



"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME"
ISAIAH 61:1

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

CHAPTER 10: 5-34

AND HIS NAME
WILL BE CALLED
WONDERFUL COUNSELOR,
MIGHTY GOD,
EVERLASTING FATHER,
PRINCE OF
PEACE.
ISAIAH 9:6

Isaiah is called "The Book of Salvation." The name *Isaiah* means "the salvation of the Lord" or "the Lord is salvation." Isaiah is the first book containing the writings of the prophets of the Bible. And the author, Isaiah, who is called the Prince of Prophets, shines above all the other writers and prophets of Scripture. His mastery of the language, his rich and vast vocabulary, and his poetic skill have earned him the title, "Shakespeare of the Bible." He was educated, distinguished, and privileged, yet remained a deeply spiritual man. He was committed to obedience over the long haul of his 55-60 year ministry as a prophet of God. He was a true patriot who loved his country and his people. Strong tradition suggests that he died a martyr's death under the reign of King Manasseh by being placed within the hollow of a tree trunk and sawed in two.

Isaiah's calling as a prophet was primarily to the nation of Judah (the southern kingdom) and to Jerusalem, urging the people to repent from their sins and return to God. He also foretold the coming of the Messiah and the salvation of the Lord. Many of his prophecies predicted events that occurred in Isaiah's near future, yet at the same time they foretold the events of the distant future (such as the coming of the Messiah), and even some events still to come in the last days (such as the second coming of Christ).

In summary, the message of Isaiah is that salvation comes from God—not man. God alone is Savior, Ruler and King.

Commentary on the book of Isaiah is by noted theologian Rev. William G. Most (1914-1999). His contributions to theology have been recognized all over the world. He published 12 books and a host of articles on topics ranging from biblical studies to Mariology and Latin grammar.

Book of Isaiah

Summary of Chapter 10: 5-34

God says: Woe to Assyria. It is indeed my means of punishing Jerusalem. Yet such was not the attitude of Assyria. Assyria boasts of its power: all its generals are like kings. But Assyria really intended only to destroy. It destroyed for God Samaria and Damascus. So it destroys Jerusalem.

Assyria boasts that it was its own power that enabled it to strike these peoples. It was as easy as robbing eggs from the nest of a bird. The axe should not boast against the arm that swung it: nor should the King of Assyria boast against the God who used him for His purposes, to punish Israel.

But The Lord will send a wasting disease against the warriors of Assyria. It will quickly consume them. Then the remnant left in Israel and Jacob will no longer rely on

Assyria, but will rely on the Holy One of Israel. That remnant will return to God the Mighty (<El gibbor>). Yes, the people used to be as numerous as the sands of the sea, but now a remnant will return, for the Lord has decreed destruction.

So God tells them: do not fear the Assyrians. Soon my anger against you will end, and will be turned to destroy them, just as He once struck Midian, as He parted the Red Sea. Yes, they enter Aiath go through Migron, put supplies a Micmash, encamp overnight at Geba, so that Raham trembles, Gibeah of Saul flees and so they continue on.

But the All powerful Lord will lop them off like so many trees.

Comments on 10:5 - 34

The date of the invasions Isaiah speaks of here is much debated. The important thing is this: God will use a foreign power, as He has so often done in the past - recall Amalek, Midian, Philistines - but then when His people finally repent, He will humble these nations. Some think this speaks of the time of Tiglath-Pileser - he did invade in 734 BC, but that time did not take Samaria, which fell in 722. Others think of the time of Sargon, second successor to Tiglath-[Pileser, who came to the throne in 722. Still others think still later of Sennacherib. A good conjecture would be 715, after Sargon's conquest of Charchemish in 717.

However the vision of Isaiah is great, and it sweeps over immense reaches of time. He wants to call the people to repentance. If they do not repent, God will humble them, as He did so often in the past. Then finally, after repentance, He will rescue them, even though it be only a humble remnant that survives.

Incidentally this picture is precisely what many like to call the Deuteronomic theme: sin - disaster - repentance - rescue. And they use that framework on a grand scale to say there are three Isaiah's. As we saw above, their evidence is really scant.

But the prophet predicts Assyria after all the other conquests will turn against Assyria. He speaks of Assyria as a rod in the hand of God. God's providence controls all nations, and He did intend to punish His people. Yet, even though Assyria was doing God's will in one sense, in another it was not: it became proud, and thought it was by its own power that it won, as if an axe should tell the man who used it that the axe was the winner!

In what way does God use even nations for His own ends? In Proverbs 21. 1 we read: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will." How does God do this?: We must say it is by His transcendence,

i. e., He is above and beyond all our categories. We explained something about it earlier, by a study of how He knows future free actions, though no one can fully understand it.

Similarly, in His transcendence, He can cause humans to do things, without completely taking away their freedom. We said, "not completely," since there is indeed a reduction in freedom.

<In the ordinary pattern> God sends me an actual grace, to lead me and to enable me to do a particular good thing here and now. If I simply make no decision at all, no decision against it, it will "work in me both the will and the doing" as Phil 2:13 says. But what it works in me is decided by that omission of resistance at the precise point at which a man could reject grace. That he can reject grace is evident from experience, and from St. Paul, 2 Cor 6:1: "We urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain." Similarly, all Scripture is full of exhortations to repent, to return to God to be converted. All these are meaningless, even mockery of the human, if we do not have the real power to reject grace.

So in the <ordinary> process, the <first decision> on the outcome is made by the human.

But there is <an extraordinary process>, in which the <first decision> is made by God, e. g., when He sends an extraordinary grace, that can either cut through resistance already present, or prevent it from developing. Then God makes the first decision, while the human seconds the motion. We call this extraordinary since it is a reduction in the freedom that God in general has pledged Himself to give us.

<When does God do this>, when does He use this extraordinary mode? We distinguish two orders, the <external> and the <internal> order. The internal order is that which includes all the things and steps that lead to eternal salvation, or the lack of it. In that <internal> category, God has bound Himself by accepting the infinite price of redemption, to offer grace without any limit, except what the resistance of humans imposes. Since He has pledged to give us freedom, then to routinely overrule that even in part would be self-contradiction.

The <external> order has to do with all else, including whether or not a king will wage war, how it will turn out, etc. In this <external> category God does not involve Himself in self-contradiction, since in this category He has not pledged to refrain from interference in freedom. Rather, as we saw in Proverbs 21:1, He has announced He will do so as He pleases. And in the case of the King of Assyria, God, as Isaiah says, had turned the kings' heart to carry out God's will. The way in which the king did it was not good, it was sparked by pride. God will punish that pride. But that basic fact that Assyria does conquer when and where God wills is part of the external order.

The mention that the Lord will send a wasting disease is fascinating. It could refer to more than one period. We are tempted to recall the appearance of Sennacherib before Jerusalem. Hezekiah, one of the few good kings, the son of Ahaz, prayed to the Lord when the threat came. God promised that Sennacherib would not take the city. And he did not take it. The inscriptions of these kings are full of boasting. Yet of this case Sennacherib merely says he received tribute from Jerusalem. He does not claim to have taken it. Instead (37:36) an angel of the Lord put to death 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp. It seems it was a sort of plague. A plague could carry off so many, but the fact that it struck at this particular time and worked so very speedily is due to God's intervention. After it, as we shall read in chapter 37, Sennacherib went back to Nineveh, and there while worshipping in the temple of a false God, was killed by two of his own sons.

To return to chapter 10: God says there will be a remnant who will no longer rely on Assyria, as so many had once done, but rely on the Holy One of Israel. In 10:21 Isaiah says they will return to the Mighty God - the Hebrew is *el gibbor*, God the Mighty, the very words Isaiah used in 9:5-6 for the Messiah. This remnant theme, we will be seeing it several times more, especially after the return from the great exile. And this reminds us of the name Isaiah gave the son who accompanied him to speak to Ahaz: <Shear jashub>, which meant: a remnant will return.

But before that point is reached, God says again: Be not afraid of the Assyrians even though they take one city after another on the way to Jerusalem. (The route described seems not to be the actual one, but again, Isaiah is interested in the broad picture as we said in the comments on the first part of chapter 10). Yet He will cut the Assyrians down as He once did the Midianites in the time of Gideon. Assyria also serves as a type of the powers arrayed against those whom God protects. Assyria finally fell only in 612, with the capture of Nineveh.

End of Chapter 10: 5-34