

The Millennium Forecast

The Book of Isaiah

Text

Isaiah 10:5-34

Topic

We are afforded a behind the scenes look at God's rule over the Gentile nations of the Earth, and His plan to save them through the witness of Israel

Title

***"All Nations Under God, Illuminated,
With Liberty And Jesus For All"***

The answer is: The British Empire

The question, "What was the largest empire the world has ever seen?"

In 1821, the *Caledonian Mercury* wrote of the British Empire, "On her dominions the sun never sets; before his evening rays leave the spires of Quebec, his morning beams have shone three hours on Port Jackson, and while sinking from the waters of Lake Superior, his eye opens upon the mouth of the Ganges."

You'll be excited to know that occupying 21st place on the list of world empires was the Second Portuguese Empire. The Dutch made the top 100, coming in at 71.

I did a quick Bible concordance check for the words British, Britain, and England. Nothing.

There is quite a bit of information in the Bible about other world empires. Most notably, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Why those? They were the nations that most affected the history of Israel.

The noun, "Israel," occurs in the Bible over 2500 times. Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes, "Anyone who reads the Bible will soon realize that... Israel... is the centerpiece of divine, prophetic activity."

In the 8th century, Assyria was the world power... *But they were not the real power.*

God is sovereign over all the nations of Earth. "For God *is* the King of all the earth; Sing praises with understanding. God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne" (Psalm 47:7-8).

The Lord had a work to do at Jerusalem and He chose Assyria to accomplish it.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 The Nations You Fear Answer To The LORD**, and **#2 The Nation God Favors Will Turn To The Lord**.

#1 - The Nations You Fear Answer To The LORD (v5-19)

October 1962. The Cuban Missile Crisis. I was 7yrs old. It is the first memory I have of nations against nations in a conflict that could end our species. It didn't alleviate my fears that every day we were practicing 'Duck & Cover' in my classroom. Or that my inventive older brothers were trying to work out the details of a DIY underground fallout shelter.

Do you ever wonder where nations originated? A long time ago, in a wilderness far, far away, mankind stopped wandering and, in rebellion against God, started to build a tower at which they could worship lesser gods.

God said, "Let us go down and mix up their language" (Genesis 11:7 GNT). God did so, and humanity was separated and scattered. The Babel incident in the eleventh chapter of Genesis explains how and why the nations that were listed in chapter ten came into being.

This is further explored in Deuteronomy, where we read, "When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when He divided mankind, He fixed the borders of

the peoples according to the number of the Sons of God. But the LORD's portion is His people, Jacob His allotted heritage" (32:8-9).

The "Sons of God" is a designation for supernatural persons. God put certain supernaturals in charge of nations of the world. When He said, "Let **us** go down and confound their language," it may have been a conversation within the Trinity. Or, God may have been talking to these supernaturals who would be over the nations.

There is an example in the Book of Daniel.

The angel Gabriel was dispatched to deliver the incredible End Time prophecy of the 70 Weeks to Daniel. On his way, Gabriel was hindered by a supernatural being he called the Prince of Persia. Michael, the archangel, came, so that Gabriel could continue.

God would begin for Himself a new nation. In the very next chapter of Genesis, chapter twelve, God calls Abraham, who would be the father of this new nation. Israel had, at least, these two missions:

- In Isaiah 42:6 we read, "I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles."
- In Romans 9:5 we read, "from [Israel], according to the flesh, Christ *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God."

The Savior Who was promised to mankind in the Garden of Eden would come through the nation of Israel to be a light to the Gentile nations.

Which brings us to the 8th century and the Assyrian Empire.

Isa 10:5 "Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger And the staff in whose hand is My indignation.

If you practice corporal punishment on your kiddos, you no doubt have a special spanking implement. How do you spank a nation? With another nation. God employed Assyria to discipline His sons and daughters.

Assyria, however, exceeded the boundaries God had set. So, "Woe to Assyria."

Isa 10:6 I will send him against an ungodly nation, And against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, To seize the spoil, to take the prey, And to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

This was the spanking God ordered for “ungodly” Israel, the northern kingdom whose capital was Samaria.

Isa 10:7 Yet he does not mean so, Nor does his heart think so; But *it is* in his heart to destroy, And cut off not a few nations.

The king of Assyria decided, apart from the LORD, that he would conquer other nations, too.

The Assyrians knew they were called by God.

The leader of the future siege of Jerusalem would say, “Have I now come up without the LORD against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, ‘Go up against this land, and destroy it’ ” (Second Kings 18:25).

Isa 10:8 For he says, “Are not my princes altogether kings?

If your princes are kings, what does that make you? *It makes you the King of kings.*

Isa 10:9 *Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad? Is not Samaria like Damascus?*

One-by-one these capital cities fell. Humanly speaking, the advance of the Assyrians could not be stopped.

Isa 10:10 As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols, Whose carved images excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria,

Isa 10:11 As I have done to Samaria and her idols, Shall I not do also to Jerusalem and her idols?’ ”

The multiple gods of these pagan nations were no match for Assyria. Israel was monotheistic, and she would fall. Judah worshipped the same LORD, so once they conquered Israel Assyria was emboldened to think Jerusalem would easily fall.

Isa 10:12 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Lord has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, *that He will say, “I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks.”*

God would stop the Assyrians from conquering Jerusalem. He'd punish the Assyrians. We will see how in a moment.

Isa 10:13 For he says: "By the strength of my hand I have done *it*, And by my wisdom, for I am prudent; Also I have removed the boundaries of the people, And have robbed their treasuries; So I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant *man*.

Isa 10:14 My hand has found like a nest the riches of the people, And as one gathers eggs *that are* left, I have gathered all the earth; And there was no one who moved *his* wing, Nor opened *his* mouth with even a peep."

Really? It was all you? God was behind the scenes, orchestrating it. There are stories about Alexander the Great and Constantine that indicate divine intervention. Cyrus, king of Persia, is mentioned more than thirty times in the Bible. His interaction with the Jews is prophesied more than 150 years before his rule.

Isa 10:15 Shall the ax boast itself against him who chops with it? Or shall the saw exalt itself against him who saws with it? As if a rod could wield *itself* against those who lift it up, Or as if a staff could lift up, *as if it were* not wood!

A lot of common expressions can be traced to the Bible. I don't think this is one of them, but essentially what God says to the Assyrian is, "**You're a tool!**"

God utilizes Gentile nations to push forward His salvation agenda. It doesn't mean they always do as He wishes. Wait, what? I thought God was sovereign? Of course He is, but we need to define what that means. The *Beacon Dictionary of Theology* describes God's sovereignty this way:

1. First, it may be seen as the divine right to rule totally.
2. Second, it may be extended to include God's exercise of this right.

The debate is whether or not there is any room for genuine free will in the way God exercises His sovereignty.

We believe that in His sovereignty God has granted mankind free will.

It could not be clearer in this passage. The Assyrians exercised free will, exceeding God's directives, and God dealt with them accordingly. None of that sidebar interrupted God's plan or thwarted His will.

J. Alec Motyer wrote, *"This passage asserts a philosophy of history, how the historical facts arise from hidden supernatural causes, and how the human actors who are the hinges on which history outwardly turns are themselves personal and responsible agents within a sovereignly ordered and exactly tuned moral system."*

I'll read verses sixteen through nineteen in the International Standard Version.

"Therefore the Lord GOD of the Heavenly Armies will send a wasting disease among Assyria's sturdy warriors, and under its glory a conflagration will be kindled, like a blazing bonfire. The light of Israel will become a fire, and its Holy One a flame, and it will burn and consume Assyria's thorns and briers in a single day. The splendor of its forest and its fruitful land the LORD will destroy - both soul and body - and Assyria will be as when a dying man wastes away. What survives of the trees in his forest will be so few that a child can count them."

The Assyrians are compared to "thorns and briers," and "trees" set ablaze to burn "in a single day." That single day was a single night in 701BC when 185,000 Assyrian soldiers surrounding Jerusalem were killed overnight by the Angel of the Lord.

What nations do we fear? Perhaps you saw the photo of China's Xi Jinping shaking hands with Vladimir Putin. The accompanying article said they plan to "stand guard over the world order" under their new "friendship without limits."

Don't fear them. There **are** limits, and our Mighty God sets them. If they exceed them, they will be punished. Could it affect us negatively? Of course. But we see the Big Picture.

Jesus conquers our fears and we share Him with the unsaved who have real cause to fear.

If you have never been born again, if you die, there is no hope for you after death. You will be cast alive in the Lake of Fire to endure conscious torment for eternity. The good news is that Jesus came to Earth as God in human flesh. He allowed Himself to be crucified, taking your place. A.W. Tozer explains it like this: "The only sin Jesus ever had was yours, and the only righteousness we can ever have is His."

#2 - The Nation God Favors Will Turn To The LORD (v20-34)

History is the progressive development and implementation of God's plan of redeeming mankind and restoring Creation. God's preservation of the nation of Israel, and the city of Jerusalem, are the filter through which history must be interpreted.

Isa 10:20 And it shall come to pass in that day *That* the remnant of Israel, And such as have escaped of the house of Jacob, Will never again depend on him who defeated them, But will depend on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.

Judah signed a treaty with Assyria in an attempt to solve her spiritual problems with politics. What a slap in the face of our Mighty God.

Isa 10:21 The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, To the Mighty God.

Isa 10:22 For though your people, O Israel, be as the sand of the sea, A remnant of them will return; The destruction decreed shall overflow with righteousness.

God promised Abraham that his offspring would be as the sand of the sea. No matter how bleak things look for Israel, there will always be a remnant from which this promise will be fulfilled.

Isa 10:23 For the Lord GOD of hosts Will make a determined end In the midst of all the land.

Isa 10:24 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts: "O My people, who dwell in Zion, do not be afraid of the Assyrian. He shall strike you with a rod and lift up his staff against you, in the manner of Egypt.

Isa 10:25 For yet a very little while and the indignation will cease, as will My anger in their destruction."

It was too late to avoid their spanking, but God would rein-in the Assyrians from conquering Judah.

Isa 10:26 And the LORD of hosts will stir up a scourge for him like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; as His rod was on the sea, so will He lift it up in the manner of Egypt.

Gideon killed the two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb, at the rock. And how about that thing at the Red Sea - when the waters flooded back upon the Egyptian army? What God did in the past, He would do in the present. God would "scourge" the Assyrians. They would join the 'Nations Defeated by YHWH' club.

Have you heard the expression, "Why not here? Why not now?" It is a reminder that, just as God revived in the past, He can do it right here, right now.

Isa 10:27 It shall come to pass in that day *That* his burden will be taken away from your shoulder, And his yoke from your neck, And the yoke will be destroyed because of the anointing oil.

How can a "yoke" "be destroyed because of the "anointing oil?"

- Jesus said, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:30).
- At the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus read from Isaiah 62, which describes the "anointed" ministry of the Messiah. He told the listeners that He was the Anointed One (Luke 4:16-21).

Rather than struggle through and butchering the pronunciation, let me just say that a list of 10 outlying cities occupies verses 28 through 31.

Isa 10:28 He has come to Aiath, He has passed Migron; At Michmash he has attended to his equipment.

Isa 10:29 They have gone along the ridge, They have taken up lodging at Geba. Ramah is afraid, Gibeah of Saul has fled.

Isa 10:30 Lift up your voice, O daughter of Gallim! Cause it to be heard as far as Laish - O poor Anathoth!

Isa 10:31 Madmenah has fled, The inhabitants of Gebim seek refuge.

The listing of cities flows from north to south, describing the course of the Assyrian death march towards Jerusalem.

Isa 10:32 As yet he will remain at Nob that day; He will shake his fist at the mount of the daughter of Zion, The hill of Jerusalem.

You can read the taunts and threats that the Assyrians threw at the Jews in chapter thirty-six.

Isa 10:33 Behold, the Lord, The LORD of hosts, Will lop off the bough with terror; Those of high stature *will be* hewn down, And the haughty will be humbled.

Isa 10:34 He will cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, And Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel ceased to exist following the fall of Samaria. Judah would survive the Assyrian onslaught with the help of the aforementioned Angel of the Lord slaughtering their encamped army.

There is something else going on in this chapter. Look back to verse twenty-four. It says, "Do not be afraid of **the** Assyrian."

Some scholars consider the king of Assyria a type of the future antichrist, and list it as one of his names, along with Beast, Man of Sin, the Big Mouth, the Little Horn, the Insolent King, the Prince who is to come, the one who makes desolate, the despicable person, the strong-willed king, the worthless shepherd, the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, and the Son of Perdition.

The expression "in that day" (v20) looks beyond the time of the Assyrian Empire into the prophetic future.

The Assyrian designated himself, "King of kings." Jesus is the King of kings, but in the Time of Jacob's Trouble, the antichrist will claim that title, and he will demand his subjects worship him as God.

Judah signed a treaty with the Assyrian. So will Israel sign a treaty with the antichrist. It is that antichrist accord that marks the beginning of the seven years of trouble.

The Assyrian meted out God's discipline upon the Jews. The antichrist will unleash a persecution against them like the world has never known. Its purpose is to turn their hearts to God.

A "remnant" survived in the 8th & 7th centuries, and a "remnant" will survive the antichrist's campaign of terror. The Bible indicates that $\frac{2}{3}$ of the Jews will die, but $\frac{1}{3}$ of them survive and are saved through the Time of Jacob's Trouble to greet Jesus at His Second Coming.

Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes,

"As a nation, Israel is indestructible. So what if the Assyrians were coming? So what if there was going to be massive destruction? Nothing will destroy God's promises and prevent Israel's survival. Otherwise, there would be no final restoration. On the basis of the promise of a final restoration, the remnant should not be afraid. Israel will survive every invasion sent against her."

Modern Israel has fought seven wars since being established in the land. The first one was the day after independence from the British.

All the modern Israeli wars have miraculous stories of her victories.

God separated the people at Babel into nations. Then He began another, special nation - Israel. Do you know that there is another, fairly recent, nation that is special to God?

The apostle Peter said the Church is "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, **a holy nation, His own special people...**" (First Peter 2:9).

We are a "holy nation," within our nation, the United States. Why?

"That you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light, who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy" (First Peter 2:9-10).

We expect "the nations to rage... The kings of the earth [to] set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed..." (Psalm 2:1).

What is our nation-within-a-nation mission?

We are to conduct ourselves "as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain[ing] from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having [our] conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against [us] as evildoers, they may, by [*our*] good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation" (First Peter 2:11-12).