

Isaiah 10:20-34: Remnant emerging during the Tribulation will face a key enemy at Nob. The remnant's return is widely predicted but who is the villain shaking his fist in v32?

Summaries of relevant background information for related passages.

1. Book of Isaiah is on God's judgment on Israel and His redemptive salvation (KV 12:1-2). In the first eight chapters Isaiah in multiple ways rebukes their sins and then in Isa. 9:8-10:4, he writes a poem on the destruction of the Northern Kingdom by Assyria (**Isa. 10:4**) which is fulfilled in 722 BC. Next in Isa. 10:5-19, God then directs His wrath against the Assyrians (**Isa. 10:5**) and a key reason for this is their pride (**Isa. 10:12**). Accurately it predicts in **Isa. 10:16-17** that their army will be destroyed in a single day which is precisely fulfilled in the demise of Sennacherib's army in **Isa. 37:36-37**. Finally **Isa 10:18-19** is a correct portrayal of how the Assyrian empire ends, by slow decay over 100 years after Sennacherib's fall. Chapter 10 then proceeds on to the present passage. **2. Micah**, a contemporary of Isaiah also prophesies the Assyrian conquest of Israel in Mi. 1:9-16. In it he correctly predicts the path taken by Sennacherib to reach Jerusalem from the south, passing through the key city of **Lachish (Mi. 1:13)**. Note that Mi. 1:9 states clearly that the invasion will only reach the gate of Jerusalem and not into the city.

Explaining the passage Isaiah 10:20-34 and evidence for fulfillment:

Isaiah 10 in **v20-23** takes a leap into the future, using the phrase "in that day". The timing for such a phrase as usual must be ascertained from the context. Firstly there is a return of the remnant (**21**), the spiritual faithful of Israel who truly rely on the Lord. Amazingly Paul quotes **v22** in **Rom. 9:27**. After stating in **Rom. 9:25-26** that God will choose the gentiles, **9:27** asserts that the remnant will still be saved. It thus means that this return of the remnant is to the future of Paul's time and so it probably points to the rise and return of the present Messianic Jews. Moreover in v22 the return is associated with a destruction overflowing with righteousness. The tribulation can certainly fit this prediction and the details in **v23**, on a complete destruction in the midst of the whole land further affirms it. Such a catastrophe did not occur when the remnant returned after the Babylonian exile and so it must be referring to the present return. It is also reassuring that the present Messianic Jews do truly rely and believe in the Lord as in v20. Next in **v24-27** is again an assurance on not to fear the Assyrians for God will deal with them in **v26**, just as for Gideon in Midian and Moses against their enemies in Egypt. But Assyria's destruction is already stated in Isa. 10:16-19 and so this repeat is perhaps to reassure the remnant in v20 that God will deal with their enemies as He did with the Assyrians. Then mysteriously in **v28-32** is description of a path taken by a villain towards Jerusalem, reaching the city at Nob (**32**) in the north and arrogantly threatens it by shaking his fist. Most scholars take it as predicting the path taken by Sennacherib but this is not probable. Firstly, Sennacherib in his memoirs records reaching Jerusalem from the south via Lachish (even making a mural on this) and not via Nob. Then in **Isaiah 36:2** and **Micah 1:13** is a clear Biblical record of Lachish and so why predicts another route? However all details will fit if this is the antichrist when he invades Jerusalem (**Matt. 24:15-16**) in the tribulation. The remnant are to flee Judea and knowledge of this route will ensure that their paths will not cross. Note that the villain will be destroyed in **v33-34**. This is one more detail showing that it is not Sennacherib for he survives in **Isa. 37:37-38** and dies 20 years later in his house, while the antichrist or beast is destroyed at the end of the tribulation (**Rev. 19:20**).

NB: There is a battle prophesied in Eze. 38-39 and the leader is Gog. This is just before the woes of the tribulation and so can the villain above be Gog? Unlikely for he perishes and dies in Eze. 39:2 while the antichrist is taken alive in Rev.19:20, fitting well with Isa. 10:33 when God just cuts his boughs or branches with no mention of killing the villain.

MAP: Sennacherib's account of his path and the villain's path in Isaiah 10

