

writings. The thought which he presents is brought out clearly in the very first verse of this passage, where God calls the Assyrian "the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation!" In verse 15 the same thought is brought out, where the Assyrian is called the axe or saw in the hand of God. Isaiah declares that the Assyrian is not a great and terrible scourge which has come into existence in spite of God, or something which God has merely permitted; but that he is actually part of God's plan and an instrument in God's hands. Surely, no greater view of the majesty and glory of God has ever been expressed. In verse 6, it is clearly stated that the Lord will use the Assyrian as His instrument to punish those who are untrue to His covenant.

The Assyrian's View of Himself

Verses 7-14 present another phase of the problem. Although the Assyrian is an instrument in God's hand, he himself does not recognize this fact. He thinks that he has done all his great works by his own strength and force. He boasts of his power and might, and thinks that nothing will be able to withstand him.

God's answer to this presentation of the wickedness and pride of the Assyrian is a declaration that even though the Assyrian is an instrument in God's hands, he is going to be punished for what he has done, because he has done it in his own wicked heart and has refused to give God the glory.

A good parallel to this is found in the acts of King Jehu, as related in 2 Kings. God commanded Jehu to put an end to the wickedness of the house of Omri, which reached its climax in the actions of Ahab and Jezebel. Jehu carried out the command with a cruelty and brutality which had never been ordered by the Lord. He made serving God a pretense for securing his own wicked ends. Consequently, Hosea 1:4 declared that the blood of Jezreel -- the place where the house of Ahab was slaughtered -- would be brought down upon the head of the descendants of Jehu. Even those who are instruments in the hand of God may find themselves culpable for what they perform, if they do it in a way that is different from His command, and if they seek their own ends instead of God's glory.