

Notes

God's Sovereignty over Assyria: The Rod of His Anger (10:5–34)

- Isaiah reveals that God is not only using Assyria (5:26; 7:18–19; 8:7), but is fully sovereign over it. Assyria is called “the rod” of God’s anger. Yet when Assyria exalts itself in pride and goes beyond God’s purpose, it also comes under judgment. Although God may use sinful nations as instruments of discipline, He never excuses their sins and always holds them accountable.

1. Assyria: The Rod of God’s Anger (10:5–11)

- The LORD declares, “*O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger*” (v5), making clear that Assyria was a tool in His hand. Although Assyria was a powerful empire, its authority was neither independent nor ultimate. God sent Assyria against a “*hypocritical nation*” (v6) as an act of divine chastening. However, Assyria did not intend to fulfil God’s purpose. Verse 7 shows that its true desire was to destroy and conquer many nations. God’s purpose was discipline, but Assyria’s motive was conquest and domination. God is in control of all nations and uses them to accomplish His purposes, even when they are unaware of it. Assyria was used by God, yet remained accountable for its pride and cruelty. Divine sovereignty does not remove human responsibility (Acts 2:23; Ps 76:10).
- This truth calls us to humility, reminding us that all power and success come from God. It also gives confidence, assuring us that God remains in control even when the world appears chaotic. At the same time, it offers comfort, reminding believers that God sees injustice and will bring righteous judgment in His perfect time (Gen 50:20).
- Assyria’s pride is evident in the king’s words. He boasted that his princes were like kings and listed the cities he had conquered to prove his power. He assumed that Jerusalem would fall just as other nations had fallen. In doing so, he made a fatal mistake by equating the living God with lifeless idols. In biblical prophecy, the king of Assyria is often seen as a type or foreshadowing of the Antichrist - a ruler marked by pride & opposition to God (Micah 5:5–6; Dan 11:36–45). Like Assyria, he will rise in power for a time, but will ultimately be destroyed at Christ’s return (Rev 19:19–21).

2. God’s Judgment on Assyria (10:12–19)

- After using Assyria to accomplish His purposes, God declares that He will punish it: “*I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria*” (v12). God permitted Assyria’s success only until His purposes were

complete. Once that work was finished, the instrument of judgment became the object of judgment (cf Jer 25:12). Assyria's downfall was rooted in pride, expressed both inwardly ("stout heart") and outwardly ("high looks"). Pride is direct opposition to God (Prov 21:4; Ps 101:5; 18:27).

- The king attributed his victories to his own strength, wisdom, and achievements (cf. Prov 3:7; James 3:17; Acts 17:26). He likened his conquests to gathering eggs from an abandoned nest - effortless and unchallenged (v14). His repeated use of "I" and "my" highlights the depth of his self-exaltation. Although Assyria was powerful, the king failed to recognise that all his success had been permitted by God.
- Isaiah exposes the folly of this pride: "*Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith?*" (v15). An axe has no power apart from the arm that swings it. Assyria was only an instrument in God's hand, like an axe in the hand of a woodsman. An instrument cannot claim credit for the work of the one who uses it (cf Job 38:11). This serves as a warning against self-reliance and pride in spiritual service (Luke 17:10). It is easy to attribute success to our own ability, but every gift and opportunity comes from God.
- Because of its pride, God pronounces judgment on Assyria. He would weaken its strength and consume it like fire. The LORD is described as the "Light of Israel" (v17), and His judgment would come swiftly and decisively. This prophecy was fulfilled during the reign of King Hezekiah, when the angel of the LORD struck down 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night. The mighty Assyrian empire was humbled, and the king retreated in humiliation and was later assassinated (37:36-38; 2 Kgs 19:35-37). The glory of the Assyrian empire would be reduced to insignificance, culminating in the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC.
- The fall of Assyria also foreshadows the final judgment of the Antichrist at Christ's return (2 Thess 2:8; Rev 19:19-21). Every proud power that exalts itself against God will ultimately fall.

3. The Remnant of Israel (10:20-27)

- In contrast to the judgment of the proud, God promises to preserve a faithful remnant. Isaiah declares that the remnant of Israel will no longer rely on their oppressors, but will truly depend on the LORD (v20). Their trust will become genuine and steadfast - ultimately fulfilled when Israel turns to her Messiah. Though the nation may fall into unbelief, God always preserves a believing remnant. His purposes never fail.

- Although Israel would become as numerous as the sand of the sea, recalling God's covenant with Abraham (Gen 22:17), only a remnant would return (v22). This highlights both the seriousness of God's judgment and the faithfulness of His covenant. Not all who are physically descended from Israel are truly part of God's redeemed people. Paul applies this in Rom 9-11, showing that God has not rejected Israel and will ultimately fulfil His promises. In the future, there will be a national turning to the Messiah, and God's promises will be fulfilled.
- God's judgment is never arbitrary; it is purposeful. He disciplines not to destroy, but to purify and restore His people. Even in judgment, His mercy is evident - He preserves a remnant. His discipline is temporary, but His faithfulness endures. In the same way, God uses trials to expose false dependencies and draw believers back to Himself (Jas 1:2-4).

4. The Defeat of Assyria: God's Final Word (10:26-34)

- Isaiah concludes with a vivid picture of Assyria's sudden defeat. God promises to act as He did in past deliverances, such as the defeat of Midian (Judg 7) and the Egyptians at the Red Sea. Deliverance comes "*because of the anointing*" (v27), meaning the yoke will be broken by His blessing & empowerment.
- Isaiah describes the Assyrian advance toward Jerusalem, creating a sense of impending disaster - Aiath, Migron, Michmash, Geba, and finally Nob. By the time they reached Nob, Assyria stood at Zion's doorstep, shaking its hand in defiance. From a human perspective, defeat seemed certain. Yet at the moment of greatest danger, God intervened. The Assyrian army came near - but no further. In a single night, the LORD struck them down.
- Assyria is portrayed as a great forest, strong and towering. Yet the LORD, like a mighty woodsman, cuts it down in an instant. No human power, however great, can stand before God. While nations build empires through power and pride, God establishes His kingdom through the Messiah - the Branch of Jesse (11:11). What man exalts, God cuts down; what God plants, endures forever.
- Isaiah 10 teaches that God rules over the nations, humbles every proud power, and preserves a faithful remnant. Success must not lead to pride. Security must not replace faith. Stability must not replace dependence on God. Our ultimate hope is not in any earthly system, but in the reign of Christ, whose kingdom will never be shaken.