



## Isaiah 10:1-19

### Arrogant Assyria ~ God Decrees Judgment on Assyria

God uses the nation of Assyria to discipline his people Israel for their disobedience and stubbornness. It's not the first time, and surely won't be the last time He uses one Israel's natural enemies to bring correction and discipline.

The mistake Assyria makes is taking credit for Israel's demise. That's a huge mistake! God never stops being God. He's in charge and He definitely has an agenda. It's also clear that He expects humility, not just from His people, but from everyone involved.

This example is helpful for us as well. There are definitely times when God will bring correction into our lives through sources we don't expect. Many times we resent being on the receiving end of correction at the hand of someone we actually feel God should really protect us from. It feels unnatural. It doesn't seem right that God would use these people to accomplish His will in our lives. But he does.

This is another example of a historical event being relatable to us, right where we live.

| English Standard (ESV)   | Passion Notes  | Passion Translation (TPT)  |
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| <p>Isaiah 10:1 What sorrow awaits the unjust judges and those who issue unfair laws. <sup>2</sup> They deprive the poor of justice and deny the rights of the needy among my people. They prey on widows and take advantage of orphans. <sup>3</sup> What will you do when I punish you, when I send disaster upon you from a distant land? To whom will you turn for help? Where will your treasures be safe? <sup>4</sup> You will stumble along as prisoners or lie among the dead. But even then the LORD's anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike.</p> <p><sup>5</sup> What sorrow awaits Assyria, the rod of my anger. I use it as a club to express my anger. <sup>6</sup> I am sending Assyria against a godless nation, against a people with whom I am angry. Assyria will plunder them, trampling them like dirt beneath its feet.</p> | <p><b>a</b> 10:2 Or "You make widows your spoil and orphans your prey.</p> <p><b>b</b> 10:3 Or "glory" or "honor," a possible metaphor for their vast armies.</p> <p><b>c</b> 10:4 Or "his hand is still reaching out."</p> <p><b>d</b> 10:6 See Isa. 8:1.</p> | <p>Isaiah 10:1 Woe to those who legalize injustice and write oppressive legislation! <sup>2</sup> You rip away the rights of the poor and prey upon widows and orphans! <b>a</b> <sup>3</sup> What will come of you on your day of visitation when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? And what will you do then with all your great wealth? <b>b</b> <sup>4</sup> You'll have no option but to cringe among the captives or fall among the corpses of the slain! Yet despite all this, his anger has not subsided, and his hand is poised to strike. <b>c</b></p> <p><sup>5</sup> Woe to arrogant Assyria, the rod of my anger! The club I place in the king's hand is my fury. <sup>6</sup> I am the one who has sent him against a godless nation and ordered him to attack a people who anger me. I sent him to take the spoil and seize the plunder <b>d</b> and to trample them down like dust in the street.</p> |

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| <p><sup>7</sup> But the king of Assyria will not understand that he is my tool; his mind does not work that way. His plan is simply to destroy, to cut down nation after nation. <sup>8</sup> He will say, ‘Each of my princes will soon be a king. <sup>9</sup> We destroyed Calno just as we did Carchemish. Hamath fell before us as Arpad did. And we destroyed Samaria just as we did Damascus. <sup>10</sup> Yes, we have finished off many a kingdom whose gods were greater than those in Jerusalem and Samaria. <sup>11</sup> So we will defeat Jerusalem and her gods, just as we destroyed Samaria with hers.’</p> <p><sup>12</sup> After the Lord has used the king of Assyria to accomplish his purposes on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, he will turn against the king of Assyria and punish him—for he is proud and arrogant. <sup>13</sup> He boasts, “By my own powerful arm I have done this. With my own shrewd wisdom I planned it. I have broken down the defenses of nations and carried off their treasures. I have knocked down their kings like a bull. <sup>14</sup> I have robbed their nests of riches and gathered up kingdoms as a farmer gathers eggs. No one can even flap a wing against me or utter a peep of protest.”</p> <p><sup>15</sup> But can the ax boast greater power than the person who uses it? Is the saw greater than the person who saws? Can a rod strike unless a hand moves it? Can a wooden cane walk by itself? <sup>16</sup> Therefore, the Lord, the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, will send a plague among Assyria’s proud troops, and a flaming fire will consume its glory. <sup>17</sup> The LORD, the Light of Israel, will be a fire; the Holy One will be a flame. He will devour the thorns and briars with fire, burning up the enemy in a single night. <sup>18</sup> The LORD will consume Assyria’s glory like a fire consumes a forest in a fruitful land; it will waste away like sick people in a plague. <sup>19</sup> Of all that glorious forest, only a few trees will survive— so few that a child could count them!</p> | <p><b>e</b> 10:9 Calneh or Calno, which means “(selfish) ambition,” was a city in Shinar (Gen. 10:10).</p> <p><b>f</b> 10:9 Carchemish, which means “fortress of one who subdues,” was a capital city of northern Syria, once known as the Hittite empire.</p> <p><b>g</b> 10:9 Hamath means “high walls” and was the principal city of northern Syria. Arpad means “I will spread out” and was a Syro-Hittite city north of Aleppo in northwestern Syria.</p> <p><b>h</b> 10:9 Samaria means “watch (guard) mountain.” It was the mountainous region north of Jerusalem also known as the northern kingdom of Israel. Damascus is not a Hebrew word (likely Aramaic); it means “alert, active.” <u>Damascus is the major city of Syria and is viewed as the oldest continually inhabited city on earth.</u></p> <p><b>i</b> 10:11 In his blasphemous boast, he equates the Lord Yahweh with all the other gods and their idols that he had conquered. His arrogance will be his downfall. Although he became the rod of God’s anger to punish Judah and Israel, that same rod is now poised to strike him down.</p> <p><b>j</b> 10:12 Or “the pride of his exalted eyes.”</p> <p><b>k</b> 10:13 Or “brought down kings from their thrones.” Assyria represents human reasoning, with its high thoughts and deceptive fantasies that exalt themselves against God (see 2 Cor. 10:1). The intellect of man falls short and is inferior to the wisdom and knowledge of God.</p> <p><b>l</b> 10:15 Although God used Assyria as his “axe” and his “saw” to bring about his purposes, that doesn’t mean they have reason to be proud. The same can be said of us. Although God may use us powerfully, we must give glory and credit to God and his grace. See Acts 12:23.</p> <p><b>m</b> 10:16 The “glory” of Assyria is a metaphor describing all their pomp and military might.</p> <p><b>n</b> 10:17 Moses knelt before the burning thorn bush, and God ignited a fire in his heart. Today God wants to light a holy flame in every heart that follows Christ.</p> <p><b>o</b> 10:18 The phrase “forest and orchard” is a metaphor for Assyria’s armies (forest) and his noblemen (orchard).</p> <p><b>p</b> 10:18 Or “From breath to flesh, it will be destroyed,” a metaphor for totality.</p> <p><b>q</b> 10:18 The Hebrew text of this last clause is uncertain.</p> <p><b>r</b> 10:19 The fire of the glory of the Lord will consume the armies of Assyria. One angel destroyed 185,000 Assyrians in one night. See Isa. 37:36–38; 2 Kings 19:35.</p> | <p><sup>7</sup> But he has no clue what he’s doing, and he has something else in mind. He plans on annihilating many nations <sup>8</sup> and thinks, “After all, I have made my executive commanders into kings. <sup>9</sup> Calnehe will be no different than Carchemish, <b>f</b> whom I destroyed. I’ll destroy Hamath as I did Arpad <b>g</b> and Samaria like Damascus. <b>h</b> <sup>10</sup> Since I was able to seize kingdoms full of idols and images more powerful and more impressive than those of Jerusalem and Samaria, <sup>11</sup> won’t I do the same thing to Jerusalem and Samaria and their idols?” <b>i</b></p> <p><sup>12</sup> But when the Lord has carried out his purpose on Mount Zion and Jerusalem, he will punish the king of Assyria because of his overbearing arrogance and unrestrained pride! <b>j</b> <sup>13</sup> He boasted, “Look what I have done by the strength of my hand and by my wisdom. See how clever I am! I have erased the borders of nations and plundered their treasures. I have been like a mighty conqueror, subduing those in strong fortresses. <b>k</b> <sup>14</sup> I seized their wealth as one who found an unprotected nest. As one who gather eggs that have been left behind, so I gathered the wealth of the world. And the young birds could neither move a wing nor even open their mouths to peep!”</p> <p><sup>15</sup> Is the axe greater than the one who wields it? Is the saw greater than the one who cuts with it? Can the axe strike without a hand to move it? Can a lifeless wooden cane walk all by itself? <b>l</b> <sup>16</sup> Therefore, the sovereign Lord Yahweh, Commander of Angel Armies, will send a devastating plague among Assyria’s proud warriors. Yes, the “glory” <b>m</b> of Assyria will be burned and go up in smoke! <sup>17</sup> For the Light of Israel will become a fire in their midst, and the Holy One will become a flame! He will consume the thorns <b>n</b> and thistles of the Assyrian king in one day! <sup>18</sup> The splendor of his forest and orchard <b>o</b> will be completely destroyed, <b>p</b> like a dying man fading away. <b>q</b> <sup>19</sup> The forest will have so few trees left <b>r</b> that even a little boy could count them.</p> |

- **Bible Knowledge Commentary** ~ John A. Martin

• **WOE TO UNJUST PEOPLE** (10:1-4)

10:1-4. The corrupt leaders in Israel were perverting the cause of justice and righteousness, in contrast with the Messiah's justice and righteousness (9:6-7). So Isaiah pronounced woe on those people. The readers should have realized that this woe would befall them if they followed their leaders' wicked ways. Israel's leaders were guilty of six things: They were (a) making unjust laws and (b) issuing oppressive decrees. These actions were repulsive because the Israelites were supposed to care for each other as members of God's people redeemed from Egyptian slavery by their God. Also they were (c) depriving the poor ("feeble, weak, helpless") of their rights, (d) taking away justice, (e) hurting widows, and (f) robbing the fatherless. These actions, which involved taking advantage of people who could not defend their rights, violated God's Law (Ex. 22:22; 23:6; Deut. 15:7-8; 24:17-18; cf. Isa. 1:17). Because of this behavior, the nation would go into captivity (10:3-4). In disaster ... from afar (i.e., from Assyria) no one would help them, as they had refused to help those in need. In anger God's judgment would fall.

• **ASSYRIA'S FALL AND THE GREAT KINGDOM'S RISE** (10:5-12:6)

In this section Isaiah again contrasted two kingdoms: the Assyrian Empire and God's millennial kingdom. Assyria would fall because it dared to defeat God's people. Even though God used the Assyrian Empire to punish Israel, He did not like the attitude Assyria displayed. (Isaiah picked up that theme again in chaps. 13-23.) God's glorious empire will come after the fall of Assyria though not immediately afterward. Isaiah was merely contrasting the two.

- **The fall of the Assyrian Empire** (10:5-34)

• **Assyria's fulfilling of God's will** (10:5-11).

- 10:5-6. **Assyria's mission...**God had commissioned Assyria to chasten Israel as the rod of His anger and the club of His wrath. Because Israel was godless and had angered God with her sin, Assyria would plunder her cities and ruthlessly trample her people. God often uses unlikely instruments to accomplish His purposes in the world (cf. His using Babylon against Judah, which puzzled Habakkuk, Hab. 1:6-17). Isaiah was not claiming that Assyria was godly or that the empire even knew that God was using it to do His bidding. In His sovereignty He directed Assyria to be His tool for vengeance.
  - 10:7-11. **Assyria's motives...**Though Assyria was a tool in God's hands (vv. 5-6) God was not pleased with her. She had the wrong attitude in conquering Israel. Discounting the greatness of Israel's God, Assyria assumed that Israel and Judah were like any other nation. Assyria had conquered the Aramean cities of Calno (the same as Calneh, Amos 6:2), Carchemish ... Hamath ... Arpad, Damascus, and Israel's capital Samaria. So Assyria thought she could easily take Jerusalem. Since these other conquered cities had greater gods, in the minds of the Assyrians, than did Jerusalem, that city could be taken more easily (cf. the Assyrians' similar boasting in Isa. 36:19-20; 37:12). Though God was using Assyria, her motives were purely political and expansionist.
- **Assyria's Punishment** (10:12-19).

- 10:12-14. **After using Assyria to punish Jerusalem...**God would then punish Assyria because of the king's willful pride evidenced by his haughty look (cf. Pss. 18:27; 101:5; Prov. 6:17; 30:13). The words of the Assyrian king in Isaiah 10:13-14 express the empire's haughty pride. The king felt that what had been achieved had been done by his strength and wisdom (six times he said I and three times my). He took other nations and their wealth as easily as a person takes eggs from a nest. No one was able to oppose his military might.
- 10:15-19. **Because of Assyria's pride...**the Lord said He would judge the king of Assyria and his empire. The instrument (ax or rod or club; cf. vv. 5, 24) is not above the one who uses it. Therefore Assyria, though used by God, was not above Him. The LORD said He would destroy the Assyrian army by disease and fire. God would destroy Assyria's soldiers like trees consumed by a forest fire. The remaining trees (soldiers) would be so few that even a child could count them. In 701 B.C. 185,000 Assyrian soldiers surrounding Jerusalem were killed (37:36-37). Then in 609 B.C. the Assyrian Empire fell to Babylon. The fall of the Assyrian Empire is a prototype of the fall of all who oppose God and His plans for His covenant people.

**- Discussion Questions:**

1. Think about the nation of Israel today. Is God bringing discipline to that nation? If yes, what might they be being disciplined for? If no, explain why He might be withholding discipline.
2. Why do you think God chose Assyria to bring discipline to His people? Is there a geographic reason? Did He just choose the strongest nation to get the most efficient result? What might be some of the other factors?
3. Has the Lord ever used you to bring discipline or correction to someone He loves? How did that experience make you feel?
4. Take another look at verses 15 through 19. Apply verse 15 to your own life and think of ways you may have overstepped your authority during times of correction and discipline in someone else's life. Have you ever felt like God was saying to you, "Is the saw greater than the one who cuts with it?"
5. What is the value of humility in correction and discipline? How can we help promote humility in these sometimes painful times? What does that humility look like in real life?