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Isaiah 9 - 10



Isaiah - Steve Gregg

Isaiah 9 speaks of the messianic age, characterized by righteousness and justice. Steve Gregg explains that the chapter references the joy and gladness that come with this age and the defeat of the enemies causing suffering. The "child born" and "son given" mentioned in Isaiah 9:6 is pointing to the birth of Jesus and his eventual reign of righteousness and justice. The prophecy gives Christians hope and comfort in the midst of trials and suffering.

Transcript

We are coming to Isaiah 9. In our last class, we looked at the prophecy about the virgin bringing forth a child and considered the way in which that fits with the following chapter, that is, we were looking at chapters 7 and 8. In chapter 7, a prediction. In chapter 8, the birth of a child. And in many points, if not every point, it looks like the child of chapter 8 was intended to be the fulfillment of the prediction in chapter 7. And yet, the problem with that is that the New Testament tells us that the child predicted in chapter 7 was fulfilled in Jesus.

And so, my conclusion was that that's a case, and they are somewhat rare, of a double fulfillment or maybe a typological fulfillment in the sense that there's a prediction that has its ultimate fulfillment in Christ, but there's a short-range fulfillment. That serves as a type of the ultimate fulfillment in Christ. Now we come to chapter 9, and I think I'm going to modify what I said at the end of the last session.

I said that the people who were passing through hard-pressed and hungry were seemingly Assyria. Now, it could be that that is true. That is one opinion that is possible, but it could also be it's referring to Israel, because the prophecy does talk about Assyria coming and judging the northern kingdom of Israel, if you read chapter 8. And what comes up in chapter 9, obviously, there's no real break there.

It starts with, nevertheless, obviously drawing a contrast to what was said in chapter 8. Isaiah didn't know somebody would put a chapter division here. And it says, whether this is Assyria or whether it's now Israel, it says at the end of chapter 8, then they will look to

the earth and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish, and they will be driven into darkness. But then chapter 9, verse 1 says, nevertheless, the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed, as when at first he lightly esteemed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward more heavily oppressed her by the way of the sea beyond the Jordan in Galilee of the Gentiles.

Now, I'm sure you could not make any sense of the way that reads. Or if you could, you're somehow better than me. Because I've never, like in the King James and in the New King James, which somewhat improves it, but not much, this is an extremely hard verse to understand.

And yet it's a very important verse. It actually is introducing a messianic passage, but its actual meaning is obscured by the language of it. In the Numerican Standard and the NIV and the ESV and virtually every other modern translation, it reads somewhat more smoothly.

Let me read, for example, chapter 9, verse 1 in the ESV and you'll see what it's saying. Virtually all the other translations agree with the ESV in this. It says, but there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish.

In the former time, he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali. But in the latter time, he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. Now notice how that's worded, that in the time past, God brought Zebulun and Naphtali into contempt.

But in later times, he'll glorify them or he'll make glorious that region. And the New Testament actually quotes this portion of Isaiah and applies it to Jesus beginning his ministry in the Galilee area. Zebulun and Naphtali are two of the tribes of Israel that are up to the north and east in their tribal territories and they were the first to be invaded and judged, as it were, when Assyria came and conquered Israel.

So these two regions were the ones that it says were held in contempt by God and that they were the first to suffer destruction at the hands of the Assyrians. But they would also be the first to experience the glory of the messianic visitation. And so we see in, for example, Matthew chapter 4, that this verse and this chapter of Isaiah is quoted.

Matthew 4, beginning verse 13, Matthew said, And in leaving Nazareth, Jesus came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali. Then it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, referring to the Sea of Galilee, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sat in darkness saw a great light. And upon those who sat in the region of the shadow of death, light has dawned.

Now, we didn't read that far into Isaiah 9, but that's the next verse. So Matthew quotes

Isaiah 9, verses 1 and 2, and says that's fulfilled with Jesus beginning his public ministry up in that same region, which had once been the first to suffer the judgment of God in the time of Isaiah. So again, verse 1 is very obscure in the New King James, but it means essentially, according to all the other translations, in former time, he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali.

But in the later time, or latter time, he has made glorious the way of the sea, meaning the Sea of Galilee, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. So we are now looking at the time frame of Jesus' public ministry when we come to this chapter. So we've transitioned from the time of Israel's destruction by Assyria, you know, in the 8th century BC, to the time of Christ's Galilean ministry.

And verse 2 says, The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them the light has dawned, or shined. It says, You have multiplied the nation and increased its joy.

They rejoice before you according to the joy of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. Now, the nation here is singular. In Isaiah's time, there were two nations, Israel and Judah, but the very use of the singular seems to presuppose a single nation.

And I believe, of course, since we're looking at the time of Christ, we're talking about the new nation, the new Israel. And joy is mentioned as one of the main features in verse 3. We have not brought this out when we were doing our topical studies, but when the messianic age is described, it's very common for joy and rejoicing to be mentioned. And remember Paul, when he said what the kingdom of God is, in Romans 14, 17, he said the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but it is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

We've seen that there are many references to the messianic age where righteousness or justice is characterized by, characterizes the age, I should say, because a king reigns in righteousness and justice. Christ reigns over his people justly. But we've also seen peace as a normal feature.

Peace is a very important feature of the messianic age, especially in terms of those passages that they beat their swords into plowshares and so forth. But joy is one we had not mentioned. And if you want to just quickly go with me through Isaiah, we can see how prominent joy is as a feature of the messianic age.

In chapter 12 and verse 3, for example, a messianic passage, it says, therefore with joy you shall draw water from the wells of salvation. So as you draw upon your salvation, it'll be accompanied by a sense of joy. In chapter 29, 19, it says, the humble also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

So they'll have an increase of joy in rejoicing. In chapter 35, the whole chapter of which is a messianic age prophecy, chapter 35 and verse 2, it says, it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with the joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it.

And when you get down to verse 10 of the same chapter, 35, 10, it says, and the ransom to the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. And they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and signs shall flee away. In chapter 51, verse 3, it says, for the Lord will comfort Zion.

He will comfort all her waste places. He will make her wilderness like Eden and her desert like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found in it.

Thanksgiving and the voice of melody. And then in verse 11, Isaiah 51, 11, so the ransom to the Lord will return and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. And they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and signs shall flee away, identical essentially to chapter 35, verse 10.

But then over in chapter 52 and verse 9, it says, break forth into joy, sing together. You waste places of Jerusalem for the Lord has comforted his people. In chapter 55 and verse 12, for you shall go out with joy and be led out with peace.

The mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. There's joy and peace, the standard characteristics of the Messianic kingdom. In chapter 61, verse 3, it says, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning.

That is, instead of mourning, they'll have the oil of joy, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Down in verse 7 of the same chapter, Isaiah 61, 7, instead of your shame, you should have double honor. Instead of confusion, they shall rejoice in their portion.

Therefore, in their land, they shall possess double. Everlasting joy shall be theirs. Chapter 65, 14, these are all Messianic passages.

Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but you, meaning the apostate Jerusalem, will cry for sorrow of heart. Chapter 66 and verse 5, hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at his word. Your brethren who hated you cast you out for my namesake and said, let the Lord be glorified that we may see your joy, but they shall be ashamed.

Over in chapter 31 of Jeremiah, chapters 30 through 33 of Jeremiah are a Messianic section. In chapter 31, verse 13, it says, then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, the young men and the old together, and I will turn their mourning into joy. I will comfort them and make them rejoice rather than sorrow.

One of the things that is most commonly mentioned along with peace and righteousness

in the Kingdom Age is joy. Paul tells us that the Kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy. In the Holy Spirit, in other words, the Kingdom is a spiritual phenomenon, a spiritual experience of those who follow Christ.

Those who are under his kingship already know the righteousness and the peace and joy. There's not a global righteousness or a global peace or global joy, but this is something experienced by those in the Holy Spirit. When Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit, he lists peace and joy high on the list of the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

These phenomena are spiritual rather than geopolitical. Of course, to the extent that the gospel spreads and makes its own conquests and more people come into the Kingdom of God, then the sum total of peace and joy and righteousness in the earth also will increase. But the point here is that the joy and the peace of the Kingdom are always associated with the first coming of Christ, what he has established.

And that's true in Isaiah 9 where we now are. And this is talking about the first coming of Christ as we see from Matthew's quotation of verse 4. But also when we come to verse 6 and 7, there's no question that we're talking about the first coming of Christ. So verse 3 says, You have multiplied the nation and increased its joy.

They rejoice before you according to the joy of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide spoil. By the way, all this reference to joy, I should point out that joy doesn't mean giddiness necessarily. On the other hand, joy should be something that is observable.

And I think, you know, the old saying that preachers say their congregation looked like they were baptized in lemon juice. They, Christians sometimes are very dour people, very sober. And sobriety is, by the way, a value also.

The Bible actually commands us to be sober. But on the one hand, sobriety in its proper place, but also joy as a prevailing mood. If mood is the right word for it.

Disposition. You know, you can be joyful in that you are content and have, you know, you're quite satisfied in life. Even if there's times when you're grieving or when you're in pain, you don't always have to be laughing.

You don't always have to be smiling. But joyfulness is simply a buoyancy in a world where there's many discouraging things going on. Yet we rejoice in the Lord, as the Bible says.

We rejoice because there is something transcendent in our experience that transcends the particular ups and downs of our environment. And of course, Christians get sad. Christians mourn.

Jesus said, blessed are those who mourn. James said, you know, be afflicted and mourn and weep. Yet your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness.

There's times when repentance is appropriate. There's times when sympathy for the pain and suffering of others is, it'd be inappropriate for you to be too lighthearted. But at the same time, joy is a wellspring of contentment, a wellspring of satisfaction in God.

A thankfulness, a rejoicing in our salvation that really is a settled foundation that should, on many occasions, be reflected in that sparkle in a Christian's eye. And, you know, the smile that is the default countenance of a Christian. And a lot of times it isn't.

Sometimes smiles and happiness and so forth are not visible in some Christians, much of any time. And so, I mean, we need to examine our own Christian experience and say, well, you know, I believe I have peace with God. I believe that I've got the righteousness of Christ, but do I have joy? Would people say that I'm a joyful person? That's just certainly something that the Bible says, both in the Old and the New Testament, that should be characteristic of those who are in Christ's kingdom.

Now, verses 4, 5, and 6 all begin with the word for, meaning because, meaning it's giving the reason for the previous thing that was said. So there's sort of a, you kind of go back to cause, to the cause of the cause, to the cause of the cause. And the reason they're rejoicing is because for, verse 4, you, God, have broken the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder and the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.

That is, just as God delivered Israel from the Midianites in the days of Gideon, so God has delivered his people from their oppressor. Now, our oppressor is not Rome, nor is it any other political system. In Jesus' day, the Jews felt that the oppressor that they wished from which to be, from which they wished to be freed, was the Roman rule.

That Jesus disappointed them in that he didn't make any motions of setting them free from the Roman rule. But the angel had said his name will be called Jesus because he'll save his people from their sins. The real oppression from which people need to be saved at any time in history is their sinfulness, their bondage.

And that's the oppressor, the demons, the guilt, the accuser. This is the bondage and the burden that Christians are always bearing, and if they're not converted. I should say Christians, I should say humanity.

And Christians are freed from that, really. If you look at what Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, said in Luke chapter 1, when John the Baptist was born, his father prophesied, broke a long silence. He had not spoken during the entire pregnancy, and now, the child being born, Zacharias is able to speak plainly.

And his prophecy was this. Within it, he says, in verse 69, that God, well, verse 68, Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets, who have been since the world began.

That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us. To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, to grant that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. And then he goes on and speaks further to John, the baby.

But obviously, Zacharias is prophesying concerning the significance of that period of time that they were living in. John is born, it's the signal that God has redeemed his people. The Messiah is coming.

And this is what God is accomplishing. Delivering us from our enemies. But of course, while Zacharias may not have known the import of his own prophecy, because many times prophets didn't, and he may have thought those enemies were the Roman oppressors, yet we know that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, we wrestle against principalities and against powers.

Against the rulers of the darkness of this age, and against spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places. So, it's our spiritual enemies from which we're set free. It's sin from which we're set free.

That's the oppression. And so, in Isaiah 9, verse 4, it says, You have broken the yoke of our burden. The yoke means the bondage.

The burden that we bore before we were saved. The staff of the shoulder, the rod of the oppressor. We're no longer beaten up by guilt and by condemnation, by the accuser.

And that's why the joy is there. You see, verse 3 says they rejoice, and verse 4 says, because, for God has set us free from the former oppression. And then verse 5, for every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle, and garments rolled in blood will be used for burning and fuel for fire.

Notice the war is over. All the stuff from the battle, the old bloody sandals and garments from the warriors that are laying around, they just are heaped up into piles and burned, because they're just littering the land from a battle that's over. Now, this is, of course, figurative, using language of natural battle, but it's talking about the spiritual deliverance.

We have peace with God. The war, in a sense, is over. Not the spiritual battle with the enemy, but certainly the conflict that was between, well, it's talking about victory in the warfare.

It's what it's talking about. The war's over, and you're gathering up the trash and burning it after the battle, the old garments from a former war that's now over. We're at peace with God.

And it says, for, verse 6, unto us a child is born. Now, the birth of this child, therefore, is the reason why the war has ended the way it has. And the war has ended the way it has is the reason why we're delivered from the yoke, and that we're delivered from the yoke is the reason why there's the joy.

So this is like going into a logical regression back to earlier causes. That's why it says, for, for, for. Now, the ultimate first cause of all of this chain is, unto us a child is born.

Unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace, there will be no end. Upon the throne of David and over his kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice, from that time forward even forever.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. This is not going to be done by man's energies, but God's zealous for this outcome, and he's going to make it happen. Now, the child who is born is clearly a reference to Jesus.

It's interesting, though, that the New Testament doesn't make more than it does of this particular verse, because it seems like just such an excellent verse on, A, the deity of Christ, and, B, simply the birth of Christ. I mean, the New Testament does quote chapter 7, verse 14 about the virgin having a son, but you just don't have as much as you would think pointing in the direction of this verse. But I believe there is reference to verse 7, which is, of course, part of the same paragraph, same stanza, in the announcement that the angel made to Mary about the birth of Jesus in Luke chapter 1. In Luke chapter 1, verses 32 and 33, the angel is talking to Mary about her son, and he says, Now, there are three phrases in this promise about Jesus that are parallel to statements in verse 7 of Isaiah 9. Upon the throne of David, in verse 32 of Luke 1, is in verse 7. Also, that his reign will be forever and there will be no end are phrases that the angel uses, and the angel seems to be deliberately alluding to this promise and saying that Jesus is its fulfillment.

Now, it says a child is born and a son is given. I believe the expression, a child is born, of course, is a reference to the birth and death hymn. The son is given might be just a repetition of the same thought, though I think it's looking beyond that.

I think it's looking to Jesus the son being offered up, being offered as a sacrifice. I think that his crucifixion is the instance of the son being given by God for our salvation, for God so loved the world that he gave his unique son. I believe that he gave him as a sacrifice, and it's not just talking about giving him to the world at his birth, but giving him as the atonement for sin.

And therefore, I think it's referring to his birth and his redeeming death, his atoning death. And it says the government will be on his shoulder, which simply means he'll be

the ruler. So here we have a kingdom passage that focuses directly on the ruler himself.

A lot of the kingdom passages just talk about conditions in the kingdom. The peace, the joy, and so forth. But here the focus is on the one who is bringing those conditions about and maintaining them by governing the kingdom.

It's this child, this son. His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. A lot of these titles, it's not clear exactly what we're to make of them.

Wonderful obviously could just mean marvelous, or it could mean mysterious. You know when Manoah, the father of Samson, had an angel visit, or a theophany, he asked the angel, or the theophany said, you're going to have this son, and this is going to be, what's going to happen, and so forth. And Manoah said, well, what is your name so that when all this happens, we can give credit to you as the messenger? What's your name? And the messenger said, why is it that you asked my name? Seeing it is wonderful.

Now the word wonderful in that case is not the same Hebrew word as here. And some translations just say secret. My name is secret.

But the point is, Jesus' name is said to be wonderful, and of course we think of wonderful as just great, fantastic, you know. And yet wonderful of course means full of wonder. Something that people would marvel at.

And counselor. Not sure exactly in the Old Testament how the word counselor would be understood. We think of a counselor as somebody who's a therapist, or something.

Or someone who's talking to people who are in trouble in their marriage, or something. But a counselor would normally be in the Old Testament, somebody who counsels the king, although this is the king. But maybe he's the one who advises his people.

And then of course the mighty God is important, because the Jews knew of only one God, and therefore it suggests that he is Yahweh, the mighty God. Now the Jehovah's Witnesses say that Jesus is not the almighty God. He's a mighty God, they say, but not the almighty God.

But I think that's just splitting hairs. The Jews knew of no mighty gods other than the almighty God. And so in case that's not already clear, he adds everlasting father.

Now to call Jesus the everlasting father has been confusing for some, and probably for everyone at one time or another, because in our view of the Trinity, the father and the son are separate persons. And yet Jesus said, if you've seen me, you've seen the father. And there is a sense in which Jesus is the embodiment of the father among us.

But the thing is, the father is much larger than the embodiment. And how that works is

hard to say. But Jesus is the embodiment of the father.

I've thought of many illustrations in my own mind of how that works, but I don't know that any of them should be sanctioned. It's hard to know exactly how that is, but the illustration that seems most scriptural is that of the Shekinah glory in the Old Testament. Because John says in John chapter 1 that the word was God, and the word was made flesh and tabernacled among us.

That's how it reads in John 1.14 in the Greek. He tabernacled among us. And so God tabernacled among Israel in the Old Testament.

And John says, and we beheld his glory. He tabernacled among us and we beheld his glory. Well, God tabernacled in the wilderness and they beheld his glory.

His glory was manifest in the cloud and in the fire pillar, the Shekinah. I think John is making reference to that and perhaps giving us the most scripturally sanctioned metaphor or analogy, excuse me, for what Jesus is. The Shekinah glory in the tabernacle was God dwelling among his people in a visible, localized form.

But no Jew who knew anything about God would have thought that God is only there. You know, that God is in the tabernacle. Good, I can get away with something over here, away from the tabernacle because God's not paying attention.

He's over there. God's everywhere, and the Old Testament teaches that God's everywhere. But if God's everywhere, he's also somewhere in particular in his manifestation in the Shekinah glory.

And the God who is manifested in the cloud is the same God who's everywhere else, too. It's just that he's only manifest there. And so theologians talk about the universal presence of God in contrast with the manifest presence of God.

God is everywhere in one sense. He's manifested in one spot, in another. And I believe that that's how the New Testament encourages us to think about Jesus.

Jesus is God manifested in a human being. In 1 Timothy chapter 3, Paul says in verse 16, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifested in the flesh.

Talk about Jesus. Now, the Alexandrian text doesn't say God was manifested. It says he was manifested.

But regardless, it's not about Jesus. And Jesus is the manifestation in the flesh of God. He's the manifest presence of God.

If you've seen me, you've seen the Father because the Father has manifested himself right here in me. But the Father is greater than I. The Shekinah glory at the tabernacle could have said, if you've seen me, the cloud, you've seen God. But God is much bigger

than this cloud.

God's filling the whole universe. And so Jesus is the everlasting Father intruding into our world, but not all there is of God. When you see Jesus, you see God truly, but not totally.

Because God is invisible and omnipresent and so forth. When I think of really earthy illustrations, I think of a person who's tending fish in a fish bowl. And they can't see outside the bowl because they only see their own reflection.

They don't know what's out there. But every day, food appears on the surface of the water and they go up and eat it. And they have theories about where the food's coming from.

And some think it's a natural phenomenon. Just kind of appears there. No explanation needed.

Others say, no, I think there's someone there putting that food in there. I think someone's taking care of us. I think someone's watching us.

And others doubt it. But then suddenly the owner starts putting his finger moving things around and intruding into their world. And they're seeing the owner.

But they're only seeing the fingertip. They're not seeing the whole owner. That finger is the owner.

But there's a lot more owner where that came from. But the thing is, they only see that part. That's the manifest presence of the owner of the fish in the tank.

If they could get out of a tank and see the whole owner, they'd see there's much more than meets the eye. Silly illustration it may be, but that's kind of how I picture it. I think God's sticking his finger into our world in a human body.

Jesus said, if I'm casting out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. I believe he is God's hand, his right hand, his right arm, intruding into our world. He's the father.

But that was the father intruding in the person of his son being born of a virgin and coming into our world and living among us. But there's more father than that. He is, in fact, the mighty God, the everlasting father.

But he could also say, my father, oh, he's a lot bigger than me, a lot greater than I, but I'm him. It's mysterious, but not entirely nonsensical, certainly not nonsensical. And it says in verse seven here, the increase of his government and peace, there won't be any end to that.

He'll be ruling on the throne of David over his kingdom to order and establish it with

judgment and justice from that time forward even forever. So we see in this one passage, verses three through seven, we have all three of the features of the kingdom of God that Paul says exists. He says the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

We have the joy in verse three. We've got the peace and the righteousness and justice in verse seven. These are the features of Christ's kingdom.

And Paul says that's, of course, the experience of those who have the Holy Spirit and are in Christ's kingdom, therefore. Now, we can't dilly-dally at this passage any longer only because there's so much more we need to cover. So verse eight says the Lord sent a word against Jacob.

Now, I just want to point out that chapter nine, verse eight, through chapter 10, verse four, is one poem. It's a unit. And it's broken into four stanzas.

And you can tell where they're punctuated because there's the same refrain at the end of each of them. And we've encountered this same refrain already before in chapter five, verse 25. We see it here in chapter nine, verse 12.

For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still, the latter part of verse 12. It's also the last part of verse 17 and the last part of verse 21 and the last part of chapter 10, verse four. And each of these times this same refrain happens, it punctuates a poem that has four sections.

And this is the conclusion of each stanza. So verse eight through 12 is one of those stanzas. The Lord sent a word against Jacob, and it has fallen on Israel, that all the people will know Ephraim and Zechariah, who say in pride and arrogance of heart, the bricks have fallen down, but we'll rebuild with hewn stones.

The sycamores are cut down, but we will replace them with cedars. Many people have likened this to the attitude of New York City at 9-11, where, you know, some people believe that was like God firing a warning shot over the bow of America, saying you're, you know, you're ripe for judgment. This is the kind of thing that should wake you up.

And yet they said, well, we'll just rebuild. The bricks are falling, but we'll just build stronger next time. In other words, they're saying the judgment of God is going unnoticed by them.

You know, God has done some initial damage in Israel, but instead of recognizing it as a warning to cause them to repent, they just say, ah, well, we'll just make it stronger next time. They're not getting the message. Therefore the Lord shall set up the adversaries of reason against him and spur his enemies on, the Syrians before and the Philistines behind, and they shall devour Israel with an open mouth.

For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. Remember this section, chapters 7 through 12, were primarily focused on judgment on Israel, as there was judgment on Judah in the first six chapters. These six chapters are concerned about the fall of the Northern Kingdom, and it says that even though this damage has befallen them, it's not over.

His anger is not turned away. He's got more to come. Verse 13, for the people do not turn to him who strikes them, nor do they seek the Lord of hosts.

Therefore the Lord will cut off head and tail from Israel, palm branch and bulrush, in one day. The elder and honorable, he's the head. The prophet who teaches lies, he's the tail.

For the leaders of this people cause them to err, and those who are led by them are destroyed. Therefore the Lord will have no joy in their young men, nor have mercy on their fatherless and widows, for everyone is a hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly. For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

Next stanza, for wickedness burns as a fire. For it shall devour the briars and the thorns and kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like rising smoke. Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts, the land is burned up, and the people shall be as fuel for the fire.

No man shall spare his brother, and he shall snatch on the right hand and be hungry, and he shall devour on the left hand and not be satisfied. Every man shall eat the flesh of his own arm. Manasseh shall devour Ephraim, Ephraim, Manasseh, and they shall be against Judah.

For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. So there's going to be, obviously, disintegration of intertribal unity. The nation, which needs to stand united against common enemies, actually begins to fight among themselves.

Manasseh and Ephraim and Judah all end up with their own agendas, hostile to each other. And so there's disintegration of the national unity, but that's not the end of it. Chapter 10, Woe to those who decree unrighteous decrees, who write misfortune, which they have prescribed to rob the needy of justice and to take what is right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey and they may rob the fatherless.

What will you do in the day of punishment and in the desolation which will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help? And where will you leave your glory? Without me, they shall bow down among the prisoners and they shall fall among the slain. For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. So we have just this poem of the disasters that are coming on Israel and saying, and each time there's something mentioned that God has done to hurt them, it says, ah, but that's not the last

of it.

There's more besides. His hand is still stretched out against them. Until they're utterly annihilated as a nation, he doesn't stop judging them.

Now, the subject matter shifts for really the rest of the chapter. Chapter 10, verses 5 through 34 is about the punishment of Assyria. Now, Assyria is the agent of judgment upon Israel that God has used.

God is using this expanding, growing empire of Assyria that is conquering so many countries in the region. It's just a tool. Assyria is just a tool in the hand of God is what he's saying.

But Assyria doesn't acknowledge this. Assyria thinks of themselves as the strong, successful nation and gives credit to their gods and to themselves rather than to Yahweh. And so the prophecy is that, well, God's going to have to judge them too.

This is the theme, or similar to the theme at least, of Habakkuk also. Habakkuk lived at a time later when Babylon was threatening to destroy Judah. And God showed him that that would happen.

God would use Babylon to punish Judah. And Habakkuk complains about that and says, well, that doesn't make any sense. Judah may be bad, but Babylon's worse.

How can you deliver Judah over to the hands of the Babylonians when the Babylonians are worse than we are? And God's answer is basically, well, I'll deal with them in due time. Right now, it's Judah's turn. But Babylon's going to get theirs too.

It's not that when God gives victory to one nation over another that he's really on the side of either nation. He's just ordering things that nations get judged in the order that he wants it to happen. And that means sometimes a worse nation beats a better nation because God's got a timetable for the judgment of the two respective nations.

What this means, of course, if a Christian looks at international politics from a biblical worldview, war is the means by which God brings down and brings up certain nations. And whenever a nation is at war, and this is particularly relevant to a Christian concerning the nation in which they live, we have to ask ourselves, are the people we're fighting under judgment? Unless you have a prophet of God to tell you, you may never know the answer to that. But you have to consider that one of those things may be true.

For example, this war on terror. When 9-11 occurred and the Twin Towers fell, there were many Christians who saw that as an indication of God's judgment on America. Others saw it as just a reason to get angry at the terrorists and go out and hunt them down and kill them.

Now, both attitudes would seem to be understandable, but the question is, which was God's attitude? We don't have a prophet of God, as far as I know, telling us, America, just submit to this. This is the judgment of God. You're a wicked nation, and I'm bringing these people against you, and just deal with it in the sense that you surrender to it.

You bow before God and humble yourself under his mighty hand, and maybe he'll deliver you. Instead, we say, well, the towers have fallen, the bricks have fallen, we're going to build with hewn stones, we're going to go back and kick some butt, and retaliate. Well, that's an understandable response when you're under attack.

That's an understandable secular response. But from the Christian point of view, we have to say, well, what is God saying here? Is this trying to get our attention for something? Now, 9-11's back far enough, it's sort of an old news sort of thing, but any time in the future, we might be invaded by some hostile power. You never know.

Will North Korea, will Iran, will China, send missiles over this way? Will we be under attack? If we do, you know what we're going to say. We've got to go back and retaliate. Of course.

What else does a nation do? Maybe God is judging us. But no Christians would think that because our enemies are evil. Our enemies are Muslim extremists or communists or someone else who's really bad.

Well, it doesn't matter if they're really bad. That doesn't tell us that God isn't judging us by them. Babylon was really bad.

Assyria was really bad, but God was using them to judge his people. The people of Israel should have turned to God rather than just decide, well, we're going to have to show up our military defenses here. If God is against you, you're going to fall.

It doesn't matter how strong your military is. A horse is a vain thing in battle. Neither is any king saved by its great strength, the Bible says.

So nations need to look at their, at least believers who believe in God, need to look at international conflicts from God's point of view and say, well, is God trying to judge somebody here? Because if he's doing this, we can't just assume right at the outset that he's judging the worst nation at the hands of the good nation. Maybe both nations are bad, and he may be using the worst nation to judge the one that's less bad, but they'll both get theirs. What Isaiah 10 is saying is that God used Assyria to punish Israel, but Assyria's going to get theirs too.

And this is where the prophet focuses on that aspect. In verse 5, he says, Woe to Assyria, the rod of my anger, and the staff in whose hand is my indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation.

That ungodly nation is Israel, but God is sending Assyria, another ungodly nation, against his ungodly nation, Israel. And against the people of my wrath, I will give him a charge to seize the spoiled, to take the prey, to tread them down like the mire in the streets. Yet he, that is Assyria, does not mean so.

He's not looking at it that way. God says, I'm the one sending him to judge a wicked nation, but Assyria doesn't see themselves as serving God. They don't even know God at all.

They're not thinking of God at all. They're just seeing it as another military conquest. He doesn't mean so, nor does his heart think so.

But it is in his heart just to destroy, to cut down, not a few nations. For he says, Assyria says, Are not my princes altogether kings? Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad? Is not Samaria like Damascus? These are all different cities conquered by Assyria. As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols, whose carved images excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria, as I have done to Samaria and her idols, I shall also do to Jerusalem and her idols.

In other words, Assyria doesn't know the difference between Yahweh and the other gods. All these other cities, they had their gods, and Assyria says, I conquered them. How is Jerusalem any different? Now, of course, he did wipe out Assyria, I mean Samaria, but he assumes Jerusalem is no different.

And that's actually what the Rabbi Sheikah actually said to Hezekiah at the walls of Jerusalem. You might remember, Rabbi Sheikah says, Don't think that Yahweh is going to save you. Did the gods of any of these other nations I've conquered save them? The Assyrian didn't know the difference between Yahweh and idols.

And they're just saying, Aren't all these cities I've conquered the same? Isn't Jerusalem, Samaria, aren't they all just like Carchemish and Hamath and Arpad? I mean, what did their gods do for them? So Assyria doesn't see God in the picture at all, though Assyria is a tool. And verse 12, Therefore it shall come to pass when the Lord has performed all his work on Mount Zion and Jerusalem. And this is, of course, referring to the fact that the Assyrians, after conquering Israel, would, in fact, do some serious damage on Judah and almost conquered Jerusalem.

Certainly would have done so, but it brought about a repentance and faith on the part of Hezekiah that prevented that. That when God is done dealing with Zion and Jerusalem, that he will say, I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the glory of his haughty looks. For he, that is Assyria, says, By the strength of my hand I have done it.

Not God's strength, not God has blessed me, God has given me victory. God loves the

credit. By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent.

Also I have removed the boundaries of the people, and I have robbed their treasuries. So I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man. My hand has found like a nest the riches of the people, and as one gathers eggs that are left, I have gathered all the earth, and there is no one who moved his wing, no one opened his mouth, not even a peep.

So he says, conquering these nations was like stealing candy from a baby. It's like running across a nest on the ground with eggs and just taking the eggs, and there's not even a mother bird there to resist or even to protest. Then God says, Shall the axe boast itself against him who chops with it? Or shall the saw magnify itself against him who saws with it? As if a rod could wield itself against those who lift it up? Or as if a staff could lift up as if it were not wood? He's simply saying that Isseri is like a saw or an axe or some other tool.

God's the one using it. Does the tool give itself the credit for the work done? Therefore the Lord, the Lord of hosts, will send leanness among his fat ones, and under his glory he will kindle a burning like a burning of a fire. So the light of Israel will be for a fire and the Holy One for a flame.

Our God is a consuming fire, Hebrews says. It will burn and devour his thorns and his briars, and one day, and it will consume the glory of his forest and of his fruitful field, both soul and body. And they will be as when a sick man wastes away.

Then the rest of the trees of his forest will be so few in number that a child may ride them. This forest and trees and so forth is almost certainly an imagery for humans. People are likened to trees in Isaiah, not infrequently, and I think it's talking about, probably talking about the wiping out of so many Assyrians outside the gates of Jerusalem by the angel of the Lord, which is recorded later on in a historical section of Isaiah.

Now verse 20, it shall come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel and such as have escaped from the house of Jacob will never again depend on him who defeated them. Actually, the people of Israel and even of Judah, Ahaz and others actually paid off Assyria. For example, Ahaz when he was threatened by Syria and Israel paid off Assyria to come and attack Syria and Israel to get them off his back.

So he was trusting in Assyria, but that's the same enemy that came and later threatened to destroy Jerusalem and did destroy Israel. So they were trusting in the wrong person. They won't do that anymore.

The remnant won't ever depend on him who defeated them, but will depend on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. In truth, the remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob to the mighty God. For though your people, O Israel, be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant

of them will return.

The destruction decreed shall overflow with righteousness for the Lord God of hosts will make a determined end in the midst of all the land. Now we know that Paul quoted verse 22 over in Romans chapter 9, verse 27 and 28. And he quoted it, the remnant will be saved.

It says in Isaiah, the remnant will return, sounding like as if it's predicting a return from exile or something like that. But in fact, it's not. It's talking about returning to God and being saved.

And we even see that in verse 21. The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob to the mighty God. And the mighty God was named in chapter 9 in verse 6. The child is born.

His name should be called the mighty God. So they're returning to Christ. The remnant of Israel turning to Christ, the mighty God, who is identified in the previous chapter by that name.

Now verse 24, therefore, thus says the Lord God of hosts, oh, my people who dwell in Zion, do not be afraid of the Assyrian. Now this is the people in Jerusalem, probably in Hezekiah's time, it's intended. He shall strike you with a rod and lift up his staff against you in the manner of Egypt for yet a very little while as will my anger, as will my anger in their destruction.

God's anger upon Assyria. And God, I guess it's saying God's anger against Judah will come to an end in the destruction of Assyria after he's done all he needs to to Judah to teach them a lesson. And the Lord of hosts will stir up a scourge for him like the slaughter of Midian.

Lots of references to Midian, which is Gideon's victories in the book of Judges. And as God was on the sea, so will he lift it up in the manner of Egypt. Once again, the Exodus motif.

It should come to pass in that day that his burden will be taken away from your shoulder and his yoke from your neck and the yoke will be destroyed because of the anointing oil. Now, Pentecostals like to say it's the anointing that destroys the yoke. Ever heard that one? It's the anointing destroys the yoke.

They get it from this verse that the word anointing here in the Hebrew either means oil or fat. And most modern translations say because of the fat, which is a really strange expression, but the idea is of a yoke on an animal that because the animals become so fat and strong, it breaks the yoke. And it is therefore the strength of the animal that is the fat in the figure of an animal under a yoke the animal gets big, strong, fat and it breaks the yoke that it's under.

And so the strength of Israel will break the yoke but the strength is of course the Lord. The Lord is the strength of Israel. He has come to Iath, verse 28, he has passed Migron at Michmash.

He has attended to his equipment. They have gone along the ridge. They have taken up lodging at Geba.

Geba of Saul has fled. Lift up your voice, O daughter of Galim. Cause it to be heard as far as Laish.

O poor Anathoth, Jeremiah's hometown, Madmena has fled. The inhabitants of Geba seek refuge. As yet he will remain at Nob.

That day he will shake his fist at the Mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem. Now these towns listed 28 through 31, are actually towns north of Jerusalem. And as they are listed there, the distance from Jerusalem is getting shorter and shorter.

The first town mentioned in verse 28, Aieth, is about 15 miles north of Jerusalem. Ramah and Gibeah, in verse 29, is six miles north of Jerusalem. When you get to Galim, Laish, and Anathoth, that's five miles north of Jerusalem.

So, in other words, it's talking about the Assyrians drawing nearer and nearer to Jerusalem. And when you get to Nob, in verse 32, that's one mile north of Jerusalem. So, this is describing the approach and the conquests that Assyria's making as it gets nearer and nearer to Jerusalem.

However, it says, in verse 32, he will remain at Nob that day. He will shake his fist at the Mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem. That's about all he'll be able to do.

Rabshika was outside the gates of Jerusalem, shaking his fist, more or less, making threats. But he did not succeed in conquering the city because Yahweh sent an angel of the Lord out to deliver the city and succeeded in doing so. Verse 33, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, will lop off the bow with terror.

Those of a high stature will be hewn down and the haughty will be humbled. He will cut down the thickets of the forest with iron and Lebanon will fall by the mighty one. This Lebanon simply means the forest.

Lebanon is famous for its cedars, of course, its trees. And this statement about the cutting down of the trees and lopping off the bow, this is figurative, talking about God basically mowing down Assyria. And it's parallel to what he said back in verse 19 on the same subject about the trees being cut down and so forth.

So the imagery of Assyria being a great forest and being cut down, again, it's the pride that God is so offended at. In verse, at the end of verse 33, the haughty will be humbled.

And that was the complaint God had about Judah in the first six chapters, often repeated their haughtiness and their arrogance, even the arrogance of their women.

And now the arrogance of Assyria that although God is using it, they give themselves the credit and they think they're so tough. God says, well, I'll show them how tough they are and how tough they aren't. Their haughtiness will be brought down when I humble them and defeat them.

Well, we've run out of time. And so when we come back, we'll have a chapter 11 to look at, which is a great chapter. We've spoken about it a lot in our, as we've looked at the various topics, almost all of the major topics we looked at have some kind of appearance in chapter 11, but it's one of the great messianic age passages.

So that's where we'll pick it up next time. Thank you.