

## Isaiah – Chapter 9:8-10:34

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Isaiah 9:12, 17, 21, 10:4 – The Arameans on the east and the Philistines on the west; And they devour Israel with gaping jaws. In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away And His hand is still stretched out. ... Therefore the Lord does not take pleasure in their young men, Nor does He have pity on their orphans or their widows; For every one of them is godless and an evildoer, And every mouth is speaking foolishness. In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away And His hand is still stretched out. ... Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh, And they are together against Judah. In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away And His hand is still stretched out. ... Nothing remains but to crouch among the captives Or fall among the slain. In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away And His hand is still stretched out.

### REVIEW

Last week, we stepped into the brilliant light of Isaiah 9:1-7. Right in the middle of the darkness that closed chapter 8, the prophet declared, “But there will be no more gloom.” We watched God reverse the contempt that had fallen on Zebulun and Naphtali and turn it into glory. The people walking in darkness would see a great light. The nation would be multiplied with harvest joy. The yoke of oppression would be shattered like in the days of Midian. Every boot and blood-soaked cloak would be thrown into the fire. Then came the reason for all of it: a Child is born, a Son is given, and the government rests on His shoulders. His name is Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. His Davidic kingdom will know no end. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish it.

We traced the three threads again: the Messianic Hope shining in the titles of the Child who is the same Immanuel of chapter 7, the Motif of the City where Galilee of the Gentiles will one day stream with light from Zion, and the Holy One of Israel whose holiness judges yet whose zeal guarantees the kingdom.

Chapter 8 left us in thick darkness. Chapter 9 opened with light. Now the prophet turns straight back to the darkness and says, in effect, “The light is coming, but first the anger of the Lord must finish its work on the North.” That single repeated refrain, “In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away And His hand is still stretched out,” becomes the drumbeat that drives the rest of this section. We are still inside the Book of Immanuel, chapters 7–12, and the hinge at 9:1 (“But there will be no more gloom”) makes the contrast unmistakable. Hope and judgment sit side by side in the same mosaic.

### HISTORICAL BACKDROP

We remain in the same window of 732–721 BC and its immediate aftermath. Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria has already struck the northern tribes. The districts of Zebulun and Naphtali named in verse 1 were the first to be ravaged and partially deported in 732 BC. The Northern Kingdom (here called Jacob, Israel, Ephraim, and Samaria) still refuses to return to the Lord. The people rebuild after each blow and boast that they will do better next time. They do not return to the One who struck them.

The prophet looks at this devastated territory that Ahaz and the Southern Kingdom feared and declares that the same God who allowed the contempt will one day turn that contempt into glory, but not before the full measure of judgment falls. The grammar is deliberate. The verbs move from past action to future certainty. The historical audience in the North knew the humiliation of their own tribes; the prophecy tells them the humiliation is not the final word, yet the anger must run its course first.

### EXPOSITION

#### **Verses 8-12 – The Message Against Jacob and the Prideful Reply**

The Lord sends a message against Jacob, and it falls on Israel. The people of Ephraim and Samaria hear it clearly. In pride and arrogance of heart they answer that the bricks have fallen, but they will rebuild with smooth stones; and the sycamores have been cut down, but they will replace them with cedars.

To the original hearers in the Northern Kingdom, this was the voice of defiance. Assyrian raids had already damaged their cities and villages. Instead of returning to the Lord who had allowed those blows, they boasted that they would come back stronger and more impressive than before. Their attitude was plain: we will fix this ourselves.

#### **Verses 13-17 – They Do Not Turn Back**

The people do not turn back to Him who struck them, nor do they seek the Lord of hosts. So the Lord cuts off head and tail from Israel, both palm branch and bulrush in a single day. The head is the elder and honorable man, and the prophet who teaches falsehood is the tail. Those who guide this people are leading them astray, and those who are guided by them are brought to confusion. The Lord does not take pleasure in their young men, nor does He have pity on their orphans or their widows, for every one of them is godless and an evildoer, and every mouth is speaking foolishness.

The Northern Kingdom refuses to return to the Lord. Because of this the entire society is cut off from top to bottom. The respected leaders and the prophets who should have spoken truth are part of the problem. Even the most vulnerable (the orphans and the widows) will not escape the consequences of the nation's refusal to turn back. Here we have the first occurrence of the refrain "His anger does not turn away And His hand is still stretched out." This is a poem or a song that reiterates the point of the recording of Isaiah. Isaiah was commanded to write as a witness to future generations; this would have been a dirge to remind the future people of Israel to not make the same mistakes as Israel and Judah did during the time of Isaiah.

#### **Verses 18-21 – Consuming Fire and Civil Strife**

Wickedness itself acts like a raging fire that starts in the underbrush and quickly spreads through the whole forest. The land is consumed, and the people become the fuel. The picture is one of self-destruction; internal fighting breaks out so severely that brother turns against

brother. The tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, once bound together in the Northern Kingdom, now devour each other. When they finally unite, it is only to turn against Judah.

To the original hearers in the North, this was not distant poetry. After the Assyrian invasions of 732 BC, the Northern Kingdom began to fracture internally. Tribal loyalties, power struggles, and desperation turned neighbor against neighbor. The metaphor of “eating the flesh of his own arm” and tribes devouring one another captured the horror of civil strife and famine conditions that were already appearing. The prophet is showing the outcome of refusing to return to the Lord; the nation begins to consume itself.

### **10:1-4 – Woe to the Unjust Lawmakers**

The leaders who write evil statutes and record unjust decisions are singled out. Their laws rob the poor of justice and treat widows and orphans as spoil. The prophet asks them a direct question: when the day of punishment comes and the storm arrives from afar, where will you turn for help and what will you do with your wealth? The only options left will be to crouch among captives or fall among the slain.

The original northern audience knew exactly who these lawmakers were. Their decrees had already crushed the vulnerable while the powerful enriched themselves. Isaiah is telling them that when the full Assyrian storm breaks, there will be no escape, no place to hide their ill-gotten gain. This fourth and final refrain falls like a gavel.

### **10:5-19 – Assyria, the Rod of My Anger**

Assyria is not an independent conqueror acting on its own initiative. The Lord calls it “the rod of My anger” and “the staff in whose hands is My indignation.” He sends it against His own godless people to trample them down. Yet the Assyrian king does not understand this. In his heart he plans only to destroy nations and take spoil for himself. He boasts as if all the victories are by his own power and wisdom.

The Lord declares that, once He has finished His work on Mount Zion and Jerusalem, He will turn and punish the arrogant heart of the Assyrian king and the pomp of his haughtiness. The original hearers in both the North and South would have heard this as a sobering reminder: the same empire God is using to judge Israel will itself be judged when its role is complete.

### **10:20-27 – The Remnant Returns**

Now in that day the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them, but will truly rely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.

The Lord God of hosts says to His people who dwell in Zion, “Do not fear the Assyrian who strikes you with the rod and lifts up his staff against you, as Egypt did. For in a very little while My indignation against you will be spent and My anger will be directed to their destruction. The Lord of hosts will arouse a scourge against him like the slaughter of Midian

at the rock of Oreb; and His rod will be over the sea and He will lift it up the way He did in Egypt. So it will be in that day, that his burden will be removed from your shoulders and his yoke from your neck, and the yoke will be broken because of fatness.”

This is the first clear, extended picture of the remnant in the Book of Immanuel. The word “remnant” here points to the small group that survives the Assyrian blows and the later Babylonian destruction. They will never again lean on the foreign power that struck them. Instead, they will rely completely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and on the mighty God—the exact titles given to the Child in 9:6.

The same idea appears earlier in Isaiah. In 6:13, the land is burned but “the holy seed is its stump.” In 7:3, Isaiah takes his son Shear-jashub (meaning “a remnant shall return”) with him when he meets Ahaz, making the boy a living reminder of this promise. Here in 10:20-21, the promise becomes explicit: a remnant will return and trust the very One whose shoulders will one day carry the government.

This remnant thread runs all the way through the prophets. Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, says the remnant of Jacob will be like dew from the Lord (Micah 5:7). Zephaniah promises that the Lord will leave a remnant that is humble and lowly and will take refuge in the name of the Lord (Zephaniah 3:12-13). After the Babylonian exile, the same language returns when a small group comes back to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and Ezra.

The New Testament writers pick up the same thread when they explain God’s ongoing plan for Israel. Paul quotes this very passage in Romans 9:27: “Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, ‘Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved.’” Later in Romans 11:5, he says, “In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice.” The idea is the same; even when the nation as a whole walks away, God always preserves a faithful remnant that returns to Him, which comes to fruition in Romans 11:26-27.

The Lord then comforts the people who dwell in Zion: do not fear the Assyrian. In a very little while His indignation against you will be spent, and His anger will turn to the destruction of the enemy. The burden will be lifted and the yoke broken exactly as it was in the days of Midian.

The remnant theme runs throughout Isaiah, and we could trace it in much greater detail, but we will return to it as the text requires. Still, it is essential to understanding God’s plan. Elijah was reminded that the Lord had preserved 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and the same preserving work is evident across the whole canon. In Matthew and the Synoptic Gospels, in Acts, and ultimately in Revelation, Scripture continues to unfold this pattern: God preserves a faithful remnant. In the end, the remnant will be that final generation of Jewish believers who enter the kingdom and fully inherit the promises God made to Israel.

### 10:28-34 – The Assyrian Advance Halted

The prophet traces the actual invasion route the Assyrian army would take, “He has come against Aiath, passed through Migron, and deposited his baggage at Michmash. They have gone through the pass, saying Geba will be our lodging place. Ramah is terrified, and Gibeah of Saul has fled away. Cry aloud with your voice, O daughter of Gallim. Pay attention, Laishah and wretched Anathoth. Madmenah has fled. The inhabitants of Gebim have sought refuge. Yet today he will halt at Nob. He will shake his fist at the mountain of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.”

These towns, Aiath, Migron, Michmash, Geba, Ramah, Gibeah, Gallim, Laishah, Anathoth, Madmenah, Gebim, Nob, are real places on the ridge road just north of Jerusalem. To the people of Judah listening to Isaiah, this list was terrifying because it showed the enemy marching straight toward their capital, city by city, getting closer and closer. The army halts at Nob, within sight of the temple mount, and shakes its fist at Zion. Then the Lord Himself steps in. The tall trees of Lebanon, a picture of Assyrian pride, are felled by the Mighty One.

#### PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Four times the refrain rings out: “In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away And His hand is still stretched out.” The section moves in a clear progression:

- Proud defiance after each blow (9:8–12)
- Refusal to return to the Lord who struck them (9:13–17)
- Internal fire and civil strife that consumes the land (9:18–21)
- Unjust leaders who will have no escape (10:1–4)
- God uses Assyria as His rod, but the rod itself will be burned (10:5–19)
- A remnant returns and relies on the Holy One of Israel (10:20–27)
- The Assyrian advance reaches the very gates of Zion and is suddenly halted (10:28–34)

#### TYING THE THREADS TOGETHER

The Messianic Hope shines again in the titles the remnant will rely on—the Holy One of Israel and the mighty God, the same titles given to the Child in 9:6.

The Motif of the City continues its contrast. Samaria and the northern cities fall, but Mount Zion stands. The Assyrian shakes his fist at the hill of Jerusalem, yet the Lord of hosts Himself cuts down the proud boughs.

The Holy One of Israel stands at the center. His holiness demanded the judgment that fell on the northern tribes. Yet the same holiness guarantees that a remnant will return and that the arrogant rod called Assyria will itself be judged. The Child, who is Mighty God, will one day bear the government on His shoulders, and the zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish it.

The judgment of the Lord is real. The hand stretched out in judgment is terrifying. But that same hand will one day break the yoke, and the light we saw in 9:1-7 has the last word.

# The Unfolding Mosaic: Isaiah's Vision of Judgment & Hope

### The Covenant Lawsuit



God summons heaven and earth as witnesses against His children who have revolted.

### The Parable of the Wild Grapes



Despite divine care, Judah produced 'rotten grapes' of greed, injustice, and pride.

### The Assyrian Flood



Unbelief transforms a quiet stream of provision into a surging flood of foreign invasion.

## Tiles of Promise (The Emerging Hope)



### Immanuel: God With Us

A miraculous sign to the House of David ensuring God's presence amid national crisis.



### The Four-Fold King

A Child-King emerges as Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.



### The Holy Seed in the Stump

Though Judgment falls the nation like an oak, a holy remnant remains to regrow.