

## New Testament Interpretation of Old Testament Eschatological Texts

Isaiah 10:22 comes on the heels of an oracle of judgment against Assyria. The pagan nation is the instrument of God's punishment against Judah (10:5), but because of Assyria's haughtiness, God will in turn punish that nation as well.

These words were spoken in the midst of a season of great upheaval in Judah's history. Ahaz was king, and when faced with a hostile Aramean-Israelite alliance, he appealed to Assyria for help (2 Kings 16:7). The reaction from Assyria was swift—Ahaz' monarchy was rescued, but in the process Judah was reduced to an Assyrian vassal state (2 Chron 28:19-20).<sup>1</sup>

In light of these events, Is 10 views Assyria as the instrument of Judah's exile (not Babylon). Is 10:22 declares that although the Jews were as numerous as the sand of the sea, only a remnant would return from the destruction of exile. Verse 22a has the promise of fecundity made to Abraham in view (Gen 13:16). Thus the people of Judah should not trust merely in the fact that they are descended from Abraham for protection in the coming judgment.<sup>2</sup>

Paul appropriates this verse in Romans as he unpacks the notion that not all who are Israel are of Israel (9:6). He sets forth a tension between physical descent from Abraham and being a "vessel of mercy chosen by God" (v. 23). Paul cites Is 10:22 in order to establish that inclusion in the latter depends on being part of the remnant (which

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<sup>1</sup> Willem A. VanGemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 250.

is synonymous with being “a child of the promise” according to 9:8). The remnant, those who are spared from destruction, is ultimately fulfilled in those Jews who have received Jesus Christ as Messiah. The eschatological hope of Israel for restoration and deliverance has been inaugurated and fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 52:7 has eschatological hopes in view as well. In the midst of Judah’s captivity in Babylon, a message of salvation is brought to the people. The proclamation is one of “good news,” “peace,” and “happiness”—in spite of the captivity in Babylon, Zion can be confident that God reigns. Paul uses this verse to condemn the obduracy of the Jews for “seeking to establish their own [righteousness]” (Rom 10:3). He raises the rhetorical objection that the Jews could not have sought righteousness from someone (Jesus Christ) in whom they did not believe, nor could they have accepted the “word of faith” without someone to preach it to them (v. 14). Paul answers this objection with his quotation of Is 52:7 (Rom 10:15), pointing out that the message of deliverance brought to Judah in Babylon anticipates the message of deliverance inherent in the Gospel. Again, the Jewish eschatological hope of deliverance looks forward to and finds ultimate fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. I (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 370.