



• Unbelief led to chaos

• A remnant preserved

• A Saviour will come

1. Israel's problem began with the nation's unbelief

• Amos and Hosea were sent to bring God's word to the people

• Eventually everyone has to admit that God was speaking to them

• The people believed they could recover on their own

2. Neglect of God's word brings judgement

• The Assyrians attacked

• Still the people didn't turn back to God!

3. Unbelief refuses to learn

Isaiah 9:8–11:16 follows the same course as Isaiah 7:1–9:7. Now four sections of this part of Isaiah will explain the reason for Israel's domination by paganism, moving along the same line of thought as before. It all went back to unbelief¹. Terrible chaos overtook Israel as a result². But a remnant were preserved³, and though long delayed the Saviour will indeed come⁴.

1. Israel's problem began with the nation's unbelief. The cause of the nation's crisis was disregard of the word of God. The prophet says:

⁸The Sovereign Lord has sent a word against Jacob; it keeps falling on Israel.

Through the ministry of Amos and Hosea, God had persistently sent his word to the northern nation.

⁹All the people, every one of them, will know it, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria.

Sooner or later everyone has to admit that God was indeed speaking to them.

It will come despite the pride and arrogance of heart, in which they say, ¹⁰The bricks have fallen down, but we will rebuild with dressed stone; the fig trees have been felled, but we will replace them with cedars.'

Their nation was like a brick house which kept on collapsing, but they were quite confident they could recover. They were like trees that had been chopped down, but the people were confident they could grow trees again. And what they would do would be better than that which had collapsed. Stone would replace bricks. Mighty cedars would replace inferior fig trees! No amount of proud, hard-hearted resistance can prevent the fulfilment of God's word.

2. Neglect of God's word brings judgement. God warned them by letting the Assyrians come upon them.

¹¹Yet Yahweh has lifted up Rezin's foes against them and has spurred their enemies on.

¹²Arameans from the east and Philistines from the west have devoured Israel with their wide-open mouth. Yet in spite of all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still stretched out.

The Assyrians who attacked Rezin, king of Aram, went on to attack Israel. And the Arameans themselves also attacked Israel. So did the Philistines. But none of this made Israel turn to God in faith. Their problems came from persistent unbelief in the word of God which kept coming to them. God was angry with them still.

3. Unbelief refuses to learn. No matter what God did, the people were still unbelieving.

¹³But the people have not returned to him who struck them, nor have they sought Yahweh Almighty.

1 9:9-10:4
2 10:5-15
3 10:16-34
4 11:1-16

• Result – violent and sudden military invasion

The result will be a violent and sudden military invasion of Israel in which every kind of leader comes to nothing.

*¹⁴So Yahweh will cut off from Israel both head and tail, both palm branch and reed in a single day;
¹⁵the elders and prominent men are the head, the prophets who teach lies are the tail.
¹⁶Those who guide this people mislead them, and those who are guided are swallowed up.*

• Suffering for the widows and the young as well

Those for whom God generally has compassion, the young, the orphans, the widows, will suffer terribly.

¹⁷Therefore the Lord will take no pleasure in his young men, nor will he pity the fatherless and widows, for everyone is ungodly and wicked, every mouth speaks vileness.

• Still unbelief continues – and so does God's anger

Yet unbelief can become so powerful in the heart that suffering fails to drive the sufferer to God, and the anger of God continues.

Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still stretched out.

4. Unbelief leads to social anarchy

4. Unbelief leads to social anarchy. It is totally destructive. Wickedness wipes out everything that is good.

¹⁸For wickedness burns like a fire; it consumes briars and thorns, it sets the forest thickets ablaze, so that it rolls upward in a column of smoke.

• Total annihilation

The picture is one of total annihilation. Something is burning so intensely that the rubbish is destroyed and only smoke is left. Something similar will happen in Israel. What is good will be burnt up.

¹⁹By the wrath of Yahweh Almighty the land will be shaken and the people will be fuel for the fire; no one will spare his brother.

• When what is good is burnt up people live for themselves alone

When what is good is burnt up, the result is that everyone in the society lives for themselves alone. People will exploit others.

*²⁰On the right they will cut people down for food, but still be hungry; on the left they will eat, but not be satisfied. Each will feed on the flesh of his own arm.
²¹Manasseh will feed on Ephraim, and Ephraim on Manasseh; together they will turn against Judah.*

• Tribes turn against each other

One tribe will turn against another tribe.

Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still stretched out.

• The legal system doesn't help

The legal system will do no good because the laws themselves will be unjust.

¹Woe to those who make iniquitous laws, to those who write decrees that cause trouble.

• The poor suffer the most

The poor suffer the most.

²They purpose to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from those of my people who are downtrodden. They plan to make widows their prey and to rob the fatherless.

But such a society is destined for terrible punishment. Isaiah asks:

³What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave the riches that you glory in? ⁴Nothing will remain but to cringe among the captives or fall among the slain. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still stretched out.

• If neglect of God's word causes social chaos, no amount of social adjustment will remove the chaos

We must keep in mind the first lines of this section. The social anarchy that comes is the result of refusing the word of God which has been coming to Israel for a long time. Consider the implications of this. **If the cause of social chaos is neglect of the word of God, then no amount of social adjustment will take away the chaos.** One must go to the root of the matter, neglect of the word of God. If widows and orphans are suffering because of neglect of the word of God, then social programmes for the needy (vital as they are!) will not really deal with the problem because the root cause is elsewhere.

• We must pay heed to the word of God

Then some readjustment needs to be made in our attentiveness to the word of God. What is involved? We must face the fact that in God's mind his word is central. Unless we pay attention to the word of God chaos will continue. Our pastors need training in the work of **exposition**. Most pastors nowadays have no idea how to preach expositively. Few of us ever hear exposition which is at the same time full of the Spirit and of power. A revival of applied, expository preaching is desperately needed. Not just preaching but **expository** preaching. Not just expository preaching but powerfully **applied** expository preaching. Non-written 'words from God' are not enough. Other kinds of revelation help us the most when they come in an atmosphere that is saturated in the written Word of God.

• We need a revival of applied expository preaching