

ISA 10:20 Now it will come about in that day that the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them, but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. [21] A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. [22] For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, Only a remnant within them will return; A destruction is determined (an end will come), overflowing with righteousness.

ISA 10:23 For a complete destruction, one that is decreed, the Lord GOD of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land.

ISA 10:24 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts, "O My people who dwell in Zion, do not fear the Assyrian who strikes you with the rod and lifts up his staff against you, the way Egypt did. [25] "For in a very little while My indignation against you will be spent, and My anger will be directed to their destruction." [26] And the LORD of hosts will arouse a scourge against him like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; and His staff will be over the sea, and He will lift it up the way He did in Egypt. [27] So it will be in that day, that his burden will be removed from your shoulders and his yoke from your neck, and the yoke will be broken because of fatness.

ISA 10:28 He has come against Aiath,
He has passed through Migron;
At Michmash he deposited his baggage. [29] They have gone through the pass, saying,
"Geba will be our lodging place."
Ramah is terrified, and Gibeah of Saul has fled away. [30] Cry aloud with your voice, O daughter of Gallim!
Pay attention, Laishah and wretched Anathoth! [31] Madmenah has fled.
The inhabitants of Gebim have sought refuge. [32] Yet today he will halt at Nob;
He shakes his fist at the mountain of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.

ISA 10:33 Behold, the Lord, the GOD of hosts, will lop off the boughs with a terrible crash;
Those also who are tall in stature will be cut down,
And those who are lofty will be abased. [34] And He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an iron axe,
And Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One.

Summary:

With at least 17 geographical locations mentioned in this text and several more alluded to, we are going to take a long trip in this sermon. From the lofty mountains of Eden to the great plains of the Euphrates river to the heart of Israel's capitol city we will travel. The purpose in taking this trip is to use Israel's experience to understand our own times, especially two opposing destinations that one may ultimately take: Heaven or Hell. See how God has orchestrated redemptive history to point you ever forward to Christ, ever upward to heavenly place, and ever outward away from yourself. Do you trust him today?

Israel's Captivity and What it Means Today

Isaiah 10:20-34

This morning we are going to go on a very long trip. Here is our itinerary. Our first stop is a mystery stop, somewhere between [Egypt and the great River Euphrates](#). From here we will travel northeast a few hundred miles to the [Garden of Eden](#). After stopping here for a brief period of time, we will travel southwest to [Jerusalem](#) in Israel, making stops in [several small towns](#) just north of her walls. Then we get to go to due east into [Iraq](#). After going to Iraq, we will head back to [Israel](#), stopping in Bethlehem and Jerusalem again. Finally, we will head into a place that few get to travel. We get to leave this world and go into places that few on earth are willing to enter. We will go into the very [depths of the earth](#) where there is darkness and great consuming heat. We will not linger here for long but will instead travel upwards into the very heavens themselves to the [New Jerusalem](#), the eternal city. We will exit our plane and begin to climb to the top of [heavenly Mt. Zion](#). From here we will be able to view all the places we have been in a new and wonderful light and your joy and assurance in all the things you hope for and believe will be made complete so that you no longer lack anything. Now to me, that sounds like a great trip indeed.

Bring plenty of water, food, and clothes because we are going to be gone for a very long time. It will take us 3925 years just to reach the first destination! Another 2100 years at the very minimum will expire before we reach our second destination. And it will take us another 6,000 years at the *very least* to reach our final

destination. Strangely enough, though, I hope that we will be back from our entire trip before lunch.

The only vehicle I know of where this sort of strange time travel can take place is a book. Using the Holy Scripture as our map will help us so that we will not get lost. But we don't want to be doing too much speed reading along our way, lest **we hit a bookmark and fly across the room**. So let's get on board and settle in for a long trip.

I got the idea for this journey because in our passage this morning (**Isaiah 10:20-34**), there are at least 17 geographical locations mentioned. Obviously, we are meant to travel some great distances when we read this passage. The locations mentioned in the text point of us to other locations not directly mentioned.

We'll let's get started. Our time is wasting. Our first step is to travel out of Boulder Colorado, across the big pond, over the Straights of Gibraltar and into the ancient city of Jerusalem. After getting acquainted with the culture and resting of weary bodies for a few moments, we are off to the first true stop on our journey together. This is the original location where God delivered a group of promises to a man a very long time ago. We journey to this place first because of what is discussed in **verses 21-24**.

In these verses we learn about **two lands**. You have the **Promised Land** to which the **remnant returns** (**vs. 21**). And you have the **land of slavery "Egypt"** (**vs. 24**). A **multitude of descendants** ("like the sand of the sea") and a burden that is taken away ("the one who struck them" **vs. 20**, "do not fear" **vs. 24**, "for in a very little while My indignation against you will be spent" **vs. 25**) are likewise mentioned. This is meant to clearly take us back to a place between Egypt and the Euphrates River where Abraham was given the following promise.

*Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."... "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. "But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions. "And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. "Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete."... On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates (**Gen 15:5, 13-16, 18**).*

The similarities between what happened to Israel in slavery and the Exodus from Egypt as promised here are compared by the prophet with the captivity she experiences with Assyria. This is why we needed to travel to the place of Abraham's promise. But each of these settings also point us to another place. Our next destination shows how this pattern, where the people of God are in temporary slavery and are ultimately released is the normal pattern in this age. Thus, we leave the plains of the Promised Land and travel Northeast to high and lofty mountains where somewhere hidden from all our site lies the Garden of Eden. As we cast our gaze to and fro upon these hills, wondering just where Adam and Eve might have committed that first sin, the thought comes into our minds of an unexpected promise.

*And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,*

And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel (Gen 3:15).

In this promise, we learn two very important truths. God is going to put enmity (antagonism) between two groups of people. Sounds just like what was promised to Abraham. Abel, who was the first to suffer and shed his blood for his faith, represents the seed of the woman and foreshadows the Greater Blood of Another. Later his brother Seth replaces the dead Abel as God resurrects the seed of the woman foreshadowing another future Resurrection.

Abel and Seth are one group. The other group begins with the faithless murdering Cain. Cain's father is actually called the "evil one" (1 Jn 3:12), for his is the line of the serpent. This antagonism will play itself out in the following way. **The line of Cain will continually, repeatedly, and successfully bruise the seed of Seth on the heel.** The very suffering promised in the slavery of God's people in Egypt, the exile of Israel into captivity to Assyria and the suffering of the Christian – sometimes even unto death is hereby promised and assured.

But God will see to it that One from the line of Seth will not just cause a wound, he will deal a mortal blow, **crushing the head** of the serpent. Unfortunately with that, our short visit to Eden must come to an end. Let's hop back on our tourist tome as we travel now back to Israel. We go **back to the Promised Land** as it looked in Isaiah's day. As with most of the prophesy in Isaiah's book, this one deals with Isaiah's own period of time in his own land. **Three things are promised here for the people living in Isaiah's day. First, God would complete the destruction** he had decreed for Israel. This is to be a righteous destruction. It was unavoidable because it was decreed to happen. **Second, God would not completely leave the people without hope, but would leave a remnant** that would return to the land. **Third, when God's indignation towards his people had been sufficiently spent, He would turn his anger towards the Assyrian.**

Now, please remember that the nation of Israel included all physical descendants of Abraham (and any Gentile who wanted to convert to Judaism). God promises in the most absolute sense, that the nation of Israel would be destroyed. God does this through the ruthless Assyrian Empire. Now we see why we traveled to Eden, because here we see Eve's promise working itself out. God's people are suffering at the hand of the line of Cain. God gave the promise to Eve even as he decreed this horrible end for Israel. That's the decree, but not the instrument. God is not held guilty for this because He uses the seed of the serpent to accomplish his will. Assyria is guilty because (as we see in the beginning of this chapter), she sinned in her heart and had evil intentions in destroying Israel.

Through the Assyrian, the promise to bruise the heel of the woman is once more brought to pass. It has happened throughout history, first in Abel's death, then in Israel's slavery in Egypt, and now here. Sometimes I wonder why it is that we think as Christians that we are not to suffer in this age. Everyone of us needs to understand that this is the way **God has ordained things in this age.** Suffering is God's plan (**because it was God's plan for his own Son!**). God has given his people the law and they do not fulfill it perfectly which is what the law requires. Breaking the law means destruction and this destruction is ordained and decreed from all eternity past. Thus, we ought not to think of suffering as abnormal. Instead, it is exactly what we all deserve. Whether you are physically being attacked, dying for

your faith, suffering from poverty, lack of a job, loneliness, depression, hunger, abuse, or doubt – while there may be no specific sin that is causing the problem (**this is not Job’s counselors theology we are offering here**), it is still the case that all suffering is the result of general sin and it has all been decreed by God.

I want to point your eyes to something that strikes me here more than any other. It is what is said in **verse 23**: A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness. Clearly this is talking about suffering and evil coming upon a city. But consider what this actually means. When a nation crumbles or a travesty occurs or an individual suffers, it happens *because God is righteous*. I’m not sure we really understand the ramifications of this, but that’s because we don’t like to think of our sin as being as bad as it really is, nor do we really know just how good and perfect God is in comparison. You see, God *has* to judge sin. He can’t let it go. Otherwise he is not righteous. So when destruction does come it is nothing but the overflowing of his own righteousness being displayed for all the world to see. The judgment of sin is exactly what justice and righteousness demands, isn’t it? The text goes on to say that **what God has decreed (in righteousness) must come to pass**. And so he promises to **complete the destruction** and in this case he **executes it in the midst of the whole land of Israel (vs. 23)**.

I think it’s always important to remember that the Bible is a historical book, not a fantasy book. This stuff really did happen and it happened exactly like this. We learn just exactly how this came about for the nation of Israel. So **verses 23-28** take us to our next stop on the journey. There are fifteen towns that we are here traveling to. We begin in **Aith**, a city some 30 miles northeast of Jerusalem. In a whirlwind tour we are taken ever closer to the walls of Jerusalem, passing through many towns and cities along the way. You see, the movement of the Assyrian was to sweep through and cleanse all the towns of Judah: **“He passed through Migron.”** He **“deposited his baggage in Michmash.”** Moving further towards the capital city they say **“Geba will be our lodging place.”** **“Ramah is terrified, and Gibeah of Saul has fled away.”** The people of **Gallim “cry aloud”** and the **“people of Laishah are called to attention.”** **“Wretched is Anathoth”** and **“Madmenah has fled.”** The city walls of Jerusalem are coming into view even as **“the inhabitants of Gebim have sought refuge”** from the mighty rod of Assyria. Along the way he **“halts at Nob”** and in his high perch he **“shakes his fist at the mountain of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.”**

This is a frightening journey we are on, and surely it must have terrified the people of Jacob. But behold now how God has not left the people entirely without hope. **The most stunning message in Christianity is the most stunning message in all the world.** When you understand how destruction and suffering are overflowing with righteousness, then you are prepared to see this truth. **“It will come about in that day that the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them, but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel” (vs. 20).**

Do you see how Assyria struck the seed of the woman, even as was promised to Eve? You will strike his heel. But this promise does not end in total destruction, does it? That’s the reason why Israel is spared here. Satan may only strike the heel. Meanwhile, God is faithfully carrying out his covenant of grace as given to Adam and Eve! He promised the exact same thing to Abraham when he told Abraham **“Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will**

also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions.”

In Isaiah’s day this meant two things. God would spare a physical group of Jews – called here the remnant. But not only will he spare them, he promises something spectacular to them. He promises them that they will “never again rely on foreign enemies of God,” but will instead rely on the LORD. He clearly calls out a gospel message to this remnant when he says, “Do not fear My people” (vs. 24) Do not fear the Assyrian for these things will now take place.

So the second thing is that God will turn his gaze of wrath upon the very people who destroyed Israel. It will be horrible for the Assyrian army. As has been the case for many verses up to this point, the image is one of God bringing low the pride of this nation. Five times we see something high brought low. God will lop off the bough with a terrible crash. The tall in stature will be cut down. The lofty will be abased. He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an iron axe. And Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One (vs. 33-34). In verse 26 you read that the LORD of Armies will lash them with a whip (arouse a scourge) like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb.

Maybe you don’t remember the story of Midian and Oreb. This (Judg 7:25) is the story of 300 men led by Gideon who God used to whip Midian into a frenzy so that all of her people ended up killing each other. Now, Oreb was the leader of Midian and Gideon chased him down to a rock, eventually killing him and lopping off his head. Why give this illustration here? Because it is apt for what actually happened to Sennacherib, who did not perish with his army but after he reached home when his own sons murdered him. But there is also a picture of God lifting his staff over the sea, the way Moses lifted it up over Egypt. God is going to baptize Assyria into the same death as he did to the Egyptian army. All of this takes place as we travel into Iraq, the home of the Assyrian. We have gotten here via the Red Sea and the Rock of Oreb.

This destruction is a gracious destruction for Judah, isn’t it? But I want you to think of why this story is in the Bible? What’s the point? Is it just a history lesson? No. The Assyrian army is an historic-redemptive picture of God striking a mortal blow to the seed of Satan. Assyria never arose from this. But it also has a meaning for the remnant. For the remnant this was proof that the blessings of Abraham would not fail.

Isaiah says it like this. “A remnant will return” is a use of the name of Isaiah’s son Shear-jashub who we met back in chapter 7. (THIS WILL BECOME IMPORTANT IN A MOMENT). Look at how the promises to Abraham are here renewed. The remnant would “return” to what? To her land! In the preservation of the remnant, the promise to Abraham to have a people like the sand of the sea is both revisited and renewed. Now it seems once again possible for this promise to come about. God can still make Abraham the father of many nations. God will remove the burden from the shoulders of the remnant even as he removed it from their fathers in leading the people out of Egypt. These are great promises, but there is something here that I cannot allow you to miss.

Zionists in our day unfortunately look past the most important meaning of this passage. Quite honestly, if these promises are only for national Jews, then the OT – including this text – means nothing more to me (a saved Gentile) than any other history book. It may be a nice story and it may even show me about the power of

God. But what good does that do me if it never actualizes itself in my own life? There are too many implications of this for me to go into at this time.

What I want you to see is that we have three critical reasons for understanding that we have to now leave the time period of Isaiah and travel not to a different land, but a different time, some 700 years in the future. First, you have to understand that when the prophet says, "In that day" that you are not allowed to stay in the present time of Isaiah. Though this prophesy is fulfilled in an immediate sense as we have discussed, "in that day" points us forward to another time far off in the future.

We learn from the NT that this Day has begun in Christ. "In these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world" (Heb 1:2). The last days point us forward to that Great Day that will come like a thief in the night (2 Pet 3:10). It is a day of salvation (1 Cor 5:5) and of destruction (Joel 2:2). But the last days are also significant in this respect. Their coming at Pentecost literally begins the salvation aspect that takes place on the Great Day. Did you catch that? With regard to salvation, the Great Day is here now! This is why "TODAY" is the day of salvation.

The mentioning of Isaiah's son shows us that this text is still a part of the larger text of chapters 7-11ff. Here we see how all of these children in some way or another remind us of Messiah who is to come. And this again catapults us forward into time. Whether it be Assyria or the returning remnant, we have to be looking forward in time to understand the complete meaning of these people. This is exactly why Paul, who quotes our text in Romans, sees that the physical remnant of Jews is only typological of a greater remnant. This greater remnant is you and I, if you are a Christian! In Romans 9, Paul tells us immediately after quoting Isaiah 10:22 in terms that cannot be misunderstood, "That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone," which is Christ (Rom 9:30-32). The remnant comes in Christ!

The life of Christ the Stumbling Stone now becomes the next stop on our journey. He lived in Israel and in Egypt. His ministry began in the northern regions of Israel and came to a bloody end just outside the city of Jerusalem on a small mountain called Calvary. But this was not the end for Christ, for his blood speaks better than the blood of Abel, and as Seth was a type of resurrection of Abel who himself is a type of Christ in his death, so to Christ was raised from the dead. Within a mere 40 days of remaining on this earth, Christ ascended into heaven and is even now seated at the right hand of the Father. This is where Christ now is, in heaven!

hell

Our journey must now follow in his path. But we must first take a short detour away from our final destination to consider the implications of Assyria's judgment. For you see, Assyria too points us forward because her destruction likewise takes place "on that day." So we must travel to the everlasting abode of a wicked for a moment. We haven't described the places we have been, but we must do so now. This is such a terrible place to be that if you really understand what it is like, there is no possible way you would ever want to come here again. This is a place of absolute darkness. Anyone who has been caving understands how completely suffocating and terrifying absolute darkness is after only a short time. But this is also a place of great fire and torment. Jesus said of this place, "It is better for you that one of the parts of your

body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell" (Mt 5:29). Here both the body and the soul are eternally destroyed, not in annihilation, but in everlasting torment. This is a place where the worm does not die though the heat is searing. Here you remain alive forever without hope, without rescue, without peace, in pain, in torment of soul, and with an eternity to do but nothing but consider how horrible your life now is. Nothing on this earth can prepare you for the place that we now consider. For there is not a place you can go on this earth where the love of God does not now extend in some fashion. But in this place, you will experience no love from God, no help from your sin, and no mercy in judgment. Nothing that happened to Egypt and Assyria in this text – not the lopping off of your head, not the drowning in a flood – nothing can prepare you for the doom that awaits those that end up in this place. Assyria's destruction is only a mere shadow of everlasting hell that awaits the enemies of God, even as the physical remnant of Jews is only a shadow of the everlasting people of God that are called by him to spiritual salvation.

heaven

I do not want to linger in hell and I guess you do not either. But how can one escape this place? There is only one way. You must trust in Jesus Christ to rescue you from this destruction that displays God's righteousness most perfectly. I was reminded this week about how important it is to understand how to escape this place. There are so many gimmicks out there that supposedly allow you to get out of hell and so many bad analogies that people try and get fooled into trusting rather than trusting in Christ.

Understand that there is no work you can do and no thing you can say that will keep you from this place, save one: and this is a gift of God. It is difficult to use this language lest you think I am saying that faith is the same as a work. On the other hand, I fear that if you do not think faith is something you do that you may conclude that you do not have to exercise faith at all. Neither position is acceptable. The bible commands you to repent and to trust that Jesus Christ has already been here for you, taken your punishment upon his body, satisfied the justice and righteousness of God towards you in his own death... and you must place all of your confidence in the fact that as God raised him from the dead, so too he will raise all who believe and hope in his rescue for them from this place. This is what faith is.

This is not easy, but impossible to anyone seeking to leave this place on their own merit thinking that they can merely add-on this one more work of faith to their list. God simply doesn't care about what you do. All he looks at is Christ's work and whether or not you are trusting in that work to bring you to heaven. You have to believe the truth that is pictured for you in Isaiah's own words. God will rescue those who live by faith from destruction. And they will inherit all of the promises given to Abraham in their full eschatological sense. The land points us to the world in the new heavens and new earth. The descendent points us to people of many nations that will with one accord shout for joy at the triumph of the lamb of God. The burden will one day be totally removed, as all evil is placed under God's feet and he eliminates all sin from this world, keeping us from being our own worst enemies.

But you see, all of this is even now taking place. How so you ask? Simple. It all takes place in Jesus Christ and as you are united to him by faith alone. Let's complete our journey. Where does Jesus *now* live? In heavenly places. Eph 1:20 says, "when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places." But Jesus *position* – his place of residence heaven – is itself nothing but a picture for you of his own person. What is heaven if not the presence

of God? Now listen carefully lest you miss the destination that you have arrived at truly and really in Christ. Ephesians also tells us that we have been "raised up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." Do you understand the ramifications of this? Do you see how the age to come and the present age presently overlap here? Do you see how the last days are here now? You, Christian, are even now seated in Christ and Christ is now seated in heavenly places. Thus, YOU live in heavenly places. The hope of the remnant here, it is YOUR hope. But what they only hoped for, you actually have received!

You think to yourself, no I haven't. What do I have? Certainly not the land. I live in Longmont or Boulder. But that is not what the text says. You do not live in Boulder, you are only traveling *through* it. You actually live in heavenly places. You see, the truth of the matter is this, "you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood." All of this is found in Christ. No matter what they are, they are yes in Christ. And they are all here for you now, but not yet in complete fulfillment. Do you seek security in Christ? Do you worry about your salvation here and now, wondering if you are in or out? Then believe these things and stop worrying. Stop doubting and believe.

It is virtually impossible for me to explain to you the importance of this truth for you life. It touches on absolutely everything you do from how you keep yourself from idolizing the things of this world, to how you worship God now, to how you work out your salvation with fear and trembling to even how you walk your dog or cook your food.

For our sake this morning, it makes all the difference for how you read the OT, including this great text in Isaiah 10. When you come to the Scripture, look at how it points you to Christ and to your eternal destination even as we have done this morning on our short journey together. Nothing I have said is out of line with either Isaiah's words or the NT's words. When you understand that home is not just a future, but a present reality – understand also that all of your longings, all of your frustrations, all of your emptiness, all of your failures, all of your sufferings, all of your desires are found in Jesus Christ. God has worked all of redemptive history in this same way. It always points you to the truth of your even now realized destination if you are in Christ. I hope you can see that the story – the journey we have taken this morning is the application, because it is Jesus Christ – who is your hope of glory and of obedience in this life.

The final words of Isaiah 10 say, "Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One." To quote Edward Young, "Only in the return of the remnant to the Mighty God Jesus Christ can there be deliverance." See how God has orchestrated redemptive history to point you ever forward to Christ, ever upward to heavenly place, and ever outward away from yourself. Do you trust him today?