

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 21

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The Defeat of Sennacherib By Rubens Cir 1612-14

Daniel E. Woodhead – Pastor Teacher

Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah

Message Twenty-One

THE LORD JUDGES THE ASSYRIANS

May 19, 2019

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Isaiah 10:5–19

⁵Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! ⁶I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. ⁷Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few. ⁸For he saith, Are not my princes all of them kings? ⁹Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus? ¹⁰As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; ¹¹shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?

¹²Wherefore it shall come to pass, that, when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. ¹³For he hath said, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I have understanding: and I have removed the bounds of the peoples, and have robbed their treasures, and like a valiant man I have brought down them that sit on thrones: ¹⁴and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the peoples; and as one gathereth eggs that are forsaken, have I gathered all the earth: and there was none that moved the wing, or that opened the mouth, or chirped.

¹⁵Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? shall the saw magnify itself against him that wieldeth it? as if a rod should wield them that lift it up, or as if a staff should lift up him that is not wood. ¹⁶Therefore will the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory there shall be kindled a burning like the burning of fire. ¹⁷And the light of Israel will be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; and it will burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day. ¹⁸And he will consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and it shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth. ¹⁹And the remnant of the trees of his forest shall be few, so that a child may write them (ASV, 1901).

ASSYRIA; GOD'S INSTRUMENT FOR CHASTENING ISRAEL

Isaiah 10:5–6

⁵Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! ⁶I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give

him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets (ASV, 1901).

This verse starts with the word *Ho*. In Hebrew this word is pronounced the same as the English translation and it is expressing dissatisfaction and pain. The destruction of the Northern kingdom of Israel by Shalmaneser king of Assyria was foretold in the immediate previous section of Scripture (Isaiah 9:8–10:4), and it was accomplished in the sixth year of the rule of King Hezekiah who reigned in the Southern Kingdom of Judah (709 B.C.). Assyria and its then ruler Shalmaneser V were puffed up with pride. They thought that they were conducting this siege in accordance with their own plans. Instead of recognizing the sovereignty of God, they believed themselves to be sovereign.

II Kngs. 18:10–12

¹⁰And at the end of three years they took it: in the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. ¹¹And the king of Assyria carried Israel away unto Assyria, and put them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, ¹²because they obeyed not the voice of Jehovah their God, but transgressed his covenant, even all that Moses the servant of Jehovah commanded, and would not hear it, nor do it (ASV, 1901)

JUDAH		ISRAEL	
Years (BC)	King	Years (BC)	King
931 - 914	Rehoboam	931 - 910	Jeroboam I
914 - 911	Abijah	910 - 909	Nadab
911 - 870	Asa	909 - 886	Baasha
870 - 845	Jehoshaphat	886 - 885	Elah
853 - 842	Jehoram	885 - 885	Zimri
842 - 841	Ahaziah	885 - 880	Tibni
841 - 835	Athaliah	885 - 874	Omri
835 - 795	Joash	874 - 853	Ahab
796 - 767	Amaziah	854 - 853	Ahaziah
789 - 737	Azariah	853 - 841	Joram
737 - 721	Jotham	841 - 813	Jehu
730 - 715	Ahaz	813 - 796	Jehoahaz
715 - 686	Hezekiah	798 - 782	Jehoash
697 - 642	Manasseh	792 - 751	Jeroboam II
642 - 640	Amon	751 - 750	Zachariach
640 - 609	Josiah	750 - 750	Shallum
609 - 609	Jehoahaz	750 - 740	Menahem
609 - 598	Jehoiakim	740 - 738	Pekahiah
608 - 598	Jehoiachin	738 - 718	Pekah
598 - 587	Zedekiah	718 - 709	Hoshea

It is rather difficult to identify a judgment by God in history because he frequently uses humans as well as weather (e.g. earthquakes, storms etc.) to accomplish his will. It is also difficult for the humans chosen by God to distinguish between their own desires and God’s will. Consequently, it

is easy to either deny God's involvement or falsely attribute some event to Him. The prophet of God has a divine perspective which enables him to identify God's role as in this case wherein He used the Assyrians to carry out divine judgment against the Northern Kingdom of Israel. It was total and final; head and tail were all cut off. These events were entirely in the hand of God, and subject to his direction; giving evidence that He has control over kings and conquerors.

Proverbs 21:1

¹ *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever he will (KJV).*

God is sending the sinful Assyrians against Israel for her hypocrisy and arrogance translated here as profane. The Lord led them to take *spoil and the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets*. It is also important to realize that the Assyrians went farther than God had intended them to go in correcting Israel. This was also true of the Babylonians who were used at a later time to punish the Southern kingdom of Judah.

In Zechariah 1:15 God says He is also "*very sore displeased*" (or, literally, "with great anger am I angered") against the nations that are at ease. "*For I was but a little displeased,*" He says, "*and they helped forward the affliction*" or, "they helped for evil". In other words, they *helped for evil*, in order to bring about evil, as in Jeremiah, *Behold I set My face against you for evil, and to destroy all Judah (Jeremiah 21:10)* which is to say they were the instruments of God, "cooperated in the execution of My justice toward you, but cruelly and with perverse intention. For the Assyrians exceeded their charge toward the Jewish people. God so ordained them to punish in the present the sins of His people, yet they did it, not as God intended but out of zeal for pride, and covetousness. Therefore, God says through Isaiah 10:5, *Wo to Asshur, the rod of Mine anger, and the staff in his hand is Mine indignation. Howbeit he thinketh not so, but his heart is to destroy and cut off nations not a few*. This is God's attitude toward the oppressors of Israel. One might say that God is not in control; He is in control, but He allows sin in many instances to run its course and does not let its effects go unnoticed. This then is an additional reason that God will punish the Assyrians.

Now the correction of the Southern kingdom of Judah by Sennacherib a successor of Shalmaneser king of Assyria is also foretold in this chapter; and this prediction was fulfilled in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, when he, encouraged by the successes of his predecessor against the ten tribes, *came up against all the fenced cities of Judah and took them, and laid siege to Jerusalem (II Kings 18:13)*.

THE ASSYRIAN'S SELF DECEPTION AND PRIDE

Isaiah 10:7-11

⁷*Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few.* ⁸*For he saith, Are not my princes all of them kings* ⁷*Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few.* ⁸*For he saith, Are not my princes all of them kings?* ⁹*Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as*

Damascus? ¹⁰As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; ¹¹shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols (ASV, 1901)?

The king of Assyria does not even begin to think that God is using him as His agent as the rod of His anger toward the highly apostate chosen people Israel. He believes that all his victories and desires of all due to his own military prowess and strength. God is presently sending him to conquer the Northern Tribes, Israel. But, in his haughtiness his intent is to destroy the entire land of both kingdoms the North and Southern Judah without sparing even Jerusalem. Sennacherib is boasting in his arrogant pride that no city can withstand his might for each of his officers are as strong and cunning as a king with a huge army. Therefore, they are proven successful leaders of soldiers.

Sennacherib boasts by asking a rhetorical question, “*Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus?*” These were very important cities near the Euphrates river that had originally belonged to Aram (Syria) and were conquered by Assyria. Sennacherib is bragging that just as he conquered these important cities all the way to Damascus, he too will conquer the capital city of the Northern Tribes Samaria.



From: <http://www.murraymoerman.com/1christ/scripture/Isaiah.asp>

Continuing his boasting he says that he has overpowered the nations who relied on their false gods for protection. So too will he overpower Israel and Judah who seemingly rely on what he calls false idols. Therefore, he says that despite the power of their deities so too will he conquer the weaker kingdoms of Samaria and Jerusalem. Unfortunately, the wicked people of Jerusalem and Samaria had supplied graven images to the nations that Assyria had conquered. This led to the Assyrian thinking that just as those idols did not help the nations who purchased them from the Jews, they will not help Samaria and Jerusalem either. Since these graven images could not protect and save the idolaters who worshipped them, neither would they save the Jews who created and relied on them. Sennacherib reasons that Surely, *shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?* Sennacherib utters this statement after conquering Samaria and will then plan on going to Jerusalem next. He must have been referring to the idols which were in place during the reign of Hezekiah's predecessor Ahaz. For Hezekiah removed them and trusted in God completely so that the Bible says there has never been a king like him.

II Kings 18:3–7

³And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that David his father had done. ⁴He removed the high places, and brake the pillars, and cut down the Asherah: and he brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and he called it Nehushtan. ⁵He trusted in Jehovah, the God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among them that were before him. ⁶For he clave to Jehovah; he departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which Jehovah commanded Moses. ⁷And Jehovah was with him; whithersoever he went forth he prospered: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not (ASV, 1901).

THE PROPHECIED PUNISHMENT OF ASSYRIA

Isaiah 10:12–14

¹²Wherefore it shall come to pass, that, when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. ¹³For he hath said, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I have understanding: and I have removed the bounds of the peoples, and have robbed their treasures, and like a valiant man I have brought down them that sit on thrones: ¹⁴and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the peoples; and as one gathereth eggs that are forsaken, have I gathered all the earth: and there was none that moved the wing, or that opened the mouth, or chirped (ASV, 1901).

God used the Assyrians to bring correction upon the Northern Tribes, Israel. He also used them to punish much (ten cities) of the Southern Tribes. The Lord intended all of this to cause the people of Israel and Judah to repent and turn from their idolatrous sinful practices. The countenance of a prideful person is characterized here with Sennacherib's *glory of his high looks*. The arrogance of

a prideful person is expressed in the look in his eyes. His eyes are looking up pridefully unlike a humble person who looks downward.

Proverbs 21:4

⁴A high look, and a proud heart, Even the lamp of the wicked, is sin (ASV, 1901).

Sennacherib attributed the victory over Israel to his own military might and brilliant strategies. He would not acknowledge that all this came from God who gave him strength and understanding. There is no sin in ignorance, but the sin comes in when those persons take the praise for their abilities and accomplishments to themselves when if they were honest they know that praise is due to someone else (Romans 1:19–21). This is what the Assyrian kings have done. They took other nations and their wealth as easily as a person takes eggs from a nest. No one was able to oppose their military might for a season. Sennacherib is saying that as easy as a man finds a nest of birds, and takes their eggs *as one gathereth eggs that are left*; by the bird, who is not presently sitting upon them, there is none to protect them. However if the bird is sitting upon the eggs, she will flutter with her wings, and strike with her bill, and preserve them as best as she can: *have I gathered all the earth*; the kingdoms and inhabitants of it, there being none to resist, or that dared to do it, as follows: *and there was none that moved the wing*; as a bird will do, when its young or eggs are taking away from it: *or opened the mouth, or peeped*; chattered, clucked, or expressed any grief, uneasiness, or resentment. No one seemed to resist or care.

WHY GOD JUDGED THE ASSYRIAN

Isaiah 10:15–19

¹⁵Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? shall the saw magnify itself against him that wieldeth it? as if a rod should wield them that lift it up, or as if a staff should lift up him that is not wood. ¹⁶Therefore will the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory there shall be kindled a burning like the burning of fire. ¹⁷And the light of Israel will be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; and it will burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day. ¹⁸And he will consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and it shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth. ¹⁹And the remnant of the trees of his forest shall be few, so that a child may write them (ASV, 1901).

The Lord gives Isaiah some pointed questions, which characterize the essence of the problem with Assyria. Assyria was a tool which here is illustrated as an axe in the hands of God. Assyria was exalting herself over God That is a denial of God's sovereignty in all situations (Romans 3:23). He is in control of all things. Should a mere saw, held in the hands of a carpenter, elevate itself, as though it were acting without the hand of the carpenter, as though it were independent and greater than the hand that held it? Obviously, no. The action of sawing is alluded to. As if the rod should shake itself against the one that lifted it up. The staff here is synonymous with *rod*, and references an instrument of chastisement.

As if it were *not wood*. That is, as if the tool was alive and acting as an independent moral agent, itself instead of being told what to do. The Assyrians were mere instruments in the hand of God to accomplish *His* purposes, and to be employed at His will. Man, in his schemes of pride and vanity, therefore, should not boast. He is under the control and direction of the God of the Universe.

Because of Assyria's pride, the Lord judged the king of Assyria and his empire. The instrument 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 (Isaiah 10:33–34) 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 (Isaiah 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.

Next message: A REMNANT WILL RETURN

E-mail: Pentwaterbiblechurch@scotlandinstitute.org Call: 877-706-2479