

ISAIAH

Chapter 10

Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression, 2 to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey! 3 What will you do on the day of punishment, in the ruin that will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your wealth? 4 Nothing remains but to crouch among the prisoners or fall among the slain. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.

10:1 *Woe.* Cf. the series of woes in 5:8–23. (CSB)

A lament. Terrible things are coming to such people (cf 5:11, 20). (TLSB)

WHEN the Jews are not influenced by individual blows, there will finally come a universal one that will destroy everything, as Isaiah now foretells. The same thing we, too, must expect when we are not reformed because of the plague, famine, etc. Moreover, the greatest sin of which the prophet here accuses the Jews is that of the teachers of the people, the experts of the Law, the lawyers, who seek their own advantage with injury to the poor. Personal advantage is the cause of traditions. Solomon says in Eccl. 12:12: “Of making many books there is no end.” This is as true now as it was then. Such, however, were the scribes and Levites scattered among the cities; they were not satisfied with the proper books of Moses but distorted Scripture for the purpose of oppressing the people. Laws of “oppression,” חֲסָדִים, they write, and of לִמְצָר, “injustice, trouble, and toil.” Manmade laws then bring forth these evils, both in government and in the worship of God. The Word of God alone makes quiet consciences. Human righteousnesses are fruitless because God has no regard for them. Earlier the prophet spoke of the perverted priesthood, now he complains about the overturned state. Evil morals follow evil teaching, and vice versa. Morals are not helped by evil laws, just as consciences are not helped by evil teaching. (Luther)

those. Judah’s powerful but corrupt leaders, who cared only for themselves. (TLSB)

writing oppression. Corrupt lawmakers who do not serve justice, but only themselves. (TLSB)

10:2 *widows ... fatherless.* Most vulnerable members of Israel’s society (cf 1:17; Jas 1:27). (TLSB)

What we read in this section calls to mind the similar threat in 3:13-15, where it was said that the Lord will enter into judgment with the elders and princes of the people because they have ravaged His vineyard, have plundered and crushed His people. Here as there the distressed, the lowly are God’s true people. (Stoekhardt)

10:3 *day of punishment.* When Assyrians came with God’s judgment. A greater, final judgment will come when Christ returns. (TLSB)

come from afar? Assyrian army first brought judgment. (TLSB)

leave your wealth? The riches that they gained by cheating the weak will be abandoned as the Assyrians attack. (TLSB)

10:4 prisoners ... slain. Jer 39:6–7 similarly describes the plight of Judah’s rulers when Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (CSB)

All that will be left for those who are leaders will be to live among the prisoners or die. (TLSB)

stretched out still. This is the fourth section in the ode (lament, dirge) of judgment. The first identified the pride and arrogance of the people as they chose to rely on their own ability to rebuild and replant after the judgment of God (9:8-12). They failed to recognize the chastisement of the Lord in their difficulties and did not turn to “Him who struck them” (9:13). The second section (9:13-17) announced the Lord’s further judgment in sending His people leaders who would mislead them. Because they have refused the Lord’s truth, they will accept lies. In the third section of this ode (9:18-21), the progress of judgment continues as wickedness itself becomes a consuming fire. The Lord allows evil to persist as a judgment upon His rebellious people. Left to their own evil, they find nothing to satisfy their desires, and they consume one another. (PBC)

Finally, this section (10:1-4) concludes the ode of judgment. God’s rebellious people have sunk to the level of greedy predators. The Word of the Lord meant nothing to them; they had long rejected it and disregarded the Lord’s efforts to call them to repentance. In their state of rebellion they descended to the level of animals preying on the weak. The rich and powerful preyed on the widows and orphans. (PBC)

It is difficult to imagine a lower spiritual state. Love had not only grown cold; it had died. Without one pang of conscience, the powerful painted theft with the brush of legality. The courts had become a place of plunder. Compassion for the less fortunate and powerless had been set aside in the name of greed. The natural law of God, inscribed in the heart of every human, held no power to check their spiritual depravity. Certainly, the written law of God revealed in the Ten Commandments had also been set aside. Where God commanded love and compassion, God’s rebellious people substituted predatory zeal for wealth. (PBC)

What is left but judgment? Three questions precede the announcement of judgment. The first threatens a day of reckoning. The second suggests that the greedy among God’s people will in turn become the prey of a yet more predator. Since they have denied help to the weak and helpless, they will find no help on the day of judgment. The third question challenges the value of the wealth these godless people have so zealously sought to acquire. Their riches will disappear. They cannot even give their treasures to someone else for safe keeping. God’s judgment itself is brutal. The predators of the widows and orphans cringe among the corpses as they become prey for bigger and more powerful predators. It is a cycle of judgment upon the arrogant who will not listen and will not repent. (PBC)

Is the judgment too harsh, too merciless, too brutal for modern readers? We wince at the violence and bloodshed described. Yet the Lord’s Word here is clear. This is nothing less than the harsh proclamation of God’s law. God will punish sin; He will not excuse it. Men and women have a tendency to minimize sins and excuse the sinner. If we stand guilty of sin, our first reaction is one of denial, and almost at the same time, we squirm to find someone else to blame. Consider Adam and Eve in the garden. The sinful human heart hates to hear of punishment of sin. Modern

readers will think this punishment is too severe, as surely as the ancient readers did; human hearts do not want to hear God's law condemn their sin. (PBC)

Don't forget the author of these judgments and the recipients. The author is the Lord, Jehovah. He is a God of grace and mercy, and because of His mercy, He provided a sacrifice for the sins of the people. As Isaiah so eloquently writes, the Lord will send the virgin's son to lay "on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). The Lord did punish His own Son for us – in our place. This was no secret to those who read Isaiah's words. All the sacrifices of the ceremonial law pointed to that one great sacrifice. Beginning with Moses, the first writer of the Scriptures, God repeated the promises to these people. But they had rejected the Lord's mercy and the sacrifices for sin that He provided. (PBC)

If God punished His own Son, freely and willingly, for the sins of the world, what will he do to those who reject His free offer of grace? Rejection of the Son offends God, who lovingly has provided forgiveness and eternal life through Him. Refusal to accept God's gifts reveals an attitude of ingratitude and arrogance. This punishment is not harsh. It is a prelude to the final judgment, when all who have discarded the death of the Son of God as unimportant and irrelevant will cringe among the damned. This litany of judgment anticipates the final judgment. The hand of the Lord is still upraised. (PBC)

9:8–10:4 The Lord rebukes the wealthy and the greedy for destroying themselves and the helpless. When the Lord blesses you with abundance, do not forget the suffering and the needy. Prosperity and power are not the truest sign of God's blessing, but goodness and mercy are. In Jesus' goodness and mercy is your refuge. • Lord, in prosperity or want our hope is in You. Stretch out Your hand to us in sweet mercy. Amen.

Judgment on Arrogant Assyria

5 Woe to Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury! 6 Against a godless nation I send him, and against the people of my wrath I command him, spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. 7 But he does not so intend, and his heart does not so think; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few; 8 for he says: "Are not my commanders all kings? 9 Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad? Is not Samaria like Damascus? 10 As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols, whose carved images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria, 11 shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols as I have done to Samaria and her images?" 12 When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the speech[h] of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes. 13 For he says: "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding; I remove the boundaries of peoples, and plunder their treasures; like a bull I bring down those who sit on thrones. 14 My hand has found like a nest the wealth of the peoples; and as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken, so I have gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved a wing or opened the mouth or chirped." 15 Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it? As if a rod should wield him who lifts it, or as if a staff should lift him who is not wood! 16 Therefore the Lord GOD of hosts will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors, and under his glory a burning will be kindled, like the burning of fire. 17 The light of Israel will become a fire, and his Holy One a flame, and it will burn and devour his thorns and briars in one day. 18 The glory of his forest and of his fruitful land the LORD will destroy, both soul and body, and it will be as when a sick man wastes away. 19 The remnant of the trees of his forest will be so few that a child can write them down.

10:5 *Ah Assyria* – There were three Assyrian kings who harassed the Jews: Tiglathpileser, Shalmaneser, and Sennacherib. Here the prophet seems to be speaking about Shalmaneser, who carried off the whole kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 17:3). (Luther)

Although God used the Assyrians as His rod of anger and the club of His wrath against Israel and Judah, God would punish the Assyrians for their arrogance too. (PBC)

God used Assyria to accomplish His will. (TLSB)

rod ... staff. Babylon also was a hammer or club used by God to punish other nations (Jer 50:23; 51:20; Hab 1:6). (CSB)

The staff which Assyria wields is the Lord's fury. That Assyria strikes so ferociously, that emanates from the Lord, that the Lord has enjoined in His fury. (Stoeckhardt)

10:6 *I send him* – Better: "I send him." Scripture points to a twofold punishment: One is a punishment of just measure, which is a fatherly chastisement, not for the purpose of destruction. In Jer. 46:28 He says: "I will chasten you in just measure, and I will by no means leave you unpunished." Again in Jer. 10:24: "Correct me, O Lord, but in just measure." The other is a rod of anger, which causes complete destruction and reduces to nothing. (Luther)

godless nation. Judah (see v. 10). (CSB)

Israel is godless because they do not follow the one true God. (TLSB)

spoil... plunder. The last part of the fulfillment symbolized by Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz ("loot" here is the translation of Hebrew *shalal*, and "plunder" is the translation of *baz*). See 8:1–4 and note on 8:3. (CSB)

Before God announced the punishment, He announced the reasons for His action. In His wisdom God decided it was time to discipline His people, to test them, to purge the. Assyria was His tool. (PBC)

mire of the streets. Assyria crushes Judah as dirt and refuse are trampled in the street. (TLSB)

10:7 Assyrian conqueror thought that he served only himself and did not believe that he did God's bidding. (TLSB)

does not so intent – The king of Assyria does not think as I do, but he wants to attack a people of good will like a people of anger. But I will forbid him, lest he strike the godly. This is an extraordinary personification of the proud heart, and it is to be set forth for the godly as a comfort to them, For such a one does not regard forces against God as too many forces, but he always deems God to be greater. The godly seem like reeds to the ungodly, who regard themselves as forests. Therefore these Scriptural concerns are earnestly heeded in time of trial, as when sin drives to despair, so that hope may be raised. That ungodly Assyrian, afflicting the people of wrath by God's permission, takes an attitude as if he were about to swallow up the whole world, boasting of the power of his princes and then also of the victories he has achieved. "Talk no more so very proudly, let not the old come from your mouth, etc." (1 Sam. 2:3): "the old," that is, that which is sure, as that which is old is strong, especially in trees. We must not

look at how many things the ungodly boast of, but what their boasting accomplishes. For this is one thing in the despairing and another in those who trust in God. The ungodly also make fun of the refuge the godly take with God. And this king measures the strength of the gods according to the strength of the nations. With respect to idols this must here be observed. The nations have many gods, and they worship them in many ways. The well-known God is in Scripture called "God," or "Object of Worship," as in 2 Thess. 2:4; that is, He is not visible to us, nor does He have converse with us in an absolute way, but He is clothed in some form. Thus He was preserved for the Jews in the ark of the covenant. For us He is in the Gospel, in Baptism, and in the Holy Supper. Men deceived by their own idea have therefore worshiped God in one form or another, namely, as they themselves thought Him to be the true One. But God can be had in no other form than the one in which He presents Himself in His Word. Human words and signs are meaningless. So then also this king calls an idol the true God and an object of worship. (Luther)

Clearly, God is in control of history, including even the rise and fall of world powers. Assyria, like every other world power, served the Lord's goals. Of course, Assyria did not have in mind what God had in mind. As her victories mounted, her influence grew, and her territory expanded. With each victory, Assyria grew arrogant and proud. Such a defiant and powerful nation must also be disciplined. (PBC)

10:8 *are not my commanders all kings* – Now Assyria is speaking. And it is talking about what it has on its evil mind. What we read here is replete with contemporary historical references and fits only into the mouth of the real Assyria. But the empire of the Assyrians was a world empire, the world power which Israel saw during the days of Isaiah. In what the Assyrian says here we perceive the nature and disposition of the world and the kingdoms of this world generally. It is Assyria's great king who, therefore, think and says to himself: Are not my officers all kings? The officers, the governors of the individual provinces of the Assyrian kingdom display the resplendence and pomp of kings. The range and influence of Assyria's satraps was that of kingdoms. (Stoekhardt)

10:9 Cities mentioned were captured by Assyrians in their march southward against Jerusalem. The southernmost of these was Samaria, capital of the Northern Kingdom; the most distant was Carchemish, more than 300 mi to the north. The other cities lay between these two points. By 717 BC, these nations had all submitted to Assyrian power. (TLSB)

Calno. A region in northern Aram (Syria). See Calneh in Am 6:2. (CSB)

Carchemish. The great fortress on the Euphrates River east of Calno (see Jer 46:2). (CSB)

Hamath. A city on the Orontes River that marked the northern extent of Solomon's rule (2Ch 8:4). (CSB)

Arpad. A city near Hamath and just south of Calno. All these areas submitted to Assyria by c. 717 B.C. (see 36:19). (CSB)

Now the king of Assyria names a number of kingdoms that he has subjected: Careish, which is Circessium on the Euphrates; Calno, which is Ctesiphon situated on the Tigris; Arpad, Hamath, Damascus, all three located in Syria. These great cities were capital cities of kingdoms by the same name. One by one the kingdoms came to an end. They all had to surrender to the mighty ruler of Assyria. (Stoekhardt)

What is said in this verse is aimed at Samaria. The meaning is: just the way things went for those kingdoms of Mesopotamia and Syria, so it will go for Samaria, the kingdom of Israel. And finally also for Jerusalem. (Stoecckhardt)

10:10 Many nations, all with their own gods, had fallen before Assyria. (TLSB)

images ... of Jerusalem and Samaria. No Israelite was supposed to worship idols, but the land was full of them (2:8). Samaria fell to Shalmaneser V (2Ki 17:3–6) and Sargon II in 722–721 B.C. (CSB)

Those kingdoms mentioned in verse 9 were greater, mightier kingdoms that were Israel and Judah. And out of the greater or lesser might of the kingdoms the king of Assyria gathers those national gods of greater or lesser worth. Even the Lord Jehovah, who was being invoked in Samaria and in Jerusalem, he regarded as an idol. This is horrible blasphemy. (Stoecckhardt)

10:11 *her idols.* Although professing faith in Yahweh, the one true God, Jerusalem was littered with false gods, causing her neighbors to assume she was no different from any other people. Assyria arrogantly assumed that Israel's God was just another powerless idol. The king of Assyria did not realize that the living God was sending him to do His bidding. (TLSB)

10:12 *Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion* – Assyria was acting, but God was using that action to accomplish His will. (TLSB)

This is comfort for those who remain steadfast in affliction. A wonderful deliverance will come to them, so that their enemies are scattered like dust, no matter how many and how strong they are. All works of the Lord, namely, of chastising His children, are done in judgment and not in wrath. This must not be taken to refer to Sennacherib, of whom it is said in 2 Kings 19:32: "He shall not come to this city, etc." (Luther)

He will punish. Even before the Assyrian king finishes his proud tirade, a reminder is inserted that the Lord is in control. The Lord will let the blasphemous boaster do no more than the specific task assigned to him. (TLSB)

arrogant. Judgment against the proud was announced in 2:11, 17. (CSB)

Because he made only the most ambitious plans, namely, from victory to victory, from kingdom to kingdom, and as if he would accomplish all this by his own strength. "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble," 1 Peter (5:5) says. That king relied on his strength and his power, as if he had of himself what God gave him. To take credit for what one has received from elsewhere is to annoy God. (Luther)

10:13–14 *my ... I.* The king of Assyria boastfully refers to himself nine times. Cf. 14:13–14; Eze 28:2–5. (CSB)

10:13 The king of Assyria arrogantly took credit for God's work. (TLSB)

wisdom – חָכְמָה, is the knowledge of things to be done in order. (Luther)

understanding – יָדָעַת, means to beware of ambushes and dangers, that is, to learn about the future from past experiences. Therefore he says, "By my wisdom, for I have understanding." Better: "Because I am experienced." (Luther)

I remove the boundaries – Or “I have shifted,” or “I have changed.” “Those who sat on thrones” is in this place to be applied to the boundaries. He says, “I have done with kingdoms what a gardener does with trees. I have placed them according to My will, not as they were before. And I have taken their yield and their value for Myself. I have east them all down. I have made a servant out of a prince, etc. All this without difficulty. All of them have taken flight at the mere mention of My name, and I have easily taken away all property and wealth. No one has interfered; in fact, every one has run away, as if some one were chasing the hen away from the eggs. Who, then, will withstand Me? If the little birds cannot escape, they rustle with their wings, they chirp, they peep, they even peck, but to no avail.” (Luther)

To the Assyrian, the world was an unguarded nest filled with eggs. All he had to do was reach out and take what he wanted. But he had gone too far. His pride had become blasphemy and defiance of the Lord. (Consider the taunt of the Assyrian field commander before Jerusalem in chapters 36 and 37.) (PBC)

like a bull. With unstoppable power. (TLSB)

10:14 *gathers eggs.* The Assyrian hordes conquered and plundered peoples with as little effort as it takes to gather eggs from a nest forsaken by a bird. Athanasius: “Such in a word, are [the devil’s] boasts and professions that they may deceive the godly. But not even then ought we, the faithful, to fear his appearance or give heed to his words. For [Satan] is a liar” (NPNF 2 4:202). (TLSB)

all the earth. Assyrian king thought that he had plundered the entire earth; no nation was greater than Assyria. (TLSB)

None... chirped. No one defended the nations. (TLSB)

10:15 Wood and iron remain inert and passive even when made into tools. They do not determine their shape or use. God, having fashioned the Assyrians into instruments of judgment, will destroy them if they refuse to be of service to Him. (TLSB)

axe... saw ... rod ... club. Inasmuch as he who handles the rod at the same time handles also those who lift it up, that is, God; He also handles both the scepter itself and those who carry it. It is as if the prophet were saying: “Well, proud king, why do you make your boast against God, who wields you as well as those who support you, that is, your people; like a scepter in His hand? And this is as easy for Him as if He should lift up a rod that is made not of wood but of straw.” This can perhaps happen when some irascible person is about to strike another and he thinks he has picked up a stick but he has picked up a blade of grass. This king is God’s scepter, and the people exalt him, and both are in the Lord’s hand. In this way the king who to himself seems made of iron is ridiculed by the prophet because he is not even made of wood and his effort is futile. He is indeed both the saw and the ax of God as long as God uses him as an instrument to chastise a disobedient people. Thereafter he is no longer ax nor saw nor rod, but stubble to be put into the fire. And therefore he can do neither good nor evil, except to the extent that the Lord draws him or cuts and strikes with him. He does not do it himself, and he has neither substance nor work nor fruition of himself. If the saw is not used, it is consumed by rust. Therefore he who made the instrument also performs the operations of drawing and moving. Where, then, is free will? He compares the king’s wisdom and power to a dead tool, which cannot move itself. Before God a fly is as much as a man, and vice versa. These words are full of comfort for the godly, but full of threatening for the ungodly and the proud. (Luther)

The illustration teaches the powerful truth of human limits. When things go well, people love to take credit for what they think are their well-deserved rewards. Prosperity and success lead more often to pride than to humble recognition of God's blessings. In spiritual things, human pride often fails to recognize the truth of the Illustration Isaiah provides. We are dead in sin, Paul tells us. God awakens us by the power of His gospel. Then we become instruments in His hands. As believers do His will and experience the blessing of the Lord on their efforts, they are easily tempted to note their effort, suffering, and perseverance with pride. Yet it is God that works in us not only the desire to do His will but also the ability to accomplish it (Philippians 2:13). (PBC)

10:16 *the Lord God of hosts.* The king of Asshur boasts of his own power. An arrogant heart sometimes cannot be corrected except by a dose of misfortune or disaster. Because of her arrogance, "the Lord, the Lord Almighty," will rob Assyria of the very power of which she was so confident. In using these names for God, Isaiah removes any doubt about the origin of this disaster. This God is the supreme Ruler, who is almighty and who has the hosts of heaven at His command. He is also Jehovah, the God of the covenant, who brought the Israelites out of Egypt and sustained them through their long history. The same God whom the Assyrians had defied would send the disaster. (PBC)

wasting sickness. When the angel put to death 185,000 soldiers of the Assyrian king Sennacherib in 701 B.C., he may have used a rapidly spreading plague. (CSB)

God will humble this mighty army with disease. (TLSB)

Stoutness denotes wealth and power. Such will be the king. Powerful princes and kings, like pigs, have much fat flesh. But I will soon reduce your fatness and make it lean. (Luther)

This disease will affect the warriors of Assyria. The army of Assyria was well equipped and well trained. In the field, they were fierce and powerful. But their training and equipment will not prevent the Lord's judgment upon them. They will suddenly waste away. (PBC)

a burning will be kindled. They will be destroyed by God's glory. (TLSB)

10:17 *light of Israel.* The true God enlightens His people and helps them see. (TLSB)

will become a fire – He is a holy light, consuming His enemies. (TLSB)

Earlier the king said that the idols of his kingdom were above the idols of Jerusalem and Samaria and that other gods were stronger and greater than the God of Israel, who is the Light, that is, the Comforter. When the army of Sennacherib was slain, the corpses were burned, they say. And Christ, who sits in our midst hidden and weak, is now a laughingstock to many, but He will come at last and will have His sport with those who despise Him, as He did with Sennacherib. The God of Israel was scarcely regarded as a lighted candle. But He is the kindling Light Himself, yes, a consuming Fire. Now God again weakens the wisdom and power of the king, who regarded himself as a vast forest. But the prophet says that the king is only a thorn and a brier, which God Himself, a powerful blaze, is about to consume. (Luther)

devour ... in one day. In a single day, God can destroy this mighty army. (TLSB)

his thorns. Assyria's. (TLSB)

10:18–19 *forests*. A reference to the Assyrian army. See vv. 33–34. (CSB)

10:18 *glory of his forest* – This is the great number of trees, like the glow of the king, above. (Luther)

Amid the glory of Assyria, amid its glorious, pompous military might can be seen a flame of fire. The light of Israel will become like a fire, like a flame of fire. Fire of wrath will burst forth from God’s pure holiness. And it is precisely that light of Israel, the Holy One of Israel, who punishes the world simply because of the harm it has done to His people, the true Israel. The fire of wrath consumes Assyria’s thorns and thistles, its forests and its pleasure garden in a single day, namely on Judgment Day. (Stoekhardt)

fruitful land – That is, the glory of the tilled field is vineyard, grain, olive grove. (Luther)

destroy ... soul and body. God can utterly destroy this mighty nation. (TLSB)

sick man wastes away. As individuals would grow weak and die (v 16), so Assyria would be no more. (TLSB)

10:19 Probably fulfilled between 612 B.C. (fall of Nineveh) and 605 (battle of Carchemish). (CSB)

a child can write them down – “And he will be a fugitive driven by dread.” Better: “He will both waste away and flee.” Many will fall, he says; few will escape. Before, there were so many that they could not be counted; now a boy who can hardly count to twenty will count them. (Luther)

Very small number. (TLSB)

10:5–19 The Lord plans to use, humble, and punish the proud Assyrians. The Lord calls all nations and individuals to genuine humility, which can only come about by seeing ourselves clearly in relation to the Lord and the standards He has commanded. Take note of how the Lord accomplishes His purposes with the arrogant. Just as He brought judgment on Judah through the Assyrians, He brought about our justification from sin by the hands of Jerusalem’s leaders and the Romans who crucified Jesus, our Savior. • Lord, work Your good purpose in my life, granting all humility and trust in Your mercy. Amen. (TLSB)

The Remnant of Israel Will Return

The Remnant of Israel Will Return 20 In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. 21 A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. 22 For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. 23 For the Lord GOD of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth. 24 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts: “O my people, who dwell in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrians when they strike with the rod and lift up their staff against you as the Egyptians did. 25 For in a very little while my fury will come to an end, and my anger will be directed to their destruction. 26 And the LORD of hosts will wield against them a whip, as when he struck Midian at the rock of Oreb. And his staff will be over the sea, and he will lift it as he did in Egypt. 27 And in that day his burden will depart from your shoulder, and his yoke from your neck; and the yoke will be broken because of the fat.” 28 He has come to Aiath; he has passed through Migron; at Michmash he stores his baggage; 29 they have crossed over the pass; at Geba they lodge for the night; Ramah trembles; Gibeah of Saul has fled. 30 Cry aloud, O daughter of Gallim! Give attention, O Laishah! O poor Anathoth! 31 Madmenah is in flight; the inhabitants of Gebim flee for safety. 32 This very day he will halt at Nob; he will shake his fist at the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem. 33 Behold, the Lord GOD of hosts will lop the boughs with terrifying power; the great in height will be hewn down, and the lofty will be brought low. 34 He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an axe, and Lebanon will fall by the Majestic One.

10:20, 27 *In that day.*† The day of victory and joy, the positive aspect of the “day of the LORD.” Israel is restored and the people praise God. Ch. 11 identifies this “day” with the Messianic age (see 11:10–11; see also 12:1, 4). (CSB)

10:20–22 *remnant.* See note on 1:9. “A remnant will return” was the name of Isaiah’s first son (see NIV text note on 7:3). A faithful remnant led by Hezekiah survived the Assyrian invasion of 701 B.C. (see 37:4). Later, a remnant returned from Babylonian exile. (CSB)

10:20 The day will come when the people of God will no longer look to the oppressor for support as Ahaz did in ch 7. Instead, Israel will trust God. (TLSB)

him who struck them. The king of Assyria (see note on 7:17). (CSB)

Rely on Assyrian power. (TLSB)

lean on the Lord – Ahaz could not be persuaded by any prophecy to lean upon the Lord, but he rather sought the alliances of men. Those who have been chastened will not do this. This, then, is the fruit of the rod, that they learn to believe God, because they see that the help that comes from men is worthless and trust in them is ruinous. This passage is a warning example against trust in the flesh, whose end is hostility and destruction. They in whom we trust are the more quick to strike us. Gal. 6:8 tells us: “He who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption.” To trust in the flesh is to trust in one’s own assassin. However, the Lord preserves faith: he who trusts in Him will reap salvation. Those who took refuge in the cities of Judah were snatched away. (Luther)

10:21 *a remnant will return* – This has reference to the word “lean on” and means that their trust in the Lord will be true; not hypocrisy, but faith without feigning (cf. 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:5). Up

until now they limped on both sides; they trusted partly in God, partly in Baal, partly in their own works, partly in other men. They were carrying on both shoulders, as the saying goes. (Luther)

To the land and life God gave them. (TLSB)

10:22 *Destruction ... decreed.* Because of Israel's sin, God would punish the nation through foreign invaders. (CSB)

Therefore is the completion, the completion of the rod, and in the midst of the act of reckoning He cuts short the punishment, that is, by reckoning He does not make the final reckoning. This means: When He smites, it seems as if He wants utterly to swallow up the people because of the attitude of those who suffer the hand of God and appear to themselves to be finished, who see the full end but do not see the shortening. But then the Lord comes and says in Matt. 24:22: "If those days had not been shortened." When we think: This is the end and annihilation, the Lord comes to cut it short and to draw the pen squarely through the account. Zophar said to Job in Job 11:16 f.: "You will forget your misery; your life will be brighter than the noonday." Thus in poverty and in Satan's onslaughts, in death and disgrace, the Lord always comes and provides a shortening. And this final reckoning began at the time of the apostles, as Paul also cites this passage (Rom. 9:27) and then (Rom. 11:9) another one (Ps. 69:22): "Let their feast become a snare and a trap, a pitfall and a retribution for them." Nevertheless he, too, approves of the shortening that was made. "Has God rejected?" (Rom. 11:1). And this statement of the prophet agrees with his words above (Is. 10:20f.): "In that day the remnant of Israel, etc.," and "A remnant will return." The king of the Assyrians, he says, is planning a final reckoning also against Jerusalem. But the Lord has a shortening in mind. There faith wrestles violently when it sees that so many know, and it is a most severe temptation that raises the question: Will you alone abide while all others perish? Especially when man ponders his works and endeavors and does not find anything to rely on, then he experiences the reckoning. But he must then fight back and think about the shortening and the preservation of the remnant, not about the number as large as the sand of the sea. Once he understands this, he will also easily understand how great Paul's temptation was when he said in Rom. 9:1: "I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying." The greater the hearts and godly spirits, the more are they assailed. David says in Ps. 118:17: "I shall not die, but I shall live." Again in Is. 30:5: "For His anger is but for a moment, and His favor is for a lifetime." The meaning is that faith is sorely tried and yet has comfort. (Luther)

overflowing with righteousness – That is to say, the apostles will preach this most abundant righteousness, compared with which the righteousness of the Law is like a lie, etc. But the preceding and following context force us to refer the reckoning and diminution to punishment, and the prophet is speaking generally and not only regarding the time of the apostles. This is rather a description of God's goodness, which He exercises in chastising men contrary to the custom of the devil and the world, who do not stop until they have swallowed up everybody. But God will keep the remnant and the dregs. (Luther)

10:23–24 *The Lord, the LORD Almighty.* See 1:24 and note. (CSB)

10:23 The Lord will complete what He has decreed, proving His power to determine the destiny of "all the earth." (TLSB)

midst of all the earth. All nations will see this "full end," not just Israel or Assyria. (TLSB)

10:24 *be not afraid of the Assyrians* – Because that king carried off some of the cities of Judah. You will nevertheless be preserved as a remnant. The shortening will be made in our midst. King

Hezekiah acknowledged this and advised the people of this. He said in 2 Chron. 32:7: “Be strong and of good courage.” Moreover, it must be observed that Assyria came and was about to besiege Jerusalem, but when they heard that the Egyptians were coming, they turned against them and then returned to Jerusalem to lay it waste. This is what the prophet is talking about here. (Luther)

The Scriptures are filled with this encouragement. The angels shared it on the fields of Bethlehem and again in the cool dampness of the empty tomb. When God’s people trust in Him, they have nothing to fear even if the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the sea. (PBC)

rod ... staff. With human power and authority. (TLSB)

That is, on their return from the Egyptians they will take over a certain number of cities, but they will not accomplish what they have in mind. I will shortly avenge also their crime, namely, that of the Assyrians, and I will set Jerusalem free and destroy those people. (Luther)

as the Egyptians did. As God broke the power of Egypt before the exodus, so He will defeat Assyria. (TLSB)

10:25 little while – The present annoyance will last but a short time. Similarly the apostle Peter wants the persecuted Christians to know that they will smart but for a little while under trials of many kinds. 1 Peter 1:6. (Stoeckhardt)

My fury. God’s judgment and wrath. (TLSB)

10:26 wield against them a whip. Because the Assyrians abused the assignment to be God’s “rod” and “staff” on Israel (vv 5, 24), they themselves will be punished. (TLSB)

struck Midian. A little band under Gideon’s command, armed only with torches and trumpets, crushed the dreaded Midianite hordes (Jgs 7). (TLSB)

Oreb. One of the Midianite leaders (Jdg 7:25). (CSB)

Where the Ephraimites killed Oreb, ruler of Midian. (TLSB)

over the sea ... in Egypt. When Moses stretched out his hand over the Red Sea, the waters engulfed the chariots of Pharaoh (see Ex 14:26–28). (CSB)

All Moses had to do to destroy Pharaoh’s army was to stretch his rod over the sea at God’s direction (Ex 14:16–29). (TLSB)

That is, the Assyrians will be received with such a scourge on their return from Egypt as were the Midianites at the rock of Oreb, when they were destroyed not by any sword of the enemies but by their own and by the slaughter of one another, as Judg. 7 tells us. You will remember this. Again, the Lord will use that rod against Assyria which, as we read in Ex. 14:19 ff., He used against the Egyptians at the Red Sea, or Bull Rush Sea; and He will remove the rule and tyranny of the Assyrian king from you. (Luther)

Both victories were a gift from God. In neither case could the people claim credit for success. It was all God’s doing. (PBC)

10:27 burden...yoke – Taxation and war. (Luther)

Oppression by the Assyrians. (TLSB)

fat. Like a sturdy animal, Israel is able to break the yoke. (CSB)

This may mean that the growing strength of the Israel (the ox) would break the oppression of Assyria. This is God's gift. The abundance of their blessings will break the yoke. (TLSB)

This was a general and proverbial saying among the Jews, just as we have the saying "He has outgrown the rod," namely, when a fatted ox breaks the yoke asunder like a rotting rope. Oil denotes fatness or even mercy. The yoke yields to fatness. Opposite yields to opposite. Thus the Law, sin, and death rot away when Christ, life, and grace are present. (Luther)

The draught animal grows fat and obese and because of the fat and because of dense mass of the fat the yoke springs from, is broken off, the neck. The yoke was a cross-beam laid upon the neck and fastened under the neck by a rope. While in other respects the yoke, tends to be injurious to the animal's flabby flesh dies to the pressure and friction, so here the reverse occurs: the securing of the animal damages the yoke. This picture points to the fact that God's people overcome the world also from within. Deliverance comes from without: the yoke will be removed; but also from within: the yoke will be broken. Our faith is the victory that overcomes the world. And when on that day the Lord will judge and destroy the world and thereby deliver and redeem His people, the believers will not just quietly and passively observe what the Lord is doing, but they will with Christ judge the world. 1 Cor. 6:2. (Stoekhardt)

10:28–34 Traces the advance of the enemy through towns situated immediately north of Jerusalem. It is a direct and unimpeded route, meant to convince the hearers of the reality of God's threats to punish Judah. (TLSB)

10:28–32 As if seeing a vision, Isaiah describes the approach of the Assyrian army to Jerusalem from about ten miles north of the city. (CSB)

10:28 *come to Aiath* –That is, even if Assyria has come very near and up to the door, do not be afraid. For they will accomplish nothing. Thus when deliverance comes, the trial is very often at its worst. (Luther)

stores his baggage – He reviews and disposes the cavalry. Baggage denotes all equipment and weapons. Concerning *Michmash* and *Gibeah* see 1 Sam. 14:2, 5. He is saying these things as though each day a messenger had been coming with the report: "The Assyrians are pitching their camp, now here, now there," thus certainly striking terror into their hearts. Hezekiah had his army in Gibeah. When he heard the rumor about the Assyrians, he fled to Ramah, where Samuel once lived. (Luther)

Micmash. Located about seven miles north of Jerusalem. (CSB)

Migron and *Michmash* are those cities and places which on their passage they were about to seize until they would reach Jerusalem. They are cities in the tribe of Benjamin, in which also Jerusalem was situated. They tried to take Jerusalem not by way of Palestine, nor from the south, but from the east by way of the Jordan. Aiath is elsewhere called Ai (Jer. 49:3). (Luther)

10:29 *Ramah.* The home of Samuel. It was about five miles from Jerusalem (1Sa 7:17). (CSB)

Gibeah of Saul. About three miles from Jerusalem. It had been the capital of Israel's first king (see 1Sa 10:26). (CSB)

Where Saul held court, a stronghold of the tribe of Benjamin. (TLSB)

10:30 *cry aloud* – To cry aloud is to be jubilant and shout for joy. How will you do this in the midst of panic? Perhaps the enemy held that very city, and their jubilation was heard, as though by the citizens of *Gallim* and *Laishah*. Of old, Laishah had been captured by the descendants of Dan and was called Leshem and Paneas and Caesarea Philippi. 31. (Luther)

Poor Anathoth. Jeremiah's hometown (see Jer 1:1). The Hebrew for "poor" sounds like the word "Anathoth," thus a wordplay. (CSB)

10:32 *Nob.* Perhaps on Mount Scopus, on the outskirts of Jerusalem. (CSB)

He will halt and stay one day. They will be away from Jerusalem. The enemy will not be able to come closer. Nob is notorious for the slaughter of the priests and the savage cruelty of Saul, described in 1 Sam. 22:11ff. (Luther)

shake his fist – That is, from different directions he will move in all directions with his hand, he will decide how to deal with Jerusalem. He will dispose his army in a circle in four sections. (Luther)

Daughter of Zion. A personification of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. (CSB)

10:33 *boughs.* Sennacherib and his armies will fall. (CSB)

Once the Assyrians have served God's purpose, He will cut down their blasphemous pride. (TLSB)

That is, what stands up high against the sky. The king of Assyria boasted too much about his princes, whom the Lord will reduce to ashes. "They will be overthrown." Better: "The thickets will be hewn down." Ps. 74:5: "At the upper entrance they hacked the wooden trellis with axes," where there is no distinction of trees. (Luther)

10:34 *Lebanon.* Refers to the famed cedars of Lebanon. (CSB)

The destruction of this threatening menace Assyria—pictured as the felling of a great cedar of Lebanon—ushers in the promise of new life for God's people (cf 11:1). (TLSB)

When the prophets use this word "Lebanon," they point to something great. So here the greatness of the Assyrian king is indicated by the word "majestic." Better: "By the mighty one," that is, the powerful angel. And this is a comfort expressed through figurative language which wonderfully takes hold of men in trouble, and it sounds as if victory were already there. Ps. 94:19 tells us: "When the cares of my heart are many, Thy consolations cheer my soul." Paul says in 1 Cor. 10:13: "With the temptation He will also provide the way of escape." Weakness overcomes even though the temptation has been in its worst throes. Yet a great and living consolation is at hand. So that king, planning to storm Jerusalem the next day, lost his army that same night. Proverb: When the rope is pulled most tightly, it will snap. (Luther)

This account is another reminder to God's people of their ultimate victory and deliverance. The characters have often changed in the course of history. In every age, God's people are confronted with opposition and persecution. Only the names change. The world will shake its fist at the kingdom of God and threaten to destroy it, but God will not allow that to happen. Jesus said that the gates of hell will not overcome His church, that is, believers in Him. (PBC)

Majestic One. The Lord, who alone is God. (TLSB)

10:20–34 The Lord notes that a remnant of Judah will turn away from the nations from which they have sought support. The Holy One, the Lord God of hosts, will always welcome our repentance and turn our hearts toward Him. Just as the Lord had pity on Judah and Israel, preserving a remnant, He will have pity on His people (the Church) today. • O Lord, deliver us from false saviors who would rob us of Your blessings given through Christ, our Lord. Amen. (TLSB)