

The Visitation

by [David Solway](#) (February 2023)



Byland Abbey, John Piper, 1940

O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. –Isaiah 10: 5

A weeping seer walks the ground
on which the holy city stands
bristling with towers and temples,
with palisades and monuments and Houses of Exchange,
the glory of the nation

soon to be ruin and rubble, dust and smoke.

This is the truth

which lives not in the words of the wise men

or the leaders of the people

but in the words of an ancient parchment:

the bricks have fallen,

the sycamore has been cut down,

a fire shall consume the briars and thorns

and kindle in the thickets of the forest,

the people shall be the fuel of the fire.

This is the truth.

The fire shall lick their flesh

like the tongue of the leopard.

For the Assyrian is now among us,

a tool of destruction in the hand of the Lord

in the Day of Visitation.

The slaughter shall proceed,

the towers of Edom shall collapse,

the columns and porticoes shall crumble,

neither brick nor stone shall withstand the onslaught.

For the Assyrian comes from afar

and mingles among the people

to tread them down like mire in the streets
and devour the fruitful fields, both harvest and gleanings.
The bearded marauder is at the wall
and inside the wall,
he strikes like lightnings from the sky
and like shakings from the earth below.
His women multiply abundantly,
the harbingers of terror spring from their loins.
He has come from the desert to create the desert,
to punish those who have written grievous decrees
and spoken words of folly,
who are arrogant in unrighteousness and high looks
and in lewdness of the flesh,
who rule a nation steeped in ignorance and greed
and welcome the Assyrian to prosper in their midst.
The seer brings warnings and lamentations
like the clapper of the last bell
that echoes in the barrens and the thoroughfares
and in the Halls of Transaction
but he is not heeded.
The Assyrian shall gloat in his triumph
for the nation has turned away

from the foundation and the source
and put its trust in idols of no substance or accounting,
in pleasure and laziness and empty promises
and in breaking of sacraments.

This is the truth.

The beast and the dybbuk shall roam in the marches,
the Assyrian shall lead them in retribution.

For *Tishri* and *Elul* are upon us.

Through judgment and calamity
the ordinance shall be fulfilled.

Neither the young nor the old shall be spared,
neither the guilty nor the innocent.

They shall be hewn down.

For the people are fickle
but the Lord does not change.

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David Solway's latest book is [*Notes from a Derelict Culture*](#), Black House Publishing, 2019, London. A CD of his original songs, [*Partial to Cain*](#), appeared in 2019.

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