

A Trek Through Isaiah 09 - 9:8 - 10:15

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Context

- Ch 7 - 11 are matching addresses to Judah and Israel
- In the address to Israel (9:8 - 11:16) will cover
 - 9:8 - 10:4 Israel's choice of self-sufficiency
 - 10:5-15 Interlude: Woe to Assyria (Isaiah's view of history)

Israel's choice of self-sufficiency and its consequences 9:8 - 10:4

- Four-stanza poem describing Israel's
- Each stanza ended by the same phrase in 9:12,17,21; 10:4: In spite of all this, His anger does not turn back, And His hand is still stretched out.
- Note the progression from pride to poor leadership to loss of brotherly love to social injustice
- Unclear whether the stanzas describe past or future events.
- Clear that Israel has turned away from Yahweh, they experience judgment, they do not repent.

Self-reliance > Strong adversaries

9:8-12 The Lord sends a message against Jacob, And it falls on Israel. And all the people know it, That is, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, Saying in lofty pride and in arrogance of heart: "The bricks have fallen down, But we will rebuild with cut stones; The sycamores have been cut in pieces, But we will replace them with cedars." Therefore Yahweh exalts against them adversaries from Rezin And incites their enemies, 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 back, And His hand is still stretched out.

- The prophet turns to the northern kingdom
 - Ephraim... Samaria. Referring to the northern kingdom.
 - And it falls on Israel. Israel chose to disobey Yahweh's word given through Moses. Now a message is coming that they cannot escape.
 - And all the people know it. Everyone.
- They are arrogant.
 - Lofty pride...arrogance of heart. No humility. Despising Yahweh.

- They respond to Yahweh's judgment with self-reliance
 - Fallen down...cut to pieces.
 - As Is 1:5-9 land stricken because of rebellion
 - We will rebuild...we will replace
 - Reliance on self
 - As Ahaz in Isa 7:12: "I will not ask"
 - Exalting self
 - As Gen 11:4 And they said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, lest we be scattered over the face of the whole earth."
 - Yahweh is out of their picture.
 - Bricks...stones...sycamores...cedars.
 - Rebuild with better quality replacement.
 - No repentance
 - As 2 Cor 7:10 For godly sorrow produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world brings about death.
 - No repentance, only dealing with consequences.
- Consequence: strong enemies raised up.
 - Yahweh exalts against them adversaries...The Arameans on the east and the Philistines on the west...they devour Israel
 - As Is 30:16 ... we will ride on swift horses," Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift.
 - Yahweh brings adversaries strong enough to accomplish His purpose of humbling
 - His anger does not turn back
 - God is a jealous God. He insists that we depend on Him rather than on ourselves.
 - As Is 48:11 My glory I will not give to another.

Not turning to God > Leaders and prophets removed

9:13-17 Yet the people do not turn back to Him who struck them, Nor do they seek Yahweh of hosts. So Yahweh cuts off head and tail from Israel, Both palm branch and bulrush in a single day. The head is the elder and the highly respected man, And the prophet who teaches falsehood is the tail. For those who guide this people are leading them astray; And those who are guided by them are brought to confusion. Therefore the Lord is not glad in their choice men, Nor does He have compassion on their orphans or their widows; For every one of them is godless and an evildoer, And every mouth is speaking wicked foolishness. In spite of all this, His anger does not turn back, And His hand is still stretched out.

- Do not turn back to him who struck them.
 - The wrong response to trials does not give a good result
 - As Isaiah 1:5, 7 Where will you be stricken again...Your cities are burned with fire...
 - A better choice is to turn to Yahweh
 - As Is 1:18-20 "Come now, and let us reason together," Says Yahweh, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. "If you are willing and obey, You will eat the best of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You will be eaten by the sword." For the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.
 - God disciplines His children as sons. But Israel would not respond.
 - Pr 3:11-12 My son, do not reject the discipline of Yahweh Or loathe His reproof, For whom Yahweh loves He reproves, Even as a father reproves the son in whom he delights.
- cuts off head and tail from Israel.
 - Consequence: All leaders and prophets removed.
 - Illustrated with two metaphors
 - Head and tail: the complete body.
 - Palm branch and bulrush: Top to bottom of a forest.
- Those who guide...those who are guided
 - Leaders and those led.
- Is not glad ... nor does He have compassion.
 - Rejected by God: (1) No delight (2) No compassion
 - Contrast Pro 3:12 ...as a father reproves the son in whom he delights.
 - Contrast Ps 103:13 As a father has compassion on his children, So Yahweh has compassion on those who fear Him.
- everyone is godless.
 - The root cause: practical atheism
 - Godless. Thoughts.
 - Evildoer. Deeds.
 - Speaks folly. Words.
 - As Isa 29:13 Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their mouth And honor Me with their lips, But they remove their hearts far from Me...

Wickedness > Strife between brothers

9:18-21 For wickedness burns like a fire; It consumes briars and thorns; It even sets the thickets of the forest aflame, And they roll upward in a column of smoke. By the fury of Yahweh of hosts the land is burned up, And the people are like fuel for the fire; No man spares his brother. They slice off what is on the right hand but still are hungry, And they eat what is on the left hand but they are not satisfied; Each of them eats the flesh of his own arm. Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh, And together they are against Judah. In spite of all this, His anger does not turn back, And His hand is still stretched out.

- Two fires
- For wickedness burns like a fire
 - Sin is illustrated by the simile of a forest fire.
 - Both the low growth and the tall trees are burned. All goes up in smoke.
 - Intense heat, blinding, choking smoke, complete destruction.
- By the fury of Yahweh of hosts the land is burned up
 - Fire also pictures the wrath of Yahweh.
 - The fuel is the people.
 - The burning is strife.
 - Each person seeks their own at the expense of others. They are hungry but never satisfied.
 - The tribes, which came from brothers, fight each other.
 - As Rom 1:28-29 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them over to an unfit mind, to do those things which are not proper, having been filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, violent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful...

10:1-4 Injustice > Day of punishment

Woe to those who enact evil statutes And to those who constantly record mischief, So as to turn the poor away from their cause And rob the afflicted of My people of their justice, So that widows may be their spoil And that they may plunder the orphans. Now what will you do in the day of visitation, And in the devastation which will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help? And where will you leave your glory? Nothing remains but to crouch among the captives Or fall among those killed. In spite of all this, His anger does not turn back And His hand is still stretched out.

- Those who decree...writers who keep writing.
 - An unscrupulous ruling clique
- Iniquitous decrees...writing oppression
 - Their purpose is iniquity and oppression.
- Widows...fatherless
 - Preying on the poor and helpless
- What will you do?
 - You plural: Spoken to the leaders.
 - Three questions for those who would not repent.
 - What will you do in the day of visitation? Too late to repent then
 - To whom will you flee for help? Only Yahweh can save you but you refuse to turn to Him.
 - Where will you leave your glory? Earthly glory that will vanish away.
- crouch...fall.
 - For those who had exalted themselves: prison or death
 - As in 10:4. Yahweh's message falls on them and they fall among those killed.

Interlude: Woe to Assyria (Isaiah's view of history) 10:5-15

- Second section in Isaiah's address to Israel
- An interlude, giving Isaiah's view of history.
 - Yahweh is the Lord of history.
 - Kings and nations are His tools to carry out His purpose.
 - People in history are fully responsible for their actions.
 - Yahweh is not necessarily on the side of the victor. Rather He uses all of history to accomplish His purpose.
- In the prophecy
 - In 7:18 - 8:8, Isaiah prophesied the historical events to come (the Assyrian invasion) and stated Yahweh's sovereignty over them.
 - In 10:5-15 he describes how history works.
 - In ch 39-42 he will show how the Assyrian invasion fulfilled the prophecy.
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Structure

- Poem of 11 stanzas
- Chiastic structure

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| A1 v5 God's view: Assyria is My tool. | |
| B1 v6 God's purpose | C1 v7-11 Assyria's purpose |
| B2 v12 What God will do | C2 v13-14 What Assyria has done |
| A2 v15 God's view: Assyria is merely a tool. | |

God's view: Assyria is My tool

10:5 Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger And the staff in whose hands is My indignation,

- Woe to Assyria. Judgment.
- Rod...staff. Inanimate objects with no power of their own.
- Anger...indignation. God's wrath against sin. Anger = felt. Indignation = expressed.

God's purpose.

10:6 I send it against a godless nation And command it against the people of My fury To capture spoil and to seize plunder, And to trample them down like mud in the streets.

- God speaking.
 - Godless nation...people of My fury: Judah.
 - Irony: Judah saw Assyria as the most godless nation they knew but God saw Judah as more godless since they had more light and yet had rejected Him.
 - As Amos 3:2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.
 - But they are still Yahweh's people
- Send...command.
 - Yahweh is sending Assyria against His people.
 - As Lord of history, He can use pagan kings and nations to accomplish His purpose.
 - As Is 45:4 Yahweh speaking to Cyrus who would allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem: ... I have given you a title of honor Though you have not known Me.
 - Yahweh is the Lord of History
 - Send. Direction from superior to underling.
 - Command. Direction for the task.
 - All of the Assyrian's power comes from Yahweh.
 - As Jesus speaking to Pilate in Jn 19:11: "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above..."
- Spoil...plunder.
 - Words from Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.

Assyria's purpose

10:7-11 But it does not intend to act in this way, And it does not think in its heart in this way, Rather, what is in its heart is to destroy And to cut off many nations. For it says, "Are not my princes all kings? "Is not Calno like Carchemish, Or Hamath like Arpad, Or Samaria like Damascus? "As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols, Whose graven images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria, Shall I not do to Jerusalem and her images Just as I have done to Samaria and her idols?"

- It does not intend...destroy, and to cut off
 - Assyria does not see themselves as God's instrument.
 - Their intent is conquest and destruction
 - God uses their evil actions to His purpose. As Joseph speaking to his brothers in Gen 50:20 ...As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good
- It says
 - Listening in on the Assyrian..
- Are not my princes all kings.
 - As the great King. Making himself God.
- Calno...Damascus. In each pair, the second is south of the first, depicting an irresistible advance.
- Whose graven images were greater.
 - Sees Yahweh as just another god, and a weaker one at that. He had already been defeated at Samaria.
- shall I not do to Jerusalem and her images
 - Not acknowledging Yahweh as Lord
 - As Pharaoh in Ex 5:2 But Pharaoh said, "Who is Yahweh that I should listen to His voice to let Israel go? I do not know Yahweh, and also, I will not let Israel go."
 - In the Egyptian pantheon, Pharaoh was head over all the gods.

What God will do

10:12 So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will say, "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his eyes which are raised high."

- Completed. A term from tailoring: to trim the ends of thread when the sewing is completed
- Punish. God is sovereign. After He has finished His work in Judah, He will punish Assyria.
- Arrogant heart...pomp of his eyes. Assyria's inward prideful heart expressed outwardly in her eyes.

What Assyria has done

10:13-14 For he has said, "By the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did this, For I have understanding; And I removed the boundaries of the peoples And plundered their treasures, And like a mighty man I brought down their inhabitants, And my hand reached for the wealth of the peoples like a nest, And as one gathers abandoned eggs, I gathered all the earth; And there was not one that flapped its wing or opened its beak or chirped."

- By the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did this
 - Hand. Organ of action.
 - Wisdom. Guiding mind.
 - I...I...I...I. All about himself
 - Mighty man. Epithet for Yahweh 3x in Isaiah
 - The king of Assyria thinks that by his strength and wisdom he has conquered. He is making himself like God.
 - As another proud king: Nebuchadnezzar in Dan 4: 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal house by the strength of my power and for the glory of my majesty?' Yahweh humbled him by making him a beast until he acknowledged that Yahweh, not himself, was sovereign.
- And as one gathers abandoned eggs.
 - Easy as gathering eggs from an unguarded nest.

God's view: Assyria is merely a tool.

10:15 Is the axe to boast itself over the one who chops with it? Is the saw to magnify itself over the one who wields it? That would be like a rod wielding those who lift it, Or like a staff lifting him who is not wood.

- Two metaphors (axe/saw and rod/staff) both with the same meaning:
 - Assyria is just a tool. Yahweh is the one who wields it to His purpose.
 - As v5.
- Contrast with the Assyrian attitude in v13: Yahweh is the One with real power and understanding.
- As Yahweh will say to the king of Assyria in Isa 37:29 ..."Because of your raging against Me And because your presumptuousness has come up to My ears, Therefore I will put My hook in your nose And My bridle in your lips, And I will turn you back by the way which you came."
 - illustration of an unwilling horse and a rider. Brute energy resides in the horse; sovereign power and guidance are in the rider.
 - Calvin: "Whenever men ascribe to themselves more than is proper, they rise against God."

Recap

- The LORD has a work to do in Judah.
 - The work is just: judgment for the nation's sin.
 - The work will be done precisely, as a master tailor.
- The LORD's tool is Assyria.
 - The Assyrian intends to enslave and destroy.
 - The LORD allows him to go just far enough and no further.
 - When the work is completed, Yahweh will punish Assyria for their pride.
- God is the Lord of history. He uses people and nations to accomplish His purpose.
 - As Dan 2:21 "And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and establishes king..."
 - As Isa 46:10 ... 'My counsel will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'...
- People in history act according to their own motives. They are held responsible for their actions.
 - Exo 34:6-7 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, Yahweh, who will by no means clear the guilty..."

References

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