria?

The choice troops of his army that he valued as men do their timber-trees (*the glory of their forest*) or their fruitful fields, will be put as briers and thorns before the fire; they shall be consumed both soul and body, not only a limb burned, but life taken away.

What is the significance of the Assyrians being destroyed both body and soul?

Matthew 10:28 – do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

It is the beginning of the punishment of unbelievers when God causes their mortal body to die... their soul will also be punished in hell.

v19 – How thorough will the culling of the Assyrian army be?

It would be so great that only a very small number of them would remain... small enough that it would be a number that a child could count to.

The LORD told Judah to not trust in Assyria as their deliverer when the threat from Syria and Israel came (Isaiah 7). The LORD promised that He would deliver them from Syria and Israel, and that they did not have to trust in Assyria.

- But Ahaz, king of Judah, did not take God's counsel and trusted in Assyria.
- The LORD would then use Assyria to defeat Syria and Israel as He had promised, but He would also use Assyria to judge Judah.

Now, the LORD wants to prepare Judah for the attack from Assyria, reminding them that He is still in charge and they can still trust Him...

Isaiah 10:20-34 – The Returning Remnant of Israel

²⁰ And it shall come to pass in that day That the remnant of Israel, and such as have escaped of the house of Jacob, will never again depend on him who defeated them, but will depend on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.

²¹ The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, To the Mighty God. ²² For though your people, O Israel, be as the sand of the sea, a remnant of them will return; The destruction decreed shall overflow with righteousness.

²³ For the Lord God of hosts will make a determined end in the midst of all the land.

²⁴ Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts: "O My people, who dwell in Zion, do not be afraid of the Assyrian. He shall strike you with a rod and lift up his staff against you, in the manner of Egypt. ²⁵ For yet a very little while and the indignation will cease, as will My anger in their destruction." ²⁶ And the Lord of hosts will stir up a scourge for him like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; as His rod was on the sea, so will He lift it up in the manner of Egypt.

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ He has come to Aiath, he has passed Migron; At Michmash he has attended to his equipment.

²⁹ They have gone along the ridge, they have taken up lodging at Geba. Ramah is afraid, Gibeah of Saul has fled.

³⁰ Lift up your voice, O daughter of Gallim!

Cause it to be heard as far as Laish—O poor Anathoth!

³¹ Madmenah has fled, the inhabitants of Gebim seek refuge. ³² As yet he will remain at Nob that day; he will shake his fist at the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.

³³ Behold, the Lord, The Lord of hosts, will lop off the bough with terror; Those of high stature will be hewn down, and the haughty will be humbled.

³⁴ He will cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, And Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One.

v20 – What would characterize the remnant of Israel?

will never again depend on him who defeated them, but will depend on the LORD. The LORD promises His people, "You are going through this now because you will not trust Me. But I am going to change you so that you trust Me again, and you will once again depend on the LORD."

v21 – To where would the remnant return?

It is not to where but to whom... the remnant would return to *Mighty God*.

v22 – How is it the judgment of God will overflow with righteousness?

When God allows destruction - whether in outright judgment or loving correction - it is always righteous, and never unfair. In fact, His judgment overflows with righteousness!

v23 – What is the *determined end* God would make?

There would be an end of Judah's trust in nations like Assyria. This pretty much refers to the Millennial Kingdom once they would trust in the Lord after the times of the Gentiles.

v24 – Of what should Judah not be afraid?

do not be afraid of the Assyrian: 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."

What is the principle here for when we are being corrected by God?

Judgment and correction, by their very nature, hurt! Yet we can decide to not be afraid and trust in the Lord, even when it hurts.

v25 – Why shouldn't Judah fear the Assyrians?

God would limit Assyria in the destruction He would allow because *His indignation will cease*.

- Judah shouldn't fear because the Assyrians are not in charge, the LORD is.
- We are comforted by the fact that God will never leave His people to the mercy of their enemies.

v26 – Why should Judah trust the Lord?

the LORD of hosts will stir up a scourge for him like the slaughter of Midian: Judah should trust the LORD because He will indeed take care of the Assyrians. He will take care of them like He took care of Midian at the rock of Oreb. The LORD will strike Assyria as His rod was upon the sea.

- Judges 7:25 describes Gideon's victory over the Midianites. As miraculous and complete as Gideon's victory was, that is how miraculous and complete God's judgment on Assyria would be.
- 2 Kings 19:35 describes how God simply sent the angel of the LORD, and killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night.
- 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.

How is it that the Lord would strike Assyria as *His rod was upon the sea*?

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.

v27 – How would God deal with the oppressing Assyrians?

Assyria would indeed trouble and oppress Judah, but not forever. Instead, the yoke will be destroyed because of the *anointing oil*... by the presence and power of the Holy

Spirit among Judah, the yoke of bondage would be destroyed.

V28-32 – With all this encouragement, why would God allow Assyria to oppress Judah at all?

These verses mention specific cities of Judah to show that God will indeed allow the invasion of the Assyrians, even though He will restore them afterwards.

- The listed cities flows from the north to the south, describing the course of the Assyrian invasion.
- Nob is right on the outskirts of Jerusalem. This is as far as the army of the Assyrians came against Judah. They were stopped here when the LORD killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night.

v33 – How would the proud among the people of Judah be humbled?

Those of high stature will be hewn down: The LORD promises that His judgment will extend even against those of high stature. A mighty forest seems invincible and seems as if it will stand forever, but the LORD can cut it down. All that will be left in a once-mighty forest will be stumps.

What would become of the proud of other nations like Lebanon?

The forests of Lebanon were known for their large, mighty cedar trees. God will judge the proud among all the nations and leave a once mighty forest of those of high stature as if they were just stumps. The bigger they are, the harder they fall!

What applications come to mind from our discussion today?

- God uses the ungodly to serve His purposes, but this is to no eternal value for them... all the more reason to be godly.
- God brings good from evil... praise Him even in the midst of painful circumstances.
- Pride incites the wrath of God... be humble before Him!
- It is way too easy for those used by God to become proud... remember to give God the glory!
- Do not fear judgment and correction... trust in the Lord, even when it hurts.