



## Study #4 - Isaiah 9:8-10:34

### Introduction & Context

We saw last week that the closing verse of chapter 8 is dominated by darkness and gloom as God's people continue in their rebellion. Isaiah himself is challenged by the LORD in the face of such rebellion to stand firm (8:12-15). Chapter 9 begins with the picture of a glorious inbreaking of light as the LORD God dramatically turns around the fortunes of his chosen people. And this through the birth of a son (9:6-7).

God's promises to restore his chosen people, outlined in 9:1-7 and centered on the birth of a son are sublime. In them, Isaiah lifts our hopes to almost unimaginable heights, pointing us forward to the time when the Son will reign forever.

From 9:8 however, we plunge back from these dizzy heights to the grim reality of Isaiah's day in the historical events of the crisis facing Judah that we learned of in 7:1-9. This time however the threat of judgement is destined to fall on the northern tribes.

1. What do you notice about the refrain in 9:12,17,21 & 10:4? What does the LORD's outstretched hand signify?
2. Why should this give God's people pause for thought?

From 10:5, Assyria herself comes into the firing line.

3. What will Assyria learn from the events described in 10:5-19?

Compare what is described here with Proverbs 21:1.

4. How should this truth give us pause for thought in our day?

5. Despite all her brave words, what will be the outcome of Assyria's seeming hold on Judah? (10:16-19)

If there's time, skim read Isaiah 36-39 to see how the events we've just looked at played out. See especially:

- the arrogant speech of the Assyrian commander who speaks for king Sennacherib in 36:4-21
- the abandonment of the siege of Jerusalem described in 37:33-38.

6. Isaiah 10:20-23 describes a surviving and faithful remnant of God's people. What will characterise this group of people?

Read Isaiah 37:14-20 to see how king Hezekiah embodies this. In 10:24-27 read how Hezekiah's trust is vindicated.

Staying with the tree imagery introduced in 10:18-19, where children of kindergarten age are described as being able to count the number of trees left standing, Isaiah describes the blisteringly rapid arrival of the Assyrian army (10:28-31) but also its incredibly rapid demise (10:32-34). In these final verses, in a savage stroke of irony, the mighty Assyria who, up until now, has been like the axe that the LORD has wielded in judgement against his own people, is brutally hewn down.

Barry Webb in his commentary on Isaiah writes:

*Faith is more than a means of justification; it is also a practical approach to the challenges of daily life, just as much for us as it was for those who faced the Assyrian threat. We are not only saved by faith; we live by it. 2 Cor 5:7 We walk by faith and not by sight.*

7. How can we encourage one another to live out this reality all the more?

8. In what situations are we tempted to do the opposite?

## **Prayer**

Finish your time together by praying about what you've shared in answer to these last 2 questions.