

Isaiah Chapter 10 – John Karmelich

1. I can describe this lesson as three questions: 1) What is God going to do about the corruption of our leaders? 2) What will He 's do about the ungodly people who take advantage of the fact our leaders are corrupt and 3) What'll happen to our descendants who are seeking God?
 - a) One has to admit one can ask that of today's government as well as anytime in the history of the world. Those three questions are what Isaiah discusses as he focuses on the politics of his day. It's like thinking, "Those people who are ruling over us have grown so corrupt, we need to do something about it. They need to be overthrown by someone else. What if those that overthrow them are even worse?" Finally, what about those people who'll seek God during and after that time frame? Yes Isaiah's describing the corruption that existed in Israel at that time, and how God's going to deal with that corruption. What I hope will be obvious to us is the question of what'll happen in to our future as we face corruption in our society? The answer is God's aware of what's going on, He'll deal with it His way and on His timing and yes, there will be believers in spite of the politics until the day God says it's time to "wrap up life" as we know it.
 - b) As I get into the specifics of what's occurring here in Chapter 10, I want all of us to see just how universal this picture is. Yes Isaiah is discussing the specifics of politics and warfare as it is and is about to occur in Israel when he wrote this roughly around 700BC. What I'd like all of us to appreciate it is that prophecy like history works in repeatable patterns. In fact, the New Testament quotes several verses from this chapter if for no other reason just to show exactly how history is repeating. To quote a famous expression, "Those who fail to learn from history, repeat its mistakes". OK, hopefully I've now got us all curious as to the specifics of this chapter, so here goes:
 - i) This chapter starts with the continuation and finishing of the condemnation of the leaders of Israel at that time. The last part of Chapter 9 and the first four verses of Chapter 10 are a single speech aimed at Israel's leaders for their failure to lead the people, as God wanted them to. To state this another way, most of the Israelites at that time had turned from God. Isaiah's condemning their leaders who fail to lead the people toward Him. I admit, I pondered why whoever put the chapter breaks millenniums after it was written, before the end of Isaiah's rant over that issue. As best I can tell, it's so that we can see this rant in the context over what he brings up next. Anyway, the break is where the break is, so I'm using it as my starting point to cover this chapter. OK enough of that, onto the issue itself.
 - a) Isaiah's specifically condemning Israel's leaders for writing laws that hurt the masses, but benefit themselves or their "cronies". If that doesn't sound like politics today, I don't know what does what.
 - b) Then Isaiah announces their punishment for failing to act properly. They will be either killed or taken prisoner by an upcoming invasion.
 - c) Then Isaiah says in effect, "God's still not satisfied when that's all done".
 - ii) That leads to the next section. The specific's are about the Assyrians who'll invade and conquer the Northern Kingdom and get to the "doorstep" of Jerusalem but fail to conquer the Southern Kingdom. Unless we are historians of the ancient history of the Middle East, most of us don't know much of the Assyrian Empire. It lasted for about 700 years and ruled much of that area. They would conquer nations and cities, and then relocate people to avoid rebellion. During Isaiah's time they were conquering places just north of Israel and they were moving south.
 - a) The point is Israelites could easily think, "Yes I know we're bad, but they're not God fearing people. What is God going to do about them?" In the last lesson I mentioned God had a "paradox". Let me explain that again here:

- b) The paradox is God told Isaiah earlier in this book that it was His idea for the Assyrians to attack Israel to punish them for rejecting Him. Now God says He'll punish Assyria for the same thing. Isn't that a contradiction? No in the sense that God says in effect in this chapter that the Assyrians did go way overboard versus what God intended them to do. However, I'm sure the Assyrians had no idea that God was behind that invasion. Besides in a time of warfare, soldiers can easily go overboard due to the adrenaline at a battle situation. My question is how can God blame whom He called in the first place? While we not there to watch the details, what I suspect is going on is simply that God's saying I'm always in charge of who will rule in any given situation and if I said they went too far, I'll judge them for how they acted. The point is we need to accept that God judges all people and we're all accountable to Him.
 - c) You may not realize it yet, but that's a pretty good summary of most of this chapter. Most of it focuses on telling the Israelites that God will eventually punish the Assyrians for "going too far" in conquering Israelites. That idea takes me back to my opening three questions of this lesson. We may say to God, "We were bad, but those people are worse". His response is in effect, Yes, I know they're worse, but I'll judge them just as I'll judge all believers. To expand that thought, "Yes life can be bad at times, and yes it'll even get worse at times, but I (God) am still in charge, I'm still aware of the situation and I'll judge them appropriately for eternity just as I judge all people."
 - c) That leads to the final part of the chapter or my third introduction question: What about our descendants who also seek God? What'll happen to them? The first thing Isaiah tells the Israelites reading his letter is that "God always leaves a remnant". Paul quotes this in Romans Chapter 10 to state the fact that even though most Jewish people don't believe in Jesus as God, there are always some who will. Both Isaiah here and Paul centuries later in effect state the same thing: Even though things are bad and can get worse, there will be a group of believers who get saved despite all the bad things that occur in life.
 - d) Let me wrap this up by returning to my original three questions that make up this lesson: What about us? What about our enemies and what about our descendants? The key point to get across is no matter how good or how bad things get, God's still in charge, He'll still judge people fairly and even if "all goes to pot", there will still be people willing to trust in His plan for salvation. What can bring us joy in the worst of times is to realize no matter how bad things get in life, God's still in charge, He still will judge our actions fairly for all of eternity and there will always be believers around until the time He wraps up life as we know it. On that positive thought, I can actually break down now and start talking about the details of this chapter:
2. Isaiah Chapter 10, Verse 1: Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, ² to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless.
- a) Let's start by remembering the first four verses continue and finish a warning all Israel's leaders at that time. While Isaiah lived in the Southern Israelite Kingdom, I suspect this message is to leaders of both kingdoms. The overall message keys on the point that God is still in charge. He's still judging all people, and He's tougher on those who are called to be His people and even tougher on those God called to lead His people.
 - b) Let me put this another way: Do you think that just because we're saved, we're no longer on the hook as to our behavior? If we murder someone, do we get a "get out of jail free" card because we're Christians? Of course not. While I'm convinced that Jesus forgives all of our sins if we're trusting in His payment for our sins, He still judges the believer based on how we used our lives as believers and rewards us for our faithfulness to our calling.

- c) With that statement made, let me jump from the "general the specific's" of these verses. In these verses, Isaiah is condemning leaders who write laws that benefit the ruling class, but do harm to the general public. It'd be like passing a law that requires a special tax on all of the poorest in a country, but at the same time exempts the ruling class from having to pay the taxes themselves. If that doesn't sound like life today, I don't know what does.
 - d) My point is God condemned that type of action thousands of years ago and His standards don't change over time. Will God hold our current leaders accountable for the laws they'll pass today? Of course. I'm convinced that there's a God who rules over the world and He allows certain people to be raised up for His purposes. Often those leaders are not what we would call "God fearing people", and often a nation or a group will suffer due to poor decisions made by those leaders. While the poor and oppressed may suffer in this life due to bad laws, God's aware of it and will judge all people fairly based on their actions.
 - e) Also keep in mind we're dealing with "God's people". The Israelites were called by God to be a witness for Him. When the Israelite leaders or say Christian leaders today make bad decisions, yes God holds them accountable. If you've lived a while, you've probably seen a few ministers lose their power as He holds them to a higher standard as rulers over His people. Short version: Don't mess with God, as one pays a big price for doing so!
3. Verse 3: What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches?
- a) Let's start here with the term "Day of reckoning". Yes it can and often does refer to God's eternal judgment that we all must face. It can also refer to disasters that occur that'll affect our lifestyle. I admit when disasters occur, I like to take inventory to see if something that I did was the cause of it and what I can learn from that situation. It's like the old saying of we can't change history, but just learn from it. Obviously not every disaster is our fault or the fault of our society or leaders. Still, when bad things happen, it's a great idea to pause and take inventory as if to say, "What does God want me to learn from this situation?"
 - b) For the Israelites Isaiah was addressing, the "Day of reckoning" is the fact that this foreign empire is "knocking at their door" and all the laws that the leaders are passing to make the leaders wealthier will be a waste of time as the Northern Kingdom is about to come to an end. As I've stated in the past lessons, in about another 100 years, that Southern Israelite Kingdom will also come to an end. The point is God often brings a "day of reckoning" in the near future as to publicly state there is a God and evil doesn't win in the long run.
 - c) The rest of the verse asks the question, "When God judges you for your actions, where do you think you can run too? Whom do you think you'll leave your riches too?" When our leaders do things to oppress believers under their rule, the point is they'll never get away with it in this lifetime or for eternity. Therefore, when we complain about laws we don't like, yes we may have to suffer for it in the near future, but there is a God in heaven who judges leaders for how they lead and what they've done as leaders.
 - d) I have to admit a bible verse that has always scared me is when James 3:1 as it tells us, if we become bible teachers God holds us to a stricter standard than non-bible teachers. It makes sense because God cares what we teach others about Him. My point is don't think I'm exempt from this tough standard God's thrown on those He has called to lead others.
 - e) OK, one more verse on "us" and then the focus moves to 'them'. I'll explain as we go:
4. Verse 4: Nothing will remain but to cringe among the captives or fall among the slain. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.
- a) Remember that this rant by Isaiah started in the middle of Chapter 9. Now that he's done condemning Israel's leaders for being bad leaders, the last thing Isaiah says is in effect that God's not "satisfied" with the punishment that's about to occur in Israel. Let's start here as we realize God doesn't have emotions. He doesn't get in good or bad moods. We have to read this from our viewpoint. It's like realizing the bad is going to get worse as if He's still mad at us based on the evidence of what's occurring here at this time.

- b) Now that I got the philosophy out of my system, let's recall the start of this speech that Isaiah gave: He was speaking to the king of the Southern Israelite Kingdom. The fear of that king is that a coalition between the Syrians and the Northern Israelite Kingdom was going to wipe out his kingdom and end his life. Isaiah's rant keys upon the fact that how the leadership in the Southern Kingdom has led, is bringing about its downfall. God will bring up the Assyrian Empire to do damage to the land of Israel, not because they're good people, but because God's people are failing to be a witness for Him and live as He wants us to live. You may recall that the current king of the Southern Kingdom wasn't what we would call a God-fearing man and Isaiah's saying to that king, "You've turned your back on God, and you're about to suffer the consequences. Yes a descendant of David will still rule here as I promised that to your ancestor King David, but that doesn't excuse how you have ruled and I'm going to make you (the king) suffer for how you've ruled as a king!"
 - c) OK, too bad for him I suppose, how does any of this affect me? The idea isn't to learn any of this ancient history. It's to realize even as saved Christians, we're accountable for how we act as believers. I've hold the view as a Christian that God will have two questions for us when we get to heaven: 1) Do we believe in Jesus as God and He dies for every sin we committed? and 2) What have we done about it? It's the second question that inspires me to keep going in this ministry no matter the results. In the meantime, back to Isaiah:
 - d) The specific's of this verse is Isaiah warning the king that because he's been a bad ruler, he not only will die but a lot of what we know as Israel today will be conquered first by this Assyrian Empire and all of it by the Babylonian empire, but he'll suffer for what he did.
 - i) What about God not being satisfied? The idea is that even though Jerusalem will be spared from the Assyrian invasion, it too will fall in 100 years as I mentioned to the Babylonians. Since the text moves to God's anger at the Israelite to His anger at the Assyrians, it's pretty obvious that God's saying in effect, "I'm not only angry at the Israelites but also at the Assyrians for how they will act."
 - ii) Well, what about modern Israel? Isn't most of it secular today? Yes and I'm sure God will hold them accountable as their still "His people" whether they believe in Him or not. In the meantime, it's time to "switch gears" and focus on God plans to deal with the Assyrians who are about to attack much of Israel:
5. Verse 5: "Woe to the Assyrian, the rod of my anger, in whose hand is the club of my wrath!"
- a) I admit, I find it endlessly strange how God put Himself in a "pickle": Earlier chapters of Isaiah have made it clear that God's called the Assyrian Empire to conquer much of Israel as it existed back then. Yet here God clearly is saying "Woe to them" (the Assyrians) even though He's behind their effort to invade Israel in the first place.
 - b) Let me pause for a quick moment to state a few facts about this empire. It existed for 700 years more or less. It was based out of the ancient city of Nineveh (in Iraq today). It came to an end, as the Babylonian Empire rose and there was a famous battle around 600 BC. It was the official end of the Assyrian Empire. However, Isaiah lived about 100 years before that official end, and over most of the remainder of this chapter, God's going to tell us of the Assyrian Empire's punishment effectively for being too cruel as they conquered God's land (i.e., Israel). There is a famous cross-reference to this in 2nd Kings 19:35. Realize that as the Assyrian army was about to attack Jerusalem, the bible says an angel appeared one night and killed 185,000 of their soldiers. After that disaster, the Assyrian king went back to Nineveh in defeat and his sons killed him there as recorded in 2nd Kings 19:37.
 - i) My point is as we read of the saga of what will happen to the Assyrians over the next bunch of verses realize that God knows history in advance. God's going to tell Isaiah about a lot of history in advance in detail and despite the fact that this empire does a lot of damage, they won't win the "big prize" of conquering all of the Israelites and they'll lose most of their soldiers to a single angel one night!
 - ii) Remember God allowed a lot of damage to first punish the Israelites!

6. Verse 6: I send him against a godless nation, I dispatch him against a people who anger me, to seize loot and snatch plunder, and to trample them down like mud in the streets. ⁷ But this is not what he intends, this is not what he has in mind; his purpose is to destroy, to put an end to many nations.
- a) If you've been with me awhile, you may recall that I said that Hebrew Poetry is not about the last syllable of a verse rhyming with the last syllable of next one. It's about connecting thoughts. Verses 6 and 7 are a perfect example of that. To state it another way, Verse 6 is God saying, "I wanted the Assyrians to do this" but in Verse 7 it states the Assyrians went a lot further than I intended." But if "God is God" and God put in the minds of the leaders of that group to do "x", why did they do "y"? The answer is free will. God can lay on our hearts a desire to do something but if we also go beyond that desire, since God created us in the first place and this is His world, He's got every right to condemn us if we went too far in what He wanted us to do. That's the "general", now back to the specifics.
 - b) The text is implying here that God allowed the Assyrian Empire to grow in the first place. God allowed for whatever purposes He had in mind for them to conquer, seize valuables of other places and allow them to prosper. However, it was not God's intent for them to grow into a mighty empire by destroying other nations. While they were growing in that state of an empire, God used them to conquer much of Israel. That's the point here.
 - i) I discussed this concept in a previous lesson: The idea that God can call a people to be His instrument of judgment and at the same time blaming them for going too far in that judgment. It's one of those "free will versus God's sovereignty" debates that are impossible to resolve mentally. We just have to accept the idea that this is God's world and He has every right to punish a group or even an individual that He's called in the first place to do something.
 - ii) The point of all of this for you and me is if we have a desire to do something that doesn't violate any of God's laws, we're free to go after that desire assuming it is obtainable and realistic. At the same time, God always wants us to watch our ego so we don't get "puffed up" by whatever it is we've achieved or what gift we have.
 - iii) Meanwhile, back to Isaiah speaking for God about the Assyrian empire.
7. Verse 8: `Are not my commanders all kings?' he says. ⁹ `Has not Calno fared like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad, and Samaria like Damascus?
- a) The point of Verse 8 is that the Assyrian empire was so successful in its growth that they thought of their army leaders as "kings". It didn't occur to them that the God who created everything was behind all their success, as opposed to the war skills of their army leaders. The point here is to remember to give God the credit for our success. We don't thank Him as if He needs to hear it. We thank Him to keep us humble and keep our focus upon Him. Thanking God reminds us of who He is and who we are in comparison to Him.
 - b) That leads me to Verse 9. In this verse God is comparing cities and towns close to Israel to other places the Assyrians conquered. God's reminding us through Isaiah that the land of Israel will always be something special. As I've stated before, it never ceases to amaze me that the God who created the entire universe has effectively said that land of Israel is very special to Him. So how were the Assyrians supposed to know all of that? The point is He used them to judge the Israelites because they collectively failed to be a witness for God.
 - c) Hopefully we all get that by now. What this little poem wants us to realize isn't that the Assyrians should be aware that Israel is "God's land", but that from God's perspective He can and will allow a godless nation to do His will if we people who are called to do His will, ignore Him.
 - i) The point for you and me as devout Christians isn't about salvation. It's about us as a witness for God. Just as these ancient Israelites can be "taken out of the game" for failing to be a witness for God, we as Christians should fear it as well! That is God's motivation tool to keep us on our toes and keep us working for Him.

- ii) Does this mean I'm in big trouble if I'm just using my life for pleasure? Yes. I'm not saying if one is sick, God expects you to ignore that sickness and go out and do something to make a difference for His kingdom. I'm saying that if we have a gift to do something or just enjoy doing a certain activity, we should use that ability in order to make a difference for God in this world. If you don't know what to do, go pick something. Try volunteering at some church activity. There's an old joke in the Christian church called "pew potatoes". It refers to those who just sit in church week after week, but never volunteer to get involved in that church. That's what I am preaching against: Not wasting our lives to only live for our own interests, but to use it to make a difference for God. That's the greatest use of our time that we'll ever use it for and bring us joy at the same time.
 - iii) That's enough lecturing for one paragraph. Time to get back to Isaiah describing how God sees the coming Assyrian invasion.
8. Verse 10: As my hand seized the kingdoms of the idols, kingdoms whose images excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria-- ¹¹ shall I not deal with Jerusalem and her images as I dealt with Samaria and her idols?' "
- a) To understand these verses, keep in mind is that the 10 Commandments are world-wide in scope, and they're not just for the Israelites or Christians to obey. Consider the idea of God holds everybody accountable for stealing and murder. He also holds us accountable for making images to false gods. The idea is if we look up in the sky, it should be obvious to us that this world didn't create itself, there has to be something or someone greater than ourselves that created everything. To not make an idol, is in effect to realize the obvious: There is a god and He created all things. To idolize success, or just go make money or go after fame are all examples of idols. To build something to honor those desires was done in the ancient world.
 - b) To explain it another way, if there are a bunch of "gods" that are each over different parts of nature, there would logically be a "god" over all of them. The false religions argue that such an overseeing god doesn't get involved in our world so therefore we have to appease these other gods in order for us to have success in this life. To realize there is a single God that's greater than these made up ones not only to acknowledge His existence but it is also to "put our money where our mouth is" by not making things to honor "smaller gods".
 - i) That is my overly long explanation of why God holds all people accountable for a sin of making any image of any false god.
 - c) Which surprisingly leads me back to these verses. God used this foreign empire to seize the idols of foreign nations as they were just "idols". God also desired for the Assyrians to seize the idols all over the land of Israel as part of that same conquering. But didn't this empire have it's own false gods? Yes it did. Let me explain:
 - d) Recall that from Verses 1-4 of this chapter we're the end of an speech started in Chapter 9 about how God was angry at Israel for ignoring Him. The speech ended effectively with God saying, "Despite all of that, I'm still angry". From there, Isaiah switched topics from talking about His anger at Israel to His anger at the Assyrian Empire. Remember that His anger is from our perspective. It's about watching history unfold and seeing how He gets involved in history for His glory. The point here is just as God's angry at Israelites because they turning from Him, He's also angry at the Assyrian Empire for thinking that "Israel" is just another land they could conquer and that God doesn't rule over that land.
 - e) Stop and consider how amazing it is that Israel as a country has survived despite all of the countries and empires that conquered it. The Assyrian Empire is long gone and Israel still exists as a country. The Babylonian Empire is long gone and Israel still exists as a country. The Roman Empire is long gone and Israel still exists. That gives us a better perspective if we think about how Iran is trying to destroy Israel's existence today.
 - f) Meanwhile we left Isaiah on a roll as he's condemning the Assyrians:

9. Verse 12: When the Lord has finished all his work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem, he will say, "I will punish the king of Assyria for the willful pride of his heart and the haughty look in his eyes." ¹³ For he says: "By the strength of my hand I have done this, and by my wisdom, because I have understanding. I removed the boundaries of nations, I plundered their treasures; like a mighty one I subdued their kings.
- a) Let's be honest, the biggest danger of success is it goes to our heads. We start to think we are something special when we achieve great success. We think it's due to our own skill of whatever success we've achieved in life. While God didn't expect the Assyrian king to become Jewish, God still holds all of accountable to figure out there is a God who's above all things and created all things for His glory and not for ours.
 - b) The point as it relates to these verses is God's aware that Assyria was a successful, large empire that conquered lots of land. As I stated in the introduction, that empire lasted for about 700 years. God allowed it to be successful as a means of punishing nations who did refuse to acknowledge a true God rules over the world and punishes people and nations as they turned to idols and not Him.
 - i) One has to see this in comparison to God's unconditional promise to King David that one of His descendants would rule over the world from Israel forever. Today modern Israel has presidents and not kings. That's because no king will rule over it until "The" descendant of King David rules from that land over the world. That is why God commands us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6) as that is where He'll rule the world from, one day in the future.
 - ii) That point leads us back to these verses. The Assyrians thought that it was no big deal to conquer Jerusalem. They thought it would fall like any other city they've conquered in the past. Mount Zion refers to the specific hill where the temple was located and where the Messiah (Jesus) will rule from one day. God's point is that He and He alone determines who'll rule over that city and not this particular king.
 - iii) But if all of that is true, why did God allow the Babylonians to conquer that city as well as the Romans hundreds of years later? As to the Babylonians, it was because the Southern Kingdom itself was so full of idolatry, "God had enough" an allowed it to be conquered. As to the Romans, I'll argue it was punishment for their failure to recognize Jesus as their Messiah. If all of that is true, why does God allow Israel to re-exist today? If I had to speculate it's because we're getting close to the time of the return of the Messiah to rule from that land. I'll save that question for my next lesson, as Chapter 11 gets into the issue of gathering the Israelites a second time.
 - c) While I was busy giving a very brief history of Israel from God's perspective over the last few millenniums Isaiah was busy condemning the Assyrians for being arrogant enough to think it was due to their skill that they could be at the doorstep of where God says He will rule from one day! These verses give us a summary of why God will punish the Assyrian Empire: Because they thought it was no big deal to conquer Jerusalem as if that city were just another trophy to be displayed.
10. Verse 14: As one reaches into a nest, so my hand reached for the wealth of the nations; as men gather abandoned eggs, so I gathered all the countries; not one flapped a wing, or opened its mouth to chirp." ¹⁵ Does the ax raise itself above him who swings it, or the saw boast against him who uses it? As if a rod were to wield him who lifts it up, or a club brandish him who is not wood!
- a) To paraphrase Verse 14, I (God) was behind their success. Their success and longevity is not due to their own skills. I'm (God) tired of hearing them brag about how great they are and I'm going to bring their kingdom to an end because they think it's no big deal to take over Jerusalem as if it's just another notch on their trophy belt."
 - b) Verse 15 uses cute colorful language to describe their arrogance. It's like a weapon taking credit for it's success and not the one wielding that weapon.

- c) The question to ponder is if God loves the Israelites so much, why did He allow most of it to be conquered by this group? The Assyrians did conquer most of the land of Israel, only Jerusalem and the area to the south of it was spared by God's intervention. Despite all of the pain of death and destruction, God's making the point that "He's never to be messed with" and there are consequences for doing so. By sparing parts of the Southern Israelite Kingdom, God's making the point that there are benefits to trusting in Him and avoiding turning from God. The Southern Kingdom was mostly loyal to God and despite having a king that was not God fearing, much of that Southern Kingdom were loyal to Him.
- i) The point for you and I as Christians is that if God can and did punish those who were "His people" back then, He's more than capable of allowing those of us who are called by His name to suffer today if we turn from Him or if our society turns from Him. We can be wonderful witnesses for Jesus but still suffer if we're part of a society that ignores Him in our lives. Being a devout Christian never means we are exempt from pain and suffering! Just consider all the martyrs that were killed just for believing Jesus is God. That does not mean we should look for bad things to occur. It means that just as many people don't want Jesus to rule over their life so we can expect resistance for our trust in Him to rule over our lives. Of course the eternal rewards are worth whatever we have to face in this life, but we need to be warned about the cost of trusting Jesus in this life as we make a difference for Him with our lives.
- ii) Now that I've scared us half to death, let's get back to Isaiah:
11. Verse 16: Therefore, the Lord, the LORD Almighty, will send a wasting disease upon his sturdy warriors; under his pomp a fire will be kindled like a blazing flame. ¹⁷ The Light of Israel will become a fire, their Holy One a flame; in a single day it will burn and consume his thorns and his briars. ¹⁸ The splendor of his forests and fertile fields it will completely destroy, as when a sick man wastes away. ¹⁹ And the remaining trees of his forests will be so few that a child could write them down.
- a) You might recall I mentioned in the introduction that in one night an angel killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. Consider that concept and re-read these verses.
- b) By the way, that incident is also recorded in 2nd Kings 19:35 as well as coming up later in this book at Isaiah 37:36. If nothing else, it's a reminder that we're not to mess with angels as that death toll is a reminder of what angels can do if God commanded them to do so.
- c) Verse 16 mentions a "wasting disease". That great death toll may have been like a wasting disease to explain how so many soldiers died at one time. The numbers of survivors were so few in number that Isaiah says in a colorful way, "a child could write them down".
- d) OK, so God killed this big army way back then. Why doesn't He send any angel or two to come deal with my problems? Why do I have to suffer when I am seeking His help? I'm positive God's in the "miracle business", but I also know He also allows horrible suffering that somehow works for His glory. I know that for every Christian that gets killed due to some evil that exists, others commit their lives to Jesus based on the testimony of what did occur at those events. I can't explain all the bad things that occur. I'm just positive that He exists and allows tragedies to occur among believers ultimately for His glory. At the same time, I've also read of miracles that have occurred that have no explanation other than the idea of God intervening in the affairs of man.
- e) In the meantime, God was making His point that He's in charge as He's about to wipe out this large army before it reaches Jerusalem. We'll get more into that in a bit. Remember it hasn't happened yet. At the time Isaiah was writing this, the Assyrians were just a threat to the Northern Kingdom as well as the Southern Kingdom. They've yet to begin their big campaign through Israel.
- f) So how do we know that Isaiah didn't write this "matter of fact" after it occurred? Even if he did, it wouldn't explain how the large army just died right before attacking Jerusalem!

12. Verse 20: In that day the remnant of Israel, the survivors of the house of Jacob, will no longer rely on him who struck them down but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.
- a) You might have noticed by now that every so often, Isaiah takes a break from giving us all of this bad news, to giving us some good news. To paraphrase this verse, those Israelites who survive all of this destruction will draw close to God. OK good for those survivors I suppose, what does that have to do with you and me? Ever stop to consider why you are alive at this moment? Why haven't we died of some horrible thing earlier in our life? The answer is so that God can use us for His glory! Just as God allowed some Israelites to be alive despite all of that destruction so He allows you and me to live on so we can use what time we have for His glory. Yes of course we still have to do our chores, but we still have time that we can use for Him as well as be a witness for Him as we do what we need to do as part of our daily routines.
 - b) The point is just as some Israelites were spared so they could have the opportunity to get closer to God, so some of us are "spared" so that God can have a close relationship with us in the world He created. If you get that, you get this verse. However, because Isaiah's so excited about the idea that some people will draw close to God, he goes on for a few more verses on this topic:
13. Verse 21: A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob will return to the Mighty God. ²² Though your people, O Israel, be like the sand by the sea, only a remnant will return. Destruction has been decreed, overwhelming and righteous.
- a) Remember how I just pondered whether or not Isaiah was writing this before it happened or after it occurred? Here Isaiah is "doubling down" to say effectively that this prediction is what God is saying will happen, so deal with it! Remember that when Isaiah wrote this the Southern Israelite Kingdom was mainly afraid of an alliance between the Syrians and the Northern Israelite Kingdom attacking them. Isaiah's response (via God) to that threat is in effect, "Don't worry about those two small kingdoms. The Assyrian Empire is going to destroy most of Israel as it existed back then, but fall short of destroying Jerusalem."
 - b) I admit that if I was living back then, I'd run to move to Jerusalem through all of that as I believe Isaiah is a prophet of God. Isaiah is saying things may be bad now, and they'll get worse, but the good news is that a remnant of God's people will survive and draw closer to Him despite all of this destruction.
 - c) What popped in my head is a survey that was done of the survivors of the holocaust as to whether or not they still believed in God. Off the top of my head it was about "50/50" but I'm sure my numbers are off. The point is some still believed in God despite all they went through while others abandoned Him. For what it's worth I've personally met a handful of those survivors. Some were still religious and others were not. Despite all that horror, there are some who are still trusting in God despite that event. At the same time, there is also a minority of Jewish people who do believe in Jesus as the Messiah. The few "Jewish Christians" (compared to non-Christian Jewish people) have always existed through the last 2,000 years of history and they still exist to this day.
 - d) Realize that Paul himself quotes these verses in Romans Chapter 10. Paul's point like my point is simply that while most Jewish people reject the idea that a perfect God desired to pay the price for our sins Himself, there will always be a percentage of the Jewish people that do believe in Jesus. As I state every now and then, a reason most people reject Jesus from paying the price for their sins is it comes down to wanting to prove one's worth to God or else ignoring Him completely and wanting to live however we desire to live. My point is that Paul realized Isaiah was right in that a small percentage of the Jewish people will trust in Jesus just as a small percentage of the Jewish people in Isaiah's day survived through that horrible destruction by a foreign empire. The scary part for us is just as God can harm those He's called to serve Him, so He can do the same to us if we fail to act as a witness for Him as we're called to be.

14. Verse 23: The Lord, the LORD Almighty, will carry out the destruction decreed upon the whole land. ²⁴ Therefore, this is what the Lord, the LORD Almighty, says: "O my people who live in Zion, do not be afraid of the Assyrians, who beat you with a rod and lift up a club against you, as Egypt did. ²⁵ Very soon my anger against you will end and my wrath will be directed to their destruction." ²⁶ The LORD Almighty will lash them with a whip, as when he struck down Midian at the rock of Oreb; and he will raise his staff over the waters, as he did in Egypt.
- a) Remember how the text over the last chapter was pretty much God telling the Israelites of their coming destruction as a nation? Assuming one took Isaiah seriously, or at least took him seriously when the Assyrians started attacking, imagine how they would react when this group was at their doorstep. Here's Isaiah now telling those Israelites not to be afraid of them despite all the damage they'll do. Despite the fact the Assyrians will literally drag the surviving Israelites out of that land, God's telling the Israelites not to fear them as His anger is "coming to an end".
 - b) The pattern we see is Isaiah preaching, "Things are bad and things are going to get worse, but that's ok because God's wrath being poured out on you for ignoring Him is coming to an end, and God's then going to focus on punishing those who harmed you." The point is despite the fact they've turned from God, He can't stop loving who He chooses to love, no matter the circumstances." The point for you and me is that yes things can be bad at times in life, and may even get worse, but that doesn't mean God stopped loving us. Evil exists and God allows us to go through trials to see if we'll still trust Him despite those trials. A final reminder is those who ignore God and hurt us will suffer far more than whatever we have to go through in this lifetime.
 - c) That little speech leads me back to the text. God used the Israelites 400 years of captivity in Egypt as an example. During all that time, the Israelites suffered oppression under the rule of the Egyptians. But in God's timing, He redeemed the Israelites from their captivity because again, God can't stop loving who He's chosen to love. All we have to do is accept the fact that God's chosen us whether we like it or not. Isaiah uses another example from the book of Judges, the story of Midian in Chapters 7-8. The short version is God used a small group of Israelites to kill a large enemy attacking Israel hundreds of years prior to Isaiah's speech here in Chapter 10.
 - d) The point here is despite whatever problems we as Christians are facing, despite the fact our problems may even get worse before they get better, we need to realize God loves us because He does and cares about us despite whatever we're going through, and it's still a lot better to be one of His than to suffer eternally as one of His enemies (those in life who refuse to submit their lives to God) and suffer the consequences.
 - i) That's a pretty good this lesson summary of this lesson in a nutshell.
 - ii) In the meantime, I still have eight more verses to go.
15. Verse 27: In that day their burden will be lifted from your shoulders, their yoke from your neck; the yoke will be broken because you have grown so fat.
- a) One has to remember that in the culture of that day, a "yoke" was something most of them understood. A yoke was a device placed on an ox to guide it to go where you wanted it to go as it pulled a plow. Here Isaiah is describing a yoke put on the necks of the Israelites. It's a colorful way of saying, the Assyrians will do a lot of harm to you, but because I still love you, you (the Israelites) will survive and thrive despite the yoke placed upon you.
 - b) Stop to consider that Jesus told his followers, "My yoke is easy, my burden is light". From Matthew 11:30 (NKJV). Compare that thought to the fact Isaiah's telling those Israelites of the yoke they'll have on their neck and the fact they'll prosper despite that yoke placed on their neck (that's what "grow fat" means). Both Jesus and Isaiah are making the point that to be a follower of God, requires a "yoke" upon us in that God expects obedience to Him as one of His followers. Yet that yoke that God puts upon us is still a much better way to live than by the "yoke" of choosing to ignore Him with our lives.

- c) In a literal sense, the "yoke" also referred to the consequences of the Assyrian invasion. A lot of Israelites living back then died due to that invasion or were literally relocated a long distance away as slaves after that invasion. God's saying to those Israelites that despite all of that punishment, the Israelites as a group will not only survive, but grow! That became true as about two hundreds after this time, the Persians conquered the Babylonians. That is when the Israelites were allowed to return to their homeland.
 - d) The point for you and me is those that are chosen to be God's people will always survive and thrive despite the damage and suffering that most believers have had over the history of those who truly trusted in God to guide our lives.
 - e) In the meantime, it's time for Isaiah to give a "war report" in advance:
16. Verse 28: They enter Aiath; they pass through Migron; they store supplies at Micmash. ²⁹ They go over the pass, and say, "We will camp overnight at Geba." Ramah trembles; Gibeah of Saul flees. ³⁰ Cry out, O Daughter of Gallim! Listen, O Laishah! Poor Anathoth! ³¹ Madmenah is in flight; the people of Gebim take cover. ³² This day they will halt at Nob; they will shake their fist at the mount of the Daughter of Zion, at the hill of Jerusalem.
- a) The good news is you don't have to learn the names of all these places. If you know their location, the simple point is that you can draw a map of these towns and cities. They all form a "line" of how the Assyrians moved south toward Jerusalem. Imagine if a reporter were covering a war by saying, "First these guys won in this city, then the battle moved to this city where the same guys won again, then the battle moved to here where once again the same results occurring. If you mapped these towns, each one was progressively closer to Jerusalem moving from north to south.
 - b) Remember that Isaiah is describing history years before it occurred. Even if you desire to make the false argument that this was written occurred, how do you explain the fact that the Assyrians did fall short of conquering Jerusalem? Historical evidence does show that the Assyrians never conquered that city and that their king returned home in defeat only to have his sons kill him when he got home. That's why Isaiah states the Assyrians will "shake their fist at the mount of the Daughter of Zion". That reference is to the location of The Temple that stood at that time. It's Isaiah's way of saying that the Assyrians won't get the big prize they sought of conquering the "God" of the Israelites.
 - c) Once again, Isaiah's the kind of guy who likes to get "colorful" in his presentation. There are references in these verses to places associated with King Saul centuries earlier. Isaiah is describing in advance one city or town after another being conquered by the Assyrians, but they will fail to get the big prize, which was Jerusalem.
 - d) By the way, the last town on that list is "Nob". Think of it as a suburb of Jerusalem. That means the Assyrians got to the Jerusalem's doorstep, but God wouldn't allow them to go conquer that city. It was right at that time, when the danger of the Southern Kingdom to be at their end, where God does the miracle of killing 185,000 soldiers in one night. If you wonder how they knew the exact number, I'm speculating the Israelites had to go bury all of those bodies, which is why they knew the number of them.
17. Verse 33: See, the Lord, the LORD Almighty, will lop off the boughs with great power. The lofty trees will be felled, the tall ones will be brought low. ³⁴ He will cut down the forest thickets with an ax; Lebanon will fall before the Mighty One.
- a) Isaiah finishes his "rant" against the Assyrian Empire with more colorful language. Here we read of that empire being compared to a large tree, where the branches are cut off as it becomes not much of a power. Remember this speech started with the Southern Israelite Kingdom being in fear of the Syrians and the Northern Israelite Kingdom threatening to destroy the Southern Kingdom where Isaiah was living. That's why he makes a reference to Lebanon, the ancient capital of Syria. It's as if to say, remember those enemies you fear, well God's going to use that big empire to bring down the enemies you fear. That empire will get as far as your doorstep, but that's about it, before I wipe them out!

- b) OK John, I now know more about the ancient history of Israel around 700BC than I ever care to know. Why should I care about all of this stuff? My answer brings me back to the three questions I posed to start this lesson. Let me repeat them here: What's God going to do about the corruption of our leaders? What's He do about the ungodly people who take advantage of the fact our leaders are corrupt? What will happen to our descendants who are seeking God? Just as God interfered with history way back then, so He works behind the events that occur in our life. He may allow us to experience great things or allow us to suffer. During all that time, God's still "pulling the strings" behind those in power.
 - c) The simple point is when God raises up a leader, be it a religious or a political leader, that leader is accountable to Him for how they lead. Yes we have to live with whatever they're deciding. However such leaders are accountable to Him and God interferes with what we decide to do, ultimately for His glory. Despite whatever suffering that occurs due to any bad decisions or foreign threats, ultimately we can rest easily (a "light yoke") knowing that there is a God who rules over our world and will judge people fairly based on how we've lived and what we've done with the time God's given us. Finally realize there will always be some who still trust in God despite whatever bad thing happens. Both Isaiah and Paul realized that fact and so should we.
 - d) So what are we supposed to do about all of this? Does that mean we Christians shouldn't be involved in politics? Of course not. Somebody has to lead our churches as well as our governments. There are always some God calls to lead and we have to accept who He has chosen to lead us and even pray for them. Paul taught us to pray for our leaders. (See 1st Timothy Chapter 2 as an example). Paul wrote that when Nero was the emperor. If Paul could pray for Nero to be a good leader, should not we pray for those in power no matter what we think of them? I assume you know Nero as one of the worst Roman Emperor's, as he persecuted and killed many a Christian in his day! The point is simply that God's in charge, He rules over our lives and we pray that those who are our leaders, (be it political or religious) make good decisions over our lives and those God called them to lead over.
 - e) Just as God was "pulling the strings" of all the events back in 700BC, so He's still "pulling the strings" over what's happening within our world today. So what should we be doing about it? Being a good witness for Him in the world we live in to make a difference for Him while all of this is occurring! With that said, let me close in prayer:
18. Heavenly Father, the world we live in can frighten us as we consider the possibilities of what can occur. We as Christians are called to pray for our leaders, so we do so here and now. Help us to be good witnesses for You no matter what the situation is around us. Help us to live as You want us to live so that we can individually and collectively make a difference for You in our world. As part of the body of believers you've called, may we never waste the most valuable thing we own, our time, as we use it for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.