Isaiah 10:26–34 — As in the Day of Midian

The Destruction of the Assyrian, His March on Jerusalem, and the Mighty One Who Fells the Forest

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Scripture Reading: Isaiah 10:26–34

> *"And the LORD of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and as his rod was upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt.*
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> *And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.*
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> *He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron; at Michmash he hath laid up his carriages… As yet shall he remain at Nob that day: he shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.*
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> *Behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled. And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one."*

The Chapters as a Whole: 10 and 11 Together

The end of chapter 10 and the beginning of chapter 11 belong together. In the closing verses of chapter 10, the Assyrian — Israel's great enemy — is prominent and threatening, marching toward Jerusalem. Then chapter 11 opens: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." The enemy at the end of 10 and the Deliverer at the

beginning of 11 stand side by side — as if to say, this is the moment of Israel's darkest extremity, and this is the one who meets it. The two chapters together form one movement: the threat of the Assyrian, and the reign of the Messiah.

According to the Slaughter of Midian at the Rock of Oreb

The scourge the Lord will stir up for the Assyrian is compared to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb (Judges 7–8). In Gideon's day, the Lord reduced the army of Israel from thirty-two thousand to three hundred, so that no one could claim the victory for human strength. Three hundred trumpets, three hundred torches in three hundred earthen vessels — and in the confusion of the middle watch of the night, the whole host of Midian ran and cried and fled. The two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, were taken: Oreb was slain upon the rock of Oreb, Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb.

Psalm 83:11 picks this up as a prayer: "Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb." The psalmist's prayer is answered by the prophetic word in Isaiah: the Assyrian will be destroyed as Midian was at the rock of Oreb. The character of the victory matters: not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord (Zechariah 4:6). Jonathan had said it before Gideon: "There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few" (1 Samuel 14:6). These two men — Gideon with his 300, Jonathan with his armour-bearer alone — are cut from the same cloth. Both understood that the victory belongs to the Lord regardless of the size of the instrument.

The two princes of Midian met their end at two symbolic places: one at a rock, one at a winepress. The rock speaks of the strength that is Christ; the winepress is a place of pressing and self-judgment, where the fruit of God passes through a process of testing. These are the instruments through which God accomplishes his purposes — not the great arm of flesh, not the vast confederacy, but the remnant that relies on the rock of Christ and is willing to pass through the press.

The Yoke Destroyed Because of the Anointing

Verse 27 gives the reason for the destruction of the Assyrian and the removal of his yoke from Israel's neck: "the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing." This is a remarkable sentence. It is not because of Israel's merit, or the pathetic circumstances of the remnant, or even because of God's mercy alone in general terms. The specific reason is the anointing — the Christ, the Anointed One. Psalm 2:6 in J.N. Darby's translation: "I have anointed my king upon Zion, the hill of my holiness." It is God's purpose to set his Anointed as king over all the earth. The Assyrian and his confederacy are an obstacle and a barrier to the gathering together in one of all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:10). Therefore they must be removed — not for any other immediate reason, but because of the anointing.

Psalm 83:18 expresses the same truth from another angle: that men may know "that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth." The honour of Jehovah is what is at stake. When God gets his place, his people get their blessing. Not before, and not otherwise. Psalm 132 gives the order: first the ark comes to its place, then there is the unity and the blessing of Psalm 133. The anointing first; then the burden removed.

The March of the Assyrian: Place Names from North to South

Verses 28 through 32 trace the march of the Assyrian southward toward Jerusalem, place by place: Aiath, Migron, Michmash, Geba, Ramah, Gibeah, Gallim, Laish, Anathoth, Madmenah, Gebim, Nob. These names follow one another from north to south, like the place names on a road map read from top to bottom — a route of approach to Jerusalem from the north.

The same names appear in a different context in 1 Samuel 14, at Michmash, where Jonathan and his armour-bearer attacked the Philistine garrison. "There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few" — Jonathan's word from

Michmash is the same lesson the whole passage teaches about Gideon and his 300. Jonathan, Gideon, and the remnant of Israel at the end — all three express the same principle.

The march ends at Nob. Nob was the place where the priestly community lived after the destruction of Shiloh — the same city that Doeg the Edomite slaughtered at the direction of Saul. That Nob is singled out in the Assyrian's march, and receives his special attention, may speak to something: the places associated with the priestly presence of God are always targets of the enemy's particular hatred. At the end of his march, he stands at Nob and shakes his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem. That gesture of contempt is the last act before the Lord's response.

The Lord Shall Lop the Bough with Terror

Verses 33 and 34 describe the Lord's answer to that shaken hand. Behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror. The high ones of stature shall be hewn down. The haughty shall be humbled. The thickets of the forest shall be cut down with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.

Psalm 110:5 is closely connected: "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath." The one sitting at Jehovah's right hand is Adonai — and Adonai is Jehovah, as Isaiah 6 made clear. Here in verse 33 it is Adonai, the Lord, who acts — and he is the Lord of hosts simultaneously. He strikes through kings personally, as we see in Daniel 8, in Revelation 19 with the rider on the white horse, and in Psalm 110. His enemies will be made his footstool through the instrumentality of the one who sits at Jehovah's right hand.

The sequence from north to south — the Assyrian sweeping down through Palestine, into Egypt and Ethiopia, then hearing tidings from the north and east and returning — described in Daniel 11, meets its conclusion when the Lord himself comes out of Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, having trodden the

winepress alone (Isaiah 63). The lamb of Revelation becomes the lion of the tribe of Judah. Twenty-eight times in Revelation the Lord Jesus is spoken of as the Lamb; yet it is the Lion of the tribe of Judah who has prevailed. He shall judge the nations, fill the places with dead bodies, and strike through the heads over many countries. He shall not be mocked by the shaking of a hand. The haughty shall be humbled, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

The high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled. The yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.