

A STUDY OF ISAIAH

The Axe and the Hand That Swings It

Lesson 8 · Isaiah 9:8-10:34

Name _____ Date _____

Does an ax exalt itself above the one who chops with it? Does a saw magnify itself above the one who saws with it?

Isaiah 10:15

WHERE WE'RE GOING TODAY

1. His hand is still raised · 9:8-10:4
2. The rod of my anger · 10:5-15
3. A remnant will return · 10:16-27
4. The forest comes down · 10:28-34
5. Looking to Christ · Romans 9:27-28

WHERE WE ARE

About _____ BC. Tiglath-pileser of _____ has torn _____ away from the northern kingdom and is closing in on _____. Pekah, Israel's king, will soon be murdered by a conspirator named _____. Ahaz sits in Jerusalem as Assyria's paying _____, glad to watch his enemies punished.

The question this passage answers: when an empire seems to be running the world, whose _____ is actually holding it?

1 HIS HAND IS STILL RAISED (9:8-10:4)

The Lord sent a message against Jacob; it came against Israel.

Isaiah 9:8

Ephraim, the leading _____ in the north, stands for the whole northern kingdom, and _____ is its capital. God had warned them for years through the prophets _____ and _____. Now the warnings were coming _____.

The bricks have fallen, but we will rebuild with cut stones; the sycamores have been cut down, but we will replace them with cedars.

Isaiah 9:10

Brick and sycamore built ordinary _____; cut stone and cedar built _____. Israel's answer to disaster is a _____ program. Nobody in the verse asks what _____ might be saying.

Aram from the east and Philistia from the west devour Israel, 9:12. Aram is _____, the very _____ Israel had marched with against Judah.

| *In all this, his anger has not turned away, and his hand is still raised to strike.*
Isaiah 9:12

How many times did you count the refrain in this passage? ____ Isaiah used it once before, at 5:____. The raised hand is _____ language: God brought His people out of Egypt *by a strong hand and an outstretched arm*, Deuteronomy 4:34. The hand that _____ them is now raised against them.

FOUR STANZAS, ONE REFRAIN

Stanza	Verses	What goes wrong
1	9:8–12	National _____, and a plan to rebuild bigger
2	9:13–17	Leaders who _____ the people
3	9:18–21	_____ war: Manasseh against Ephraim
4	10:1–4	Crooked _____ that rob the poor, the widow, and the fatherless

| *The people did not turn to him who struck them; they did not seek the Lord of Armies.*
Isaiah 9:13

They felt every _____. They never asked who _____ it.

The head is the _____, the honored one; the tail is the _____, the one teaching lies, 9:15. The men who should have been leading had become tails, wagging whichever way the _____ pulled.

In the thirty years after Jeroboam II died around 753 BC, _____ kings sat on Israel's throne. _____ of them were murdered. Only _____ passed the crown to his son.

Manasseh and Ephraim were brothers, _____'s two sons. All they agree on now is attacking _____, 9:21.

In the fourth stanza no northern city is named, and the pronoun turns to _____, 10:3. Isaiah's listeners have been nodding along about Samaria. Now he's asking about their own _____.

2 THE ROD OF MY ANGER (10:5–15)

| *Woe to Assyria, the rod of my anger—the staff in their hands is my wrath.*
Isaiah 10:5

In chapter 8 Assyria was a _____. Here it's a _____, and God is holding it. The words *to take spoils, to plunder*, 10:6, echo the name of Isaiah's son, _____.

Ahaz had sent the temple's silver and gold to Tiglath-pileser with a plea: *March up and _____ me*, 2 Kings 16:7-8. Now God sends that same king against them. Judah's rescuer becomes its _____.

TWO PURPOSES (10:5-7)

What God sends Assyria to do	What Assyria means to do
Punish a _____ nation, 10:6	_____ and cut off many nations, 10:7
Take spoils and plunder, then stop	Treat Jerusalem's God as one more _____, 10:11

Isn't Calno like Carchemish? The names in 10:9 are a roll call of cities Assyria had already _____.

When the Lord *finishes* His work against Jerusalem, 10:12, He'll punish the king of Assyria. *Finishes* is a _____'s word, the snip of the last thread. Assyria will do exactly the work it was given, and not one _____ more.

| *I have done this by my own strength and wisdom, for I am clever.*
Isaiah 10:13

Count the pronouns in 10:13-14: _____ and _____, over and over. Taking the nations was as easy as robbing an unguarded _____.

An axe has an _____. It doesn't have an _____. Assyria's power was real, and every ounce of it had been _____ to it.

Isaiah holds two things together. Assyria is an _____ in God's hand, and Assyria is _____ for what it does while it's there.

3 A REMNANT WILL RETURN (10:16-27)

| *Israel's Light will become a fire, and its Holy One, a flame. In one day it will burn and consume Assyria's thorns and thistles.*
Isaiah 10:17

The same God is _____ to His people and _____ to their enemy. Assyria's forest will be cut down until a _____ could count what's left, 10:19.

In 701 BC *the angel of the Lord went out and struck down _____ in the camp of the Assyrians*, 2 Kings 19:35. Nineveh itself fell in _____ BC.

| *On that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no longer depend on the one who struck them, but they will faithfully depend on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel.*
Isaiah 10:20

To depend is to _____ your weight on something. Ahaz leaned on Assyria, and Assyria _____ him.

TWO NAMES MEET IN 10:21

The phrase	Where we saw it first
<i>The remnant will return</i>	The name of Isaiah's older son, _____, 7:3
<i>Mighty God</i>	One of the _____'s names, 9:6

The remnant comes home to the God the Child is _____ for.

Israel, even if your people were as numerous as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return.

Isaiah 10:22

God had promised Abraham descendants like the _____, Genesis 22:17. Descent from Abraham was never enough on its own. Only those who turn back to the _____ are the remnant.

My people who dwell in Zion, do not fear Assyria, though they strike you with a rod and raise their staff over you as the Egyptians did.

Isaiah 10:24

TWO MEMORIES TO HOLD ONTO (10:26)

What God did before	Read it in
Gideon's men kill the Midianite prince _____ at a rock that took his name	Judges 7:25
Moses raises his _____ over the sea	Exodus 14:16

God has broken bigger _____ than this one.

4 THE FOREST COMES DOWN (10:28–34)

Town by town the army closes in from the _____: Aiath, Migron, Michmash, Geba, Ramah, Gibeah. Anathoth, where the prophet _____ would be born about a century later, is *miserable*, 10:30.

Today the Assyrians will stand at Nob, shaking their fists at the mountain of Daughter Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 10:32

Isaiah doesn't say which campaign this is. When Sennacherib's spokesman came in 701, he came from _____, southwest of the city, 36:2. Isaiah paints the danger as it would feel from the _____, each town a step closer.

Look, the Lord God of Armies will chop off the branches with terrifying power, and the tall trees will be cut down, the high trees felled. He is clearing the thickets of the forest with an ax, and Lebanon with its majesty will fall.

Isaiah 10:33–34

The axe has changed _____. Assyria, which bragged it was doing the chopping, has become the _____. Chapter 11 opens on a _____.

5 LOOKING TO CHRIST

Paul faces a painful question: if Jesus is the Messiah, why has so much of _____ turned Him down? *It is not as though the word of God has failed, because not all who are descended from Israel are _____*, Romans 9:6.

Though the number of Israelites is like the sand of the sea, only the remnant will be saved; since the Lord will execute his sentence completely and decisively on the earth.

Romans 9:27–28

In Paul's day the remnant is *a remnant chosen by _____*, Romans 11:5: the Jews who leaned on _____.

GOD'S HAND AND HUMAN GUILT AT THE CROSS

Text	God's hand	Human guilt
John 19:11	Pilate's authority was given <i>from</i> _____	The one who handed Jesus over has the greater _____
Acts 2:23	Delivered up according to God's determined _____ and foreknowledge	<i>You used _____ people to nail him to a cross</i>

The worst thing men ever did was held in God's _____ the whole time, and He used it to save the _____.

6 APPLYING THE TEXT

Put a check by the one you most need to work on this week.

- ☐ **Ask who struck the blow.** Israel felt every loss and never asked what God was saying. Not every hardship is a punishment. Every one is still a reason to seek the Lord before you start repairing the damage. When the bricks fall, is your first plan to rebuild, or to pray?
- ☐ **Look for the sin you condemn in someone else's house.** Isaiah's listeners agreed with every word about Samaria until he asked about their own courts. Read 10:1–4 slowly and ask where it touches the way you treat people who can't push back.
- ☐ **Don't confuse your strength with your source.** *Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord*, 1 Corinthians 1:31. Your gifts are real. They were also given.

- ☐ **Do not fear the rod.** Whatever holds power over you right now is a tool in another hand. God told Zion the rod would be put away *in just a little while*. The blows still hurt, and every one of them is counted.

7 FOR DISCUSSION

1. Name the four stanzas of 9:8–10:4 and the sin each one exposes. What line closes every stanza, and what does it tell you about God?

2. What did Israel plan to do after *the bricks have fallen* (9:10)? According to 9:13, what should they have done instead?

3. Compare God's purpose in sending Assyria (10:5–6) with Assyria's own purpose (10:7). How can God use a nation and still hold it guilty for what it did?

4. Read 10:20–22 alongside Romans 9:27–28 and 11:5. What makes someone part of the remnant, in Isaiah's day and in Paul's?

5. Isaiah's audience would have applauded his sermon on Samaria right up to 10:1. What sin do you find easy to condemn in others that you'd rather not have examined in yourself?

6. Where in your life are you most tempted to say, *I have done this by my own strength*? What would it look like this week to give God the credit there, out loud?

NEXT WEEK**Lesson 9 · A Shoot from the Stump · Isaiah 11–12**

Assyria's forest is down, and out of the stump of Jesse one green shoot comes up. The Spirit of the Lord rests on Him, the wolf lies down with the lamb, and a highway opens for the scattered remnant to come home. Then the first part of Isaiah ends in a song.

Your assignment: read Isaiah 11–12. Then turn back to 12:2, the verse this study asked you to carry from the beginning, and read it again now that you've walked through the first twelve chapters.

NOTES
