



ShalomAZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption

When the Axe Thinks It's in Charge

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts: Isaiah 10:5-19; Is. 37:36; Deut. 8:11-18; Daniel 5; Habakkuk 1-2

There's a dangerous illusion that creeps into human hearts — the illusion of control. We begin to believe that our strength, strategy, or wisdom has brought us where we are. We start to think we're holding the axe... when in reality, we *are* the axe. Isaiah 10 gives us a sobering picture of this through the story of Assyria, the most powerful empire of its day.

God calls Assyria *"the rod of My anger...the club in their hand is My indignation"* (Isaiah 10:5). He was using them to discipline His people, Israel. But Assyria didn't recognize this. They thought they were conquering by their own power. They boasted, they plundered, they exalted themselves. And in doing so, they became like an axe bragging against the one who swings it. This passage reminds us: God is sovereign over history. He is not trapped inside human wars or subject to human pride. He wields the axe. He directs the saw. And when tools forget their place, judgment follows.

1. GOD USES TOOLS TO FULFILL HIS PURPOSES (Is. 10:5-7)

Assyria was the fiercest empire on earth. Their armies marched across nations like an unstoppable force. But God says clearly, *"I am sending it against an ungodly nation, against the people of My fury. I am commissioning it to take spoil and plunder, to trample them down like mud in the streets"* (Isaiah 10:6). Assyria thought it was acting on its own ambitions, but it was in God's hand, accomplishing His discipline of Israel.

God's sovereignty is not limited by human loyalty. He can use even those who don't know Him to accomplish His purposes. Israel's defeat didn't mean their God was weak—it meant their God was at work in a way they didn't expect. He is not a prisoner of history; He is the Author of it. And that should humble us. Even when we can't see it, His purposes are unfolding through nations, leaders, and circumstances—both good and bad.

Reflect on an area in your life where you've felt powerless or confused. How might God be working behind the scenes, using unexpected "tools" to accomplish His purposes?

2. PRIDE MAKES THE AXE FORGETS WHO'S HOLDING IT (Is. 10:8-14)

The heart of Assyria is exposed: *"That's not what Assyria intends, nor is it what he is thinking about. Rather, his heart is to destroy, to annihilate and cut down nations—not a few"* (Is. 10:7). The king of Assyria boasts, *"Aren't all my princes kings?... As my hand has reached the kingdoms of the idols...won't I also do to Jerusalem and her idols?"* (vv. 8-11 TLV).

This is the voice of human pride—loud, confident, blind. "I did this. I earned this. I conquered this. I'm smarter, stronger, superior." Like an axe bragging, "Look at all the trees I've chopped down," forgetting that without a hand to lift it, it would lie useless on the ground. Pride blinds us to dependence. It convinces us that strength and success are self-made, when in truth, they are entrusted gifts meant to be used for God's purposes.

Where have you started to boast—even subtly—in your abilities, wisdom, or accomplishments? What would it look like to consciously give glory back to the One holding the axe?

3. GOD WILL JUDGE THE ARROGANT AND RESTORE HIS ORDER (Is. 10:15-19)

God's response to Assyria is piercing: *"Should the axe boast against the one who chops with it? Should the saw magnify itself against the one who wields it?"* (Isaiah 10:15 TLV). Assyria's

ignorance wasn't innocent; it was arrogant. Their cruelty and self-exaltation provoked God's judgment. He declared He would send "leanness" among their strong ones, and *"the Light of Israel will become a fire, and His Holy One a flame. He will burn and consume its thorns and briars in one day"* (vv. 16–17 TLV).

In one night, 185,000 Assyrian soldiers fell (Isaiah 37:36). The empire that thought itself invincible became like a charred forest—reduced, humbled, undone. God will not let arrogance stand forever. His judgment isn't reactionary; it's restorative. He brings down human pride to re-establish His rightful place as King, so that life can flourish under His rule.

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any "boasting" places in your life or community where God might be calling for humility before discipline. Where might He be preparing a refining fire to restore His order?

CONCLUSION

When the axe thinks it's in charge, it's only a matter of time before the Woodsman reminds it who's holding the handle. God is Sovereign. He directs nations, rulers, movements, and individuals. He can use anyone to accomplish His purposes. But He will not share His glory with human pride.

For Israel, the danger was trusting Assyria instead of trusting "God with us." For Assyria, the danger was exalting themselves as if they were the hand. For us, the danger is forgetting that everything we are and everything we have is *entrusted*—not self-made. Our security, our success, and our story only make sense when we know our place relative to the Lord. Today, live with conscious humility before God. Lay down the axe's boast. Remember who holds you, guides you, and gives you strength. Trust His hand more than your swing.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why is the image of an "axe boasting against the one who swings it" so powerful? How does it speak to human pride today?
2. How does God's sovereignty bring both comfort and humility when we look at current world events?
3. In what subtle ways might believers fall into the same attitude as Assyria, taking credit for what God has done?
4. How can communities of faith regularly remind themselves that they are instruments in God's hand, not the source of power?
5. Where in your personal walk might God be calling you to lay down pride and realign under His authority?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Sovereign Lord, You are the One who holds history in Your hands. Forgive us for the moments when we, like Assyria, have boasted in our strength, wisdom, or success. We acknowledge today that we are not the hand—we are the axe. Teach us to rest in Your sovereignty, to walk humbly, and to give You glory for every victory. Burn away our pride with the flame of Your holiness, and restore right order in our hearts.

In the mighty Name of Yeshua, the Light of Israel, Amen.