



# Highlights From the Book of Isaiah

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# The Remnant of Israel (Isaiah 10:20-23)

<sup>20</sup> *At that time those left in Israel, those who remain of the family of Jacob, will no longer rely on a foreign leader that abuses them. Instead they will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.* <sup>21</sup> *A remnant will come back, a remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.* <sup>22</sup> *For though your people, Israel, are as numerous as the sand on the seashore, only a remnant will come back. Destruction has been decreed; just punishment is about to engulf you.* <sup>23</sup> *The Sovereign LORD of Heaven's Armies is certainly ready to carry out the decreed destruction throughout the land.*

# The Surrounding Context of Today's Text

- Today's text is nestled in the middle of a larger section, **Isaiah 10:5–34**, that describes how the Lord is about to turn against Assyria.
- As I see it, this *larger* section breaks down into *four subsections*:
  - **10:5-19** tells us that God will use Assyria as a *tool* over which he has *ultimate* control.
  - **10:20-23 (today's text)** declares that ultimately a *small remnant* of the people of Israel will be delivered from her enemies (including Assyria)
  - **10:24-27** goes on to show that there is no need to Judah fear Assyria.
  - **10:28-34** predicts and describes the *destruction* of Assyria.

# The Remnant Theme in Isaiah

- Remnant is an important concept in biblical theology.
- The term is applied to **three** types of groups:
  - The **first** is simply a **historical** remnant made up of survivors of a catastrophe.
  - The **second** consists of the **faithful** remnant, distinguished from the previous group by their genuine spirituality and true faith relationship with God.
  - The **third** is designated as the **eschatological** remnant, consisting of those of the faithful remnant who go through the cleansing judgments and apocalyptic woes of the end time and emerge **victoriously** after the Day of Yahweh as the recipients of the **everlasting kingdom**.

# The Remnant Theme in Isaiah

- The remnant idea is *central* in the theology of Isaiah.
- “Remnant” in Isaiah carries both the idea of *judgment*, but at the same time *hope*.
- Examples *judgment* regarding the remnant:
  - *Your land is devastated, your cities burned with fire... destroyed by foreign invaders... If the Lord of Heaven’s Armies had not left us a **few survivors**, we would have quickly been like Sodom, we would have become like Gomorrah. (Isaiah 1:7,9)*
  - *Even if only a **tenth of the people remain** in the land, it will again be destroyed (Isaiah 6:13)*
  - *For though your people, Israel, are as numerous as the sand on the seashore, **only a remnant** will come back. Destruction has been decreed; just punishment is about to engulf you. (Isaiah 10:22)*

# The Remnant Theme in Isaiah

- Examples *hope* regarding the remnant:
  - *The Lord will again lift his hand to reclaim the **remnant** of his people from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and the seacoasts.* (Isaiah 11:11)
  - *Those who remain in Judah will take root in the ground and bear fruit. “For **a remnant** will leave Jerusalem; survivors will come out of Mount Zion. The zeal of the Lord of Heaven’s Armies will accomplish this.”* (Isaiah 37:31-32)
- The notions of remnant and faith are *inseparable* in Isaiah:
  - The confrontation of King Ahaz (7:3) by Isaiah and his son Shear-Jashub (“A-Remnant-Shall-Return”) is intended to teach that an attitude of faith, confidence, and trust in Yahweh is essential to the emergence of a remnant (7:2-9)
  - The prophet, his children, and his disciples (8:16-18) are prophetic representatives of the future remnant of faith.

# The Remnant Theme in Isaiah

- The second part of Isaiah gives a saving message to “*all the remnant of the house of Israel*” (Isaiah 46:3) who are left from the political catastrophe.
- They are promised that God will still “carry and save them” (Isaiah 46:4)
- The future hope includes a remnant of non-Israelites “*survivors of the nations*” (Isaiah 45:20) who recognize Yahweh as the true God.
- During the end-time gathering God “*will send survivors [from the Jews] to the nations*” in order to “*declare my glory among the nations*” (Isaiah 66:19).

10:20 ***At that time*** those left in Israel, those who remain of the family of Jacob, will no longer rely on a foreign leader that abuses them. Instead they will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.

- “***At that time***” is a broad term referring to any future time of God’s judgment and/or restoration.
- It does not ***necessarily*** to refer ***just*** to the events of 701 BC when the Assyrian army was destroyed by the LORD as it was laying siege to Jerusalem, nor even to the events of 620-609 BC, when Assyria itself was finally destroyed.
- Rather, here it speaks of a ***future*** time when ***all*** the punishment at the hands of “the nations” will be over and the purified “remnant” of God’s people (see 4:2-6) will be brought home.



10:20 *At that time those left in Israel, those who remain of the family of Jacob, will no longer rely on a foreign leader that abuses them. Instead they will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.*

- Isaiah speaks here of “*those left in Israel, those who remain of the family of Jacob*”.
- The concept of a remnant seems to have been part of Isaiah’s understanding from the *very beginning* of his ministry
- As we saw earlier, this idea is mentioned at the time of Isaiah’s *calling* where it talks about a time of future devastation when “*only a tenth of the people remain in the land*” (6:13).

10:20 *At that time **those left in Israel, those who remain of the family of Jacob**, will no longer rely on a foreign leader that abuses them. Instead they will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.*

- Likewise, the idea of a remnant is embedded in the name of Isaiah's first son "*Shear-Jashub*", which means "a remnant will return."
- There is a *negative* overtone to this name as it applies to Ahaz (Isaiah 7:1-9).
- It points to a *destruction* from which only a small *portion* of Ahaz's people will return.
- Yet it also has a *positive* connotation in its promise that at least *some* will survive.

<sup>10:20</sup> *At that time those left in Israel, **those who remain** of the family of Jacob, **will no longer rely on a foreign leader that abuses them**. Instead they will truly **rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel**.*

- This verse goes on to tell us that this remnant (“*those who remain*”) will be **different** from their predecessors in at least **one** respect:
- They will no longer “*rely on*”, or trust, their worst enemy before they will trust “*the Holy One of Israel*.”
- In that coming day when a handful of survivors return to the land from which they have been exiled, they will **finally** have learned the lesson of trust in the LORD that Isaiah 7-39 focuses on.

10:21 ***A remnant will come back, a remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.***

- In the original Hebrew, the opening phrase, “*a remnant will come back*” is *Shear-Jashub*, the name given to Isaiah’s first son (mentioned in 7:3).
- This “*coming back*” is seen, not simply as that of a *physical* return from exile, but as a *spiritual* return in *repentance* to “*the mighty God*”.
- “*Mighty God*” is one of the names of the Messiah in 9:6, though I would not *necessarily* see this as a *direct citation* of that verse.
- *Similar* titles for God are found in a number of *other* places, including Deut 10:17, Neh 9:32, and Jer 32:18.
- The thought here seems to be that their return is motivated by recognition of the *power* that the “*mighty God*” has extended on their behalf to save them.

10:22 *For though your people, Israel, are as numerous as the sand on the seashore, only a remnant will come back. Destruction has been decreed; just punishment is about to engulf you.*

- There is a *sobering* side to the return of “*only a remnant*”.
- It is as though Isaiah here directly addresses Israel (=Jacob) as the forefather of the nation, and *commiserates* with him as to how *many* of his descendants will perish and how *few* will “*come back*”!

10:22 *For though your people, Israel, are as **numerous as the sand on the seashore**, only a remnant will come back. Destruction has been decreed; **just punishment** is about to engulf you.*

- Even though the people have become “*as numerous as the sand on the seashore*” in fulfillment of the promise of the covenant with Abraham (Gen 22:17), the promise of a *return* will be realized by only a remnant, a *handful*.
- Nevertheless, it *will* be realized.
- God’s promise to Abraham will not prevent the wrath of God from being poured out against Abraham’s descendants when they rebel.
- Nevertheless, Isaiah tells us here, this divinely imposed “*punishment*” will be “*just*” – not going any further than was *warranted* by their rebellion.

10:23 *The Sovereign LORD of Heaven's Armies is certainly ready to carry out the decreed destruction throughout the land.*

- In the original Hebrew, there is a “for” connecting this verse with the previous verse, meaning that this verse is an *explanation* of destruction that will take place as the “*Sovereign Lord of Heaven's Armies*” punishes his rebellious people.
- This destruction comes about, not by *human will* (e.g. the imperialist Assyrian Empire) nor by *chance* but by *divine decree*.
- “*throughout the land*” indicates that the acts of God take place not only in Judah and Israel but, people living *throughout the Assyrian Empire* will be affected by this “*decreed destruction*”.

New Testament  
Usage of  
Isaiah 10:20-23



Isaiah 10:22 *For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, **only a remnant of them will return...***<sup>23</sup>  
*For the LORD God of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth. (ESV)*

Rom 9:27 *And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel:  
“Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, **only a remnant of them will be saved,***<sup>28</sup>  
*for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.” (ESV)*

# Some Background on Romans 9

- According to the Jewish understanding of Paul's day, salvation history had taken an *unexpected turn*.
- Most of the people of *Israel* to whom the promises of salvation had been *given* refused to recognize Jesus as the *fulfillment* of those promises.
- At the same time *Gentiles*, who were considered to be *excluded* from the covenant, were *embracing Jesus*.
- Paul insists, however, that this turn of events, though *unexpected*, does *not* violate the integrity of God's word and his promises.
- Paul *justifies* this claim by showing what God's word *itself* (in the OT) says about becoming a member of God's true spiritual people.

# Some Background on Romans 9

- Paul argues in **Romans 9:6-29** that belonging to God's *true spiritual people* has *always* been based on God's *sovereign call* and *not* on ethnic identity.
- Therefore God is free to *narrow* the apparent boundaries of election by choosing only *some* Jews to be saved (vv.6-13; 27-29).
- He is also free to *expand* the dimensions of his people by choosing Gentiles (vv.24-26).
- Throughout **Romans 9:6-29**, Paul argues from *Scripture*, to convince both his Jewish and Gentile Christian readers in Rome that his viewpoint is *rooted* in the OT.
- **Isaiah 10:22-23** is one of the *last* passages quoted by Paul in this section to establish that God is calling his “vessels of mercy” from *among* the Jews.

Isaiah 10:22 *For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return...<sup>23</sup> For the LORD God of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth. (ESV)*

Rom 9:27 *And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved,<sup>28</sup> for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay." (ESV)*

- In his citation of **Isaiah 10:22-23**, the Apostle Paul brings **Romans 9:6-29** to a **close** on the note with which it began all the way back in verses 7-8 where he says:
  - *...not **all** are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through **Isaac** shall your offspring be named." This means that it is not the children of the **flesh** who are the children of God, but the children of the **promise** are counted as offspring. (Rom 9:7-8)*

Isaiah 10:22 *For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return...<sup>23</sup> For the LORD God of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth.*

Rom 9:27 *And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved,<sup>28</sup> for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay."*

- Paul then goes on from there citing passage after passage from the OT to show that God chooses only ***some*** from among ***national*** Israel to be his ***true spiritual*** Israel.
- And it's in this way that Paul ***reconciles*** the promises of God to Israel with the ***small number*** of Jews that were ***actually*** being saved.

Isaiah 10:22 *For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return...<sup>23</sup> For the LORD God of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth.*

Rom 9:27 *And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved,<sup>28</sup> for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay."*

- And so it's in ***this context***, that the Apostle Paul cites **Isaiah 10:22-23** (that we looked at earlier) where we see the important concept of the "remnant" described.
- And as we observed earlier, the idea of a "remnant" contains both ***judgment*** and ***hope***.
- The ***judgment*** consists in the fact that, though "*the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, **only** a remnant of them will be saved.*"

Isaiah 10:22 *For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return...<sup>23</sup> For the LORD God of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth.*

Rom 9:27 *And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved,<sup>28</sup> for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay."*

- The Jews in Paul's day ***mistakenly*** assumed that the Lord's covenant with Israel (beginning with the promises to Abraham) insured both the ***political integrity*** and the ***spiritual vitality*** of the people as a ***whole***.
- But, as Paul points out, a ***careful*** study of the OT shows that the Lord through his prophets announced ***doom*** for the people as a ***whole***, but ***hope*** for the ***remnant*** who were saved.

# Next Time

I plan to cover Isaiah 11:1-16, a section which talks about The Root of Jesse as a “*signal flag*” for the nations.



# Class Discussion Time



# \*Class Discussion Time

- As I look around at what's going on in our society (especially compared to what I saw in society as a young man growing up) I'm feeling more and more like I'm in ***the minority*** on what I think about almost ***all*** of the important issues – both theologically as well as politically.
- And I must confess that, at times, I find this to be very discouraging, because I believe it's indicative of the judgment of God on our nation.
- In today's lesson, I found a word, not only of judgment, but of hope – a hope in the fact that in the midst of all the terrible things that we see taking place around us, God is raising up a faithful remnant who he will deliver on the last day.
- What about you? Do you experience similar feelings?