

ISA 10:5 Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger
And the staff in whose hands is My indignation, [6] I send it against a godless nation
And commission it against the people of My fury
To capture booty and to seize plunder,
And to trample them down like mud in the streets. [7] Yet it does not so intend
Nor does it plan so in its heart,
But rather it is its purpose to destroy,
And to cut off many nations. [8] For it says, "Are not my princes all kings? [9] "Is not Calno like Carchemish,
Or Hamath like Arpad,
Or Samaria like Damascus? [10] "As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols,
Whose graven images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria, [11] Shall I not do to Jerusalem and her images
Just as I have done to Samaria and her idols?"

ISA 10:12 So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will say, "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness." [13] For he has said,
"By the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did this,
For I have understanding;
And I removed the boundaries of the peoples,
And plundered their treasures,
And like a mighty man I brought down their inhabitants, [14] And my hand reached to the riches of the peoples like a nest,
And as one gathers abandoned eggs, I gathered all the earth;
And there was not one that flapped its wing or opened its beak or chirped."

ISA 10:15 Is the axe to boast itself over the one who chops with it?
Is the saw to exalt itself over the one who wields it?
That would be like a club wielding those who lift it,
Or like a rod lifting him who is not wood. [16] Therefore the Lord, the GOD of hosts, will send a wasting disease among his stout warriors;
And under his glory a fire will be kindled like a burning flame. [17] And the light of Israel will become a fire and his Holy One a flame,
And it will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in a single day. [18] And He will destroy the glory of his forest and of his fruitful garden, both soul and body;
And it will be as when a sick man wastes away. [19] And the rest of the trees of his forest will be so small in number
That a child could write them down.

Summary: We live in the "Me" generation. Everything is about the holy human trinity: My, Myself, and I. This works itself out in what we do and even in how we think we are saved. The King of Assyria had a serious "Me" complex. It got to the point where he exalted himself as High King of Heaven, while blasphemously calling Israel's God and idol. God will not leave those who live in pride like this unpunished. Assyria's pride is a Satanic pride. Her destruction is a fateful reminder of how God will finally deal with all the unrighteous, even sending them to hell. But he will leave even a remnant from Assyria. There is still time even now to repent.

Trampled Down Like Mud in the Street Isaiah 10:5-19

What are the people of this world to God? We'll see today just exactly what they are apart from Jesus Christ. Most people run about saying, "We are free, free to do anything we wish." They boast about their achievements, their power, even their salvation. All of the things they have gives them a perception of pure, autonomous freedom. (**Autonomous = Not controlled by others or by outside forces**). Don't go getting the impression that I think all freedom is bad. Not at all. **I'm not talking about freedom from dictators and other men.** I'm not talking about national freedoms: the freedom to buy property, to bear arms, to say what you wish without fear of government retaliation. Freedom from ruthless men is not only an American Right; it is as Thomas Jefferson said (I believe rightly so) our "**inalienable right**." As image bearers of God we are endowed by our Creator with the Right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in this world.

Freedom and liberty from oppressive governments or from systems of slavery is the basic storyline of the Old Testament people of Israel. So obviously freedom is a major biblical theme. It was God's blessing that freed the people from Pharaoh, even as it must be looked at as God's blessing when any people are freed from the ruthless oppression of others. The gospel is all about freedom. Christian liberty on those matters that are not essential – as Paul says, "**matters of food and drink and religious observances**" are *essential* to the gospel, not peripheral. It is for freedom

that Christ has set you free, Paul loudly proclaims to the Galatians. So the type of freedom we are talking about is clearly not the freedom from other men.

So when people run around saying that they are "free," we are clearly talking about something else. In the bible, we learn that our freedom in Christ also brings slavery, slavery to God. It is failure to submit to God that is the heart and soul of [Isaiah 10:5-19](#). We are talking here about a prideful arrogance that says, "I am the master of my own destiny." It boasts in its own achievements. It fails to give glory and praise and honor to God. It says, "I plan my course and I determine my steps." Sometimes, this arrogance is hidden under religious garbs so that the sympathetic ear will think it is a holy statement rather than one of haughtiness. From time to time we hear very religious people say things like "God doesn't want puppets" or "God gave me freewill" or whatever. Now, we need to be patient with folks remembering always our own place before God's majestic throne and how we also fall short of his glory, but these sorts of attitudes come from what I call a lack of biblical oxygen. They are well above timberline in arrogance and self-centeredness.

Altitude Sickness

I was thinking about how what happens to a body at altitude is a perfect analogy for what happens to a person spiritually because of pride. Pride and height are often talked about together. God says Israel was "proud of its height" ([Eze 31:10](#)). James says a "brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position" ([James 1:9](#)). Humility is the exact opposite of pride, because humility is to think lowly of yourself. God LIFTS UP the humble, but he BRINGS DOWN the proud ([Ps 18:27](#), [Isa 2:9](#), [23:9](#), [James 4:10](#) etc.).

Since we live in Colorado, I thought this would be fun for us to learn about while also giving you a good analogy that perhaps you might remember the next time you climb or drive up the mountains. You all know about some of the effects of altitude upon a body. The most obvious thing you notice is how the higher you go, the harder you breath. Some of you may experience headaches or nausea. People think there is less % of oxygen at higher elevations. But this is not exactly true. There is the same 21% oxygen at sea level as there is on the top of Everest. The problem is that the air, because of gravity, is not compressed as much at higher elevations as it is a sea level. It turn, there is less all around stuff to breath. You simply need more air to get that oxygen into your system in order to stay alive. Breathing hard is the body's way of trying to get more oxygen into its system to feed your cells.

But breathing hard has a bad side effect. Every time you breath out you are exhaling carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide adjusts the acidity of the blood. "Overbreathing 'washes out' carbon dioxide, causing low acidity... this cannot be tolerated for long and it can cause light-headedness, fainting, spasm, and death."¹ The weak acidity of the body from lack of CO₂ must be compensated by the body so that it can retreat to its normal state of balance.

What the body does to compensate is slow down metabolism. This conserves oxygen, but also decreases energy for heat or action. That's why it is so easy to get frostbite at high altitude. You have both the cold (which also slows metabolism) and the altitude working against you. As the body is trying to adjust, the response time is sometimes not fast enough and the result is headaches or dizziness or nausea. But sometimes (especially at increasingly higher altitudes) these symptoms get worse. Hypoxia and Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) are more severe cases of oxygen deprivation.

This is where it can begin to get dangerous as opposed to just annoying. "AMS can develop into the more serious High-Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE) when the small amount of fluid that appears in most lungs at altitude is not absorbed normally. Instead, it accumulates, obstructing the flow of oxygen... in effect drowning the victim in his own fluids." You can tell when a person gets HAPE because they get a hacking bloody cough. High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE) is the worse case, because excess fluid gets onto the brain. The only hope for a person with Edema is to get them down from altitude *immediately*. HACE is dangerous for another reason. The person with it often can't tell that they have it because it effects the brain including their judgment,

¹ Broughton Coburn, *Everest: Mountain Without Mercy*, P. 122.

perception, memory, and will. Thus, at the exact time you need to get down, you can't figure that very simple fact out!

Perhaps this illustration helps you understand why pride is such a dangerous thing. It blinds the person's own senses, so that they cannot even tell how high they are, and that if they do not humble themselves immediately, they will die of High Altitude Spiritual Edema. Arrogant pride is something that all people face. [Freewill theology is a particularly Christian symptom of this larger problem](#) (and it is indirectly addressed in this text so I'm going to talk about it a little bit this morning). Both bring a person on a steady ascent up a never-ending mountain. The longer it persists, the higher up your own mountain you go. But the higher you go, the less spiritual oxygen is available for you to breath. You think you are getting closer to God, but the truth is, you are not close at all. Finally, you may reach the point where you are no longer able to even understand that you have contracted Edema. This was Assyria's very problem as it is for many in our own day. To Assyria we now turn.

Assyria

Isaiah has now taken his destructive gaze off of Israel and placed it upon the Assyrian Empire. This is the first time in the book where someone other than God's people are addressed. You will recall that it was Assyria, that nation in modern day Iraq, that history shows took over the Northern State of Israel, and swept down even into Judah, but not entirely overthrowing it. Perhaps you remember names like [Tiglath-Pileser](#), [Shalmaneser](#), [Sargon](#), [Sennacherib](#), [Esarhaddon](#), and [Ashurbanipal](#) from your biblical history. Theirs were the faces of doom and evil to all Jews. These are the Assyrians.

["Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger
And the staff in whose hands is My indignation"](#) (10:5).

This begins the prophesy against Assyria by the Isaiah the man of God. Now, half of what we will look at this morning revolves around the theology of this verse. The other half revolves around what we have just seen in the introduction: pride and arrogance in thinking we are actually free from God, however that may play itself out. This is how the king of Assyria thought about it, ["By the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did this, For I have understanding, and I removed the boundaries of the peoples, and plundered their treasures, And like a mighty man I brought down their inhabitants"](#) (10:13).

Put these two verses together and you get - at the same time - Assyria saying ["I did this"](#) and God saying ["woe to you for thinking that you did this."](#) Putting this is common theological language you have here the biblical themes of God's sovereignty and human responsibility (hiding behind the misnomer called freewill).

Verse 5

Verse 5 is really quite interesting. God pronounces woe upon a people that are the rod of His anger. I want you to think carefully about this, because what you see in this very first verse is something that many people do not think is even possible. [You have God getting mad at someone who did exactly what God made him do!](#)

What does it mean to be God's rod or the staff in God's hands? First of all, if you are a rod or a staff - then you are a tool. God is raising you just like Moses raised his staff to part the Red Sea or to strike the rock. Did that staff put up any resistance? Did it fight back and say, ["Moses, I don't want you to make me hit that rock."](#) Of course not, it was a staff! When we think about "who" parted the sea, do we normally think of the staff or Moses? The staff only instrumentally did it. But Moses was the efficient cause of it. Well, that's exactly how it is with Assyria. He is God's rod and his staff. God lifts him whenever he pleases and he does exactly what God decrees for him to do. Though he was God's instrument, he should not have boasted in anything he did, but merely acted like a servant in the hands of God Most High.

Verse 15

Perhaps this would be a good place for me to insert verse 15 and the theology that lies behind it. [Verse 15](#) says, ["Is the axe to boast itself over the one who chops with it? Is the saw to exalt itself over the one who wield its? That would be like a club wielding those who lift it, Or like a rod lifting](#)

him who is not wood.” I trust that you can see the great similarities between the rod and staff of verse 5 and the axe and saw in the hands of the chopper or the wielder here. These verses remind me of another set of verses. In Romans 9 Paul says, “Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?” (Rom 9:21). Paul gets this illustration from Jeremiah. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel” (Jer 18:4). These verses talk about freewill in salvation, rather than freewill in destroying nations. But ultimately, its all the same root of pride. Its all about me doing and being able to boast about it.

All of these images are similar. Everyone of them is in the hands of God. The rod and the staff, the ax and the saw, the pot and the clay, all have done to them exactly what God wants to do to them. Many people will not like the direction I am about to take this (and I want to warn you even here that everything in this sermon must be viewed as a whole, not as segmented parts), so I offer the following question for your own examination. Are we allowed to change the meaning of the Scripture because we do not like its implication?

I want to bring this down to the level of the Christian, because I am talking this morning to almost all Christians. We are all arrogant in many ways, aren't we? We boast about our own opinions on things, our own freedom to not have to obey God's law, our own power in positions of authority of whatever. But there is a particular pride that shows itself in so much of evangelicalism. Talking about this really seems to hit the same nerve that I think Isaiah was trying to hit with the king of Assyria. People say, “God does not want puppets.” I don't know how many times I have heard this said before. I don't know what book or movie they are all watching, but it must be some secret society that millions of people are all in, but that I wasn't invited to. Oddly, though everyone seems to think it, to the best of my knowledge, that isn't in the Bible.

I can't figure this out. Friends, what is a rod or a staff in God's hand, an axe that he chops with, a saw that he wields, a lump of clay that he forms, or a pot that he has made if not the same thing as a puppet that God makes do whatever he wishes? Honestly. What is the difference? I know of none, absolutely none. Someone will say that the analogy is limited. Granted. But if this isn't the exact point that the analogy is trying to make, then what is? With regard to this very issue, this is the point of the analogy. Many Christians have a problem with freewill in salvation because they freewill theology seeps into everything else they do to. For example, we think God doesn't want puppets in the realm of our toothpaste or our choice of shoe to wear or the color car we buy or the meal we prepare for supper that night. God leaves this up to us. But the logical implication for God is that if He doesn't care about little things, then he doesn't care about big things either. “If you can't be trusted with little things, how much more the big ones?” So freewill in the salvation, the destiny of nations, the rise of wicked rulers... we just naturally think this in our hands just like these little things.

It was Assyria's own failure to recognize this exact fact that made her well up with pride, stumble from her lofty mountain top, and cause God's anger to come down upon her. In her own way, Assyria was running around saying, “God doesn't want puppets.” And she fell in her arrogant presumption. I tell you the truth now, whether you like it or not, we are as puppets in God's hand in that he does whatever he wants to with the people's of the earth – WHATEVER he wants.

Verse 6

Do you need proof of this? Look no further than verse 6. Whatever God does is by definition good. This includes making Assyria be the rod of *his anger*, the staff of His *indignation*. Look at what this entailed. Look at everything Assyria was not only permitted to do, but sent to do. “I send [Assyria] against a godless nation and commission it against the people of My fury, To capture booty and to seize plunder, And to trample them down like mud in the streets.” Understand this very clearly. God sent Assyria. That's what the text says. God commissioned it. They were called by God for a very specific task. They were to go against the people of God's fury. Assyria was to capture the riches of Israel, to seize her plunder, and to trample them down like mud in the streets. Assyria is to be God's instrument in this world to carry out God's fury. And had she done only what she was commissioned to do, we have to assume that everything would have been fine for Assyria, because God does not seek retribution for doing something that he commands. There could be nothing more foolish than to think such a thing.

But alas. Assyria did not do only what she was commissioned to do. Even if she knew that she was being sent to destroy Israel (which we get no hint of from Scripture), she failed in two ways. Her **intent** was different from God's intent. And she went beyond the bounds of her call by attacking **many nations**. In these ways, she stepped over the line that was drawn for her. And I know what some of you are thinking even now. Those of you who are unwilling to trust the Scripture by faith alone will automatically think that I am contradicting everything I have just said about people doing exactly what God decrees and being nothing but puppets in his hands. (All this means is that the analogy is limited).

So now we need to understand perhaps even more carefully than before *why* God pronounces *woe* upon Assyria. Not because she destroyed Israel, but because her **purposes** and **intent** were not godly. There is nothing about what I have said that contradicts this. God planned for Assyria to destroy Israel and this is exactly what she did. She plundered, she sacked, and she trampled the people down like mud in the streets. That's an historical fact. This is the sense in which all men are in fact puppets. We DO exactly what God wants us to do. We can't avoid it, and to think we can is sheer stupidity.

Those with an unwillingness – on either side of this matter – to trust God will have to throw verses 6 and 7 out of their Bibles. Because you see, for as hard core on God's sovereignty that verse 6 is, verse 7 is just as hard core on the human responsibility side of things.

Now, responsibility does not mean *ability*. It is the philosopher, not the biblical theologian who thinks this way. Responsibility for Assyria did not mean that she had the freewill and capacity to actually not carry out **verse 6**. She *had* to trample the people like mud in the streets because this is what God decreed for her to do. We will not look at these verses this week other than to mention them here. "Destruction has been **decreed**, overwhelming and righteous. The Lord, the LORD Almighty, will carry out the destruction **decreed** upon the whole land" (10:2-23). 14:24 completes our thought by God's own mouth, "The LORD Almighty has sworn, 'Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand.'"

Nevertheless, **we are not told that God decreed the attitude** that this wicked nation was to have in carrying out God's plans. This is the mystery. God expects that our attitude will fall in line with his law. In fact, God's laws apply to all people not just Israel, and the Assyrians broke God's moral law in doing these things. We will see how in a minute. **It is always to the law, and not the decree to which people are held accountable**. It is just like he told Cain, "If you do right, will you not be accepted?" (Gen 4:7). Carrying out the decree was right. Acting immorally in the process was not. Can I explain how these things interact without contradiction? Perhaps if I was there when God set the boundary for the sea, or if I could grab the leviathan by the tail or if I knew how far the universe extended or if could fathom how life is created, I might be able to explain them to you. But I cannot. I am a brute and I can only trust God's word by faith because I know that he can explain them and in his mind there is no contradiction. All I know is that I must affirm the decree and I must affirm the moral culpability of man that seeks to do God's things with wicked intent. It is even as it says in Acts 2:23, "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross." You see, it is what all men in fact know (but suppress) about right and wrong that makes God pronounce woe here. It is not that they carried out the decree exactly as God desired.

Verse 7

We begin to see this play itself out in **verse 7**. "It [Assyria] does not so *intend*, Nor does it *plan* so in its heart, But rather it is its *purpose* to destroy and to cut off many nations." In this word "intend" we see the classic phrase that Joseph gave to his brothers playing out again. "And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive" (Gen 50:20). This is why I said this is moral, not a decretal problem for the Assyrians. Their intention is different from God's intention. Their plans are not God's plans. Their purposes are not God's purposes. There are two wills are in conflict with one another here on the level of law, not the level of decree.

Again, this is not to be interpreted as if I am saying that the king of Assyria has a freewill, as if he could have actually placed his will in line with God's on this moral issue. **Responsibility does not mean ability. It means accountability.** Because he was wicked from birth and a child of Adam,

the Assyrian had no possible way to change his wicked intentions apart from God's direct intervention in grace. But God did not give grace to this people. In fact, he did not even tell them that He was using them against Israel!

What was else will a person living in darkness do, but continue to live in darkness. Though she should have sought to destroy Israel for breaking covenant with God, should have sought it for God's glory, and should have stopped with Israel; Assyria did just the opposite. Do you see what the Assyrian did? The king did not plan God's plans, but his own. That's what the text says. God sent him to destroy Israel. *He was bent* on cutting off and destroying "many nations." This was not his calling, and for it, he is about to himself be destroyed.

Verse 8-11

Verses 8-11 give us a glimpse at just how arrogant and demonic the Assyrian empire actually was. It starts bad and gets worse, which is pretty typical of all sin. The Assyrian said to himself. "Are not my princes all kings? Is not Calno like Carchemish, or Hamath like Arpad, or Samaria like Damascus?" (vs. 8-9). Even the princes of Assyria were as kings compared to the little rulers of those lands that Assyria was conquering with ease and speed. Immediately, then, we see here just how highly the King of Assyria thought of himself.

"If my princes are kings, what does that make me," he thought to himself. "It makes me the High King." And just as a good pagan Egyptian Pharaoh thought of himself so long ago, it makes the King of Assyria: The High King of *Heaven and Earth*. This is bragging taken to a whole different level. The names of the fallen cities where these little, measly kings resided are interesting because they move geographically from very far away from Jerusalem to bordering right on it. In this way the King is not so subtly saying, "I'm coming to get you next!"

If it is bad to think of yourself as High King of heaven and earth, it is worse to think of Yahweh as a mere helpless idol. And this is clearly that the Assyrian thought. *Verses 10-11* say, "As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols, whose graven images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria, shall I not do to Jerusalem and her images just as I have done to Samaria and her idols?"

There are several important things to say about this verse. First, Assyria was sent to Israel, not to Judah. Yet, here we see the king going for the heart of Judah: Jerusalem. This was out of line. Second, this surely would have brought fear and trembling to the people of Judah, and this was the hope of this ancient Hitler. God will address this troublesome thought for the Jew in a moment, so stand by. Finally, these words of the Assyrian king prove that he thinks about as highly of Jerusalem's God as he does any of the other gods who were completely unable to protect their people from the only real god of this earth: Himself.

See? "My hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols" and destroyed them, the king says. "But their graven images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria." Jerusalem had abandoned the true worship of Yahweh for the worship of the nations around them, including *Baal, Marduk, Hadad and Asherah*. One of the things this teaches you and I is that when God's people give up true worship for false worship, the pagans of the world very quickly learn about it. Often times, they are wiser than God's own people. They recognize when his people are trusting in worthless idols, because they know that their own powerful hands can crush our idols in a heartbeat. Perhaps God's church ought to think twice before she so quickly adopts the Baal's of modern society, whether it be in the corporate worship of God or the private temples of our own homes. It was after all this very reason why Israel had become the people of his fury in the first place. "Shall I not do to Jerusalem and her images just as I have done to Samaria and her idols?" E. Young says it brilliantly, "Why," she addresses Israel, "do you think that Yahweh your god can protect you? The nations round about whose gods you have called idols, have each had gods, but they have all been deceived in their gods. With you too it will be the same. Just as my hand, my powerful hand, has found the idol kingdoms, kingdoms whose images exceeded those of Jerusalem and Samaria, much more will it find Jerusalem and Samaria themselves." Thus, in boasting blasphemy Assyria designates the holy Yahweh of hosts an idol.²

² Young, *Isaiah* Vol 1, 363.

Let me now ask you a question. Do you seriously think that God, the Real King of Heaven and Earth is going to stand by and watch his name be mocked by the very agent that he used to carry out his vengeance? Its terribly ironic that Assyria would actually be so foolish as to think of God as an Idol when the reality of the situation was that God was using Assyria to do His bidding!

Of course God is not going to stand by and watch his name be trampled along with his people in the mud. So Assyria is to become a type of what will happen to all people who mock and ridicule the Lord of Hosts, saying he's just an idol, that he doesn't really exist, that he is powerless, that he doesn't defend himself, that he doesn't care about his people. This is the eschatological meaning of Assyria's destruction. She serves as a warning to all unbelief that one day God will destroy all of the nations and people and build upon them his own eternal kingdom. God will be exalted and lifted up, but men will be brought down low.

Verse 12

God is a covenant God and even in the midst of his fury, he remembers his promises to his people Israel. It says in [verse 12](#) that he will complete his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem. God's anger will only last a short time against them. Such is the good news for all of God's people. Though in his displeasure he chastens and disciplines us, he still does this in love for his people. And this wrath will not last forever. But against Assyria and all unrighteous people who refuse acknowledge God's sovereignty and instead exalt their own choices and supposed autonomy from him, God will not be so merciful.

God says, "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness." It is for these very things, then, that God is truly going to punish Assyria. And we know from recorded history (and by the way, the very fact that history validates all of these things as truth is one of the most mind boggling things to me as to why unbelievers continue even in our own day to say that God is not going to judge their own sin. Truly, the fool alone says in his heart there is no God. Those who refuse to trust Christ simply refuse to look at the facts of history, or logic, of archeology, of prophesy and fulfillment, and of their own ruined and troubled lives that exist because of their own faithlessness) that Assyria was destroyed, exactly as predicted here by the Babylonians about a century later.

The king has said, "By the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did this, for I have understanding and I removed the boundaries of the peoples, and plundered their treasures, and like a mighty man I brought down their inhabitants, and my hand reached to the riches of the peoples like a nest, and as one gathers abandoned eggs, I gathered all the earth; and there was not one that flapped its wing or opened its beak or chirped."

Let me compare for you the words of the king to the words of the KING of KINGS. Who has wisdom? [Colossians 2:3](#), "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." So much for that boast from the king. Where does understanding come from? "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" ([Prov 9:10](#)). Isaiah is clearly mocking the king by saying that the truth of the matter is that he doesn't actually know anything!

Its funny that the king would say that he moved the boundaries of the peoples when Luke says, "[God] made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation." ([Acts 17:25](#)). The Assyrian fool thought he brought down the inhabitants of Israel? Another wicked king learned this lesson the hard way. After living for 7 years as a wild animal inside of an insane mind, Nebuchadnezzar relented and confessed, "And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing... and He is able to humble those who walk in pride" ([Dan 4:35, 37](#)). It is God, and not the king of Assyria who hovers over the earth and gathers people into his kingdom to in any way the He sees fit.

All of this bragging sounds familiar to another king that will arise later in this book. King Cyrus is prophesied by name. And after an almost identical tirade going on about his own majesty, the king is brought to nothing. So God says to Cyrus, ""Have you not heard. Long ago I did it, From ancient times I planned it. Now I have brought it to pass, That you should turn fortified cities into

ruinous heaps" (1 Sam 37:26). The same thing is found in the King of Babel in chapter 14. Ultimately, Geerhardus Vos is right when he says this. "The highest embodiment that this sin of pride had found, to the far-reaching vision of Isaiah, was in that King of Babel. "Pride is in its essence a form of self-deification. Satanic sin, a type of Satan, has been found in the King of Babel [The King of Babel is in Isaiah 14 called Lucifer]."³ You want to know why the church needs to take pride, including the pride that comes in thinking you chose your own salvation, so seriously? It is because this is a Satanic sin. It is the very sin that *caused* sin. It is the root of all sin. And it is very, very wicked. This is serious business.

Verses 16-19

So the Assyrian truly is nothing but the ax in God's hand, the saw that he uses to chop down his own rebellious people Israel. But, "The Lord, the God of hosts (the title of the warrior God), will send a wasting disease among his stout warriors; and under his glory a fire will be kindled like a burning flame. And the light of Israel will become a fire and his Holy One a flame, and it will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in a single day. And He will destroy the glory of his forest and of his fruitful garden, both soul and body, And it will be as when a sick man wastes away. And the rest of the trees of his forest will be so small in number that a child could write them down."

Hell

You see from these last verses how it is that Assyria's destruction foreshadows eschatological destruction in hell. It is Christ himself – the light of Israel and the Holy One – who will be for those in hell a fire and a flame. He will burn and devour them even as He did the king of Assyria here. It will be like a wasting disease among stout warriors. It will be a burning flame. It will destroy both soul and body. For Assyria, even those little kings who rule like trees in a forest will be destroyed. There will be no fruit brought forth in this place.

But there is a hint even here of good news. Though hell is the ultimate reality behind this destruction, the time for hell has not yet come for the living. There is still an opportunity to repent. God promises even here, even for Assyria, that there will be a very small number of trees that he will not burn up. This number will be so small that even a child could write them down. The immediate impact of Assyria's own fall would be absolutely devastating. But this is not the end, even for the people of Assyria.

There is to be a new beginning even for them as there is for Israel. This new beginning comes to all people the same way: through Jesus Christ. If you are a person who sits here week after week not trusting Christ, though you hear the pleas to do so, may *this* be the week for you to turn to him. I'm going to skip ahead some 9 chapters. Hear the good news of Isaiah 19 concerning Assyria now, come alive, and believe upon Christ because of these words.

"In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance." (Isa 19:23-25). May God be pleased to fulfill such a promise in our own hearing of it today, which is fulfilled in the coming of the little child Jesus Christ.

³ Vos, *Biblical Theology*, p. 281.