

The King and His Authority

Isaiah 10.5–34

Sermon

Isa 10 (p. 466). Thankful for everyone's participation last wk in our Season of Prayer & Fasting, esp Nick for guide he made. Encouraged to hear from many re prayer groups around the city, what G did in peo's hearts. As we lean in to a new yr, let us move forward on our knees.

Returning to Isa after two wks in Mt. Might remember that we're in sec called Book of Imm (chs. 7–12). DV we'll finish this part of Isa next Sun. Recap: Isr split in two, Jeru/Davidic kings in south, north & south in off-again/on-again civil war, north allied w Syria/Aram/Damascus to combat 1st great world power Assyria, Syr-Eph alliance a threat to Judah & its king Ahaz. So in ch. 7 Ahaz wanted to form alliance w Assyria to protect himself. Where Isa comes in: gave word from G not to do so, but instead to trust him. Ahaz refused & would have to deal w consequences. Assyria would rush in through Syria, Isr, Judah like a flood, fill everything (ch. 8). G's promise to his peo, esp David, would remain, but Assyria would devastate nat. Brings us to today's txt. Long & quite challenging, but offers tremendous insight into human heart.

1st half of txt addressed to **Assyria**, this enemy army, ostensibly pagan esp compared to G's peo. Said Assyria 1st great world power. Until this time, no real regional superpowers. Don't read medieval kings into OT narrative. An age of walled city-states (think Jericho), yes w kings, but some more like mayors or governors of loosely-confederated nations. Assyria the 1st to stretch its power into empire status (8). Centered on upper Euph R, spread SE, W, SW throughout Fertile Crescent. What we see in them: a peo of very **high accomplishment**. Lit turned tide of history, did what had never been done before, shifted human history from ind city-states dotted across a map to empires stretching over peos & languages. After Assyria: Babylon, Greece, Rome.

Like most peo of high accomplishment, made critical **assumption**—one might say presumption. Fut will be like the past. IOW, cyclical view of history: what has been will happen again. Gloried in past success (13–14) & on that basis presumed fut success (9–11). Easy for us to look back & say that was foolish, but that's bc we know Babylon will knock them off the throne/we know what's coming. They didn't—not Assyria, not those conquered, not even G's peo at this point. Not unlike our own sit: quite unsure how Eur will deal w multiculturalism, what will come of Amer diplomatic overtures w Iran, how crisis in Ukr will be resolved. Often look to past to guess fut. & if you've been successful, assume that past success will translate into fut success.

But Assyria not the only char here: **Judah**. & in some ways they're the exact opp of Assyria. Whereas Assyria gaining prominence as an intl powerhouse, Judah a small, struggling peo, grasping at straws for its own survival. & w these words of judgment bc of Ahaz's failure to trust G's word, once the flood of Assyrian devastation swept in, peo of Judah/Jeru would be filled w **fear** (24). They'd be just another conquered town, no dift from Carchemish, Arpad, Damascus.

One thing they shared w Assyria, however: cyclical approach to history. Once judgment came, no cause for hope: everything would be changed for the worse, nothing good would ever come, fut would continue on as past. Cause for **despair**.

Must note at this point how much their perspective would change once judgment fell. Remember Judah's/Jeru's mindset at time of Isa's min? what they were saying before Assyria swept in? Look back at 9.9–10. Contrary to the cyclical view of history they would fall into, had a more linear approach: fut yet unwritten, we have power to make it what we want. & we're going to make it great! Perh we've had few successes in the past (*bricks, fig trees*), but this gen will pull itself up by **bootstraps** & be something great. [Show these three on a matrix, if available.]

[Just to round out the pic: what goes up here? what do peo of great success conclude if they think fut will be unlike past? Extremely protective, want to **fence** all they've won bc fut will be bad.]

Four dift ways we look at fut in light of our past: presumptuousness, despair, bootstraps, fence. Here's my q for you: which one marks you? "I've been successful in the past so I'll go do it again"? "Everything has fallen apart & there's no hope for me"? "I've had it rough but I'm going to double down & get this right"? "I've been successful & now it's time for me to protect my assets & live like no one else"?

Another q: which one *should* mark you? Ans: none of them. Bc there's a fund prob w this matrix: whole thing revolves around axis of our own accomplishments (or lack thereof). Each one of these approaches to life reveals mindset w myself as center of universe—or put another way, **pride** (of Judah in 9.9, of Assyria in 10.12). v. 12 lays it out clearly: *heart* = what I love, *eyes* = what I desire, *works to hands* = what I do. What I do reflects what I desire, what I desire reflects what I love. & if I love me more than anything, all my works will be marked by pride.

& foolishly I miss the 3rd char of the psg: **G**. Most imp char there is bc everything that happens depends on him (5–6, 15, 22–23). Not just that G sets the table & we do w it what we will, but that the K's **auth** even stretches over human action (*rod of my anger*, 5) even when we don't know or acknowledge him (*I send him*, 6). Say what you will about G of B, but do not call him a local deity. This G claims auth over everything.

As soon as topic of divine sov comes up, our minds go haywire. Sure, ult resolution to q of human resp & divine sov beyond our capacity. But I wonder if reason for our trouble less what is unknowable & more our emph on work of our hands. **Gladwell** writing about success stories in comp industry: "There are very clear patterns here, & what's striking is how little we seem to want to ack them. We pretend that success is

exclusively a matter of indiv merit. But there's nothing in any of the histories we've looked at so far to suggest things are that simple. . . . Their success was not just of their own making. It was a product of the world in which they grew up" (67). So obvious that even some atheists ack it (cf. Harris, *Free Will*). Ill of talking about *Outliers* w Dr. C. Him: cause for supporting affirmative action. Me: cause for belief in div sov. Him: have hard time believing G's up there thinking, "I'm going to make Bill Gates rich." Me: B says G involved in every aspect of life, nothing outside his notice. See, I think we so emph human resp that any hint of divine sov sends us into a mental tailspin.

But to his credit Dr. C made statement he should have: if you bel that G is sov over good, you have to bel he's **sov over evil** too. Me: yes, def. B says that too. Him: what do you do w that? Me: no full ans to that q, for Xians or anyone else. But this much we know: G was fully in control at moment of greatest evil in human history—execution of sinless SofG. Those who did it guilty of great sin, but at same moment G fulfilling his promise to extinguish his wrath & rescue a remnant. & all who turn from their pride & trust this S find all their evil forgiven.

See, that's where this psg ultimately leads. Judah gets proud, so G judges them for their sin & uses Assyria to do it. But then Assyria gets proud, so G judges them for their sin & uses Babylon to do it. But then Babylon. What will break the cycle & introduce a new fut? Death & res of J. Means by which G brings restoration to world, hope to indiv peo.

& when you give up your pride & humble yourself to J the Serv K, when your life stops revolving around you & what you have/have not done & your life begins to revolve around G & what he has done & will do, all four of these ways of living start to **dissolve**. Presumptuousness melts bc we recog that the best things we've done are G's doing, not our own. Despair fades bc we recog that even in worst moments of life, love of G hasn't change/will not change, & he will make even this circ work

for our eter good. No longer have to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps bc we recog a far greater power at work, a sov grace that can transform us not just in our outward success but in the most secretive places of our inner selves. & protectiveness dissolves bc we recog we have what we have bc of the Never-Failing Shep, & if he wants us to go on having it, we'll have it—& if he doesn't, nothing we do will enable us to keep it. Gos breaks axis of pers accomplishment & enables us to center our lives on work of Another—& ultimately to give our lives in service to those made in his image.

When he was just 18, J Edwards preached his [1st sermon](#) on subj of Xian happiness. Point: “A good man is a happy man, whatever his outward circs are.” Three points [paraphrased](#) by J Buzzard, a good motto for life: “Our bad things will turn out for good, our good things can never be taken away from us, and the best things are yet to come.” Friends, today Serv K calls you to repent of your presumptuousness, leave your despair, stop pulling yourself up by your bootstraps, turn from your protectiveness—& find the freedom & joy of sov grace.