

*Wait for the Lord,
Renew Your Strength*

The Vision of Isaiah

PROSPECTUS (1-39)

“You must pay close attention to what [the prophets] wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place—until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts.” (2 Peter 1:19 NLT-SE)

The destruction of Israel (north) is certain, but Judah (south) still has hope if only they will trust in the LORD. But if they will not stand in faith, they will not stand at all. Through Isaiah, God begs his people to trust him - the true King - and all will be well. But they refuse. They are full of idols and social injustices. Worship is a weariness. Faith is non-existent. They will trust a stick or a nation, but not the Holy One of Israel. So, Isaiah declares God's message: it is time to purge evil from Judah with fire.

“When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness. But when grace is shown to the wicked, they do not learn righteousness; even in a land of uprightness they go on doing evil and do not regard the majesty of the LORD.” (Isaiah 26:9–10 NIV-11)

It is only through fire that God will have the righteous city he longs for. Therefore, Isaiah declares that God's wrath will come against Jerusalem by the hand of the Chaldeans (i.e., Babylonians). But Judah is not the only one that needs to be reminded who the true king is - all the nations have become arrogant. So God will judge them as well. But there is hope for all who will bow to YHWH of Armies.

“In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, “Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.”” (Isaiah 19:24–25 ESV)

Isaiah frequently declares in the first 39 chapters that there is a future hope for Judah and the nations. This is a constant reminder of the aim of God's wrath: one day, the peoples will know and fear him; one day, God will have his holy city.

The more we read the prophets, the more we will find that they lived and prophesied in a world similar to ours. Isaiah's pictures of what angers the Lord aren't foreign to our world. Furthermore, Isaiah's pictures of hope are precisely what we need to hold onto until the day when Christ comes from heaven. Our aim will be to study Isaiah 1-39 in the fall and Isaiah 40-66 in the winter. Our goals for the class are below.

- **Read in a way that respects both original and new covenant contexts.**
- **Wrestle with and apply Isaiah's highly relevant pictures of what angers God.**
- **Appreciate Isaiah's pictures of our current blessings in God's kingdom.**
- **Emphasize Isaiah's pictures of our future hope in the fullness of God's kingdom.**

PROSPECTUS (40-66)

“They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles.” (Isaiah 40:31 ESV)

God urged Jerusalem to be the fruitful vineyard he planted them to be, but they were full of idols and injustice. When God tried to wake them up with foreign enemies, they trusted their leaders and other nations to deliver them. But when Assyria came against Jerusalem a second time, King Hezekiah finally called out to the Lord for help. The Assyrians mocked Hezekiah for trusting the Lord, but the angel of the Lord struck down 185,000 of their army. The Holy One of Israel will be feared and respected by the world. Because of this, God would still send Judah into exile when they turned from him, but he would bring them back in a new exodus, of which Isaiah 40-66 speaks.

God issues a challenge against idols in Isaiah 40-66. “Do good, or do harm. Do anything so we can fear you.” God is determined to do something that will cause all to throw away their idols and fear him. He will declare the end before the beginning. He will make promises about a solution to a problem that doesn’t exist yet. God’s people are still living on their land, but he will start talking about a time when he will gather them from the nations to which they have been scattered.

God has many agents through which he will glorify himself. His servant, the people of Israel. His servant, Cyrus. His suffering servant - who we know as Jesus. God’s suffering servant will have offspring - servants - after him who will do the work of the Lord. God’s servant will set the prisoners free. They will become God’s servants to rebuild the ancient ruins of Zion.

But God did not complete this new exodus and rebuilding of Zion in one stage. He called his people out of Babylon to rebuild Zion in the days of Zerubabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. He calls us out of Babylon to rebuild Zion today through Jesus and his apostles. We are the offspring Isaiah spoke of and we are awaiting the day when God will complete his kingdom restoration project. As we study and mediate on Isaiah 40-66, we will have a few goals.

- **Study what idolatry really is, why it is so foolish, and why it angers God so much.**
- **Study God’s use of the term “servant” and “servants” toward different people.**
- **Understand and apply God’s pictures of who he wanted his new “Israel” - us - to be.**
- **Understand the nature of progressive revelation and fulfillment in Isaiah.**
- **Learn how to interpret and hope in God’s visions of grace and restoration today.**

There are a number of references to two commentaries throughout this book. I am fully citing their reference here in lieu of full citations on each page.

Motyer, J. Alec. *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*. InterVarsity Press, 1993
Smith, Gary V. *Isaiah 1-39*. Broadman & Holman, 2007

INTRODUCTION TO READING ISAIAH

Many wonder *why* we should read Isaiah. Others want to know *how*. There are healthy and unhealthy ways of reading Isaiah. Consider the texts below as a brief guide to healthy reading.

1. As you read the texts below, consider **why** we should read Isaiah/the prophets and/or **how** we should read them. As appropriate, think of ways we **should not** read or think of Isaiah.

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Romans 15:4

1 Peter 1:10-12

2 Peter 1:19-21

Acts 3:19-21

2. What kind of literature is Isaiah? How should/shouldn't we read this kind of literature?

3. What are four words which summarize the general nature of most texts in Isaiah?

4. What is the general structure of Isaiah's written message?

1-39:

1-12:

13-27:

28-39:

40-66:

40-48:

49-55:

56-66:

5. What are some of the key themes that come from the book of Isaiah?

ISAIAH 1

2 Kings 15:32-17:23 provides a historical background to much of what was happening during these times. **Deuteronomy 32:1, 4-6** provides background for the language used in Isaiah's opening lines.

1. (1:1-6) What images does Isaiah use to lay out God's charge against Judah? Meditate on these images. Do any stand out as particularly striking/helpful to you?

2. (1:7-9) What will be the result of Judah's rebellion? Will they be repaid as they should be?

3. (1:10-17, 21-23) Explain God's complaint against Judah's rulers and people here. Why is God so repulsed by this? What do you personally learn from this?

4. (1:18-20, 24-31) How all does God offer to deal with Judah's evil and oppression?

5. (1:29-31) Meditate on God's poetic words regarding the result of idolatrous desires. What is his point? How will Judah end up feeling if they go with God's "plan b" (cleansing by fire)?

ISAIAH 2-4

Peter quotes the first line of **Isaiah 2:2** on Pentecost in **Acts 2:17**. This probably signifies that the latter days Isaiah prophesied of were beginning. However, remember Peter's statement in **Acts 3:21** that Jesus will come when all things the prophets spoke of have been restored.

1. (2:1-5) What picture of the world does Isaiah prophesy of? What should we do if this image is our hope?

2. What are God's charges against the people of Judah in the following texts? Also note anything that strikes you as especially interesting or important from these charges.

2:6-8

3:8-9

3:12-15

3:16-17

3. Note the unifying problem God is planning to deal with in his judgments in **2:20-22**.

ISAIAH 2-4 (continued)

4. What does God say he will do about this situation in Judah/Jerusalem? Summarize the message of the following texts and jot down the images that strike you the most.

2:9-19

3:1-7

3:18-4:1

5. **(4:2-6)** What is our hope and what is God's aim in these judgments? What is the end result God is aiming for? Where do these images come from and how do they inspire hope?

ISAIAH 5

Recommendation. Isaiah will feel repetitive if you tend to gloss over or generalize these texts (i.e., don't simply label everything as rebellion, repentance, retribution, or restoration). After you read these texts, take time to meditate on the pictures. For example, notice how Jerusalem reaps what it sows. In verses 11-14 the people have produced the fruit of feasting, drinking, and partying without regarding God's works, so at the harvest they will be hungry and thirsty. Sheol has been hungry, but don't worry, Sheol's appetite will be satisfied when it eats them. (Sheol = abode of the dead)

The structure of Isaiah 5. The flow of Isaiah 5 is somewhat challenging to see when you zoom in, but the big picture is simple enough. Verses 1-7 give us the song of the vineyard while verses 8-30 tell us the stink-fruit Judah produced and the harvest they will reap.

1. **(5:1-7)** Explain the meaning of the love song Isaiah sings regarding the vineyard.

2. **(5:1-7)** Meditate on the impact of hearing this song. How is it meant to strike its hearers? How does hearing this song affect you?

3. **(5:7b)** Reserve this space for an in-class discussion of justice/judgment (*mispat*) and bloodshed/violence (*mispah*), righteousness (*sedaqah*) and outcry/distress (*se'aqah*).

ISAIAH 5 (continued)

4. (5:8-17) What are God's complaints against his people in this section? How does God say he will handle this? Where do you see relevant dangers for yourself or our society in these pictures? (*possible structure/groupings: vs. 8-10, 11-14, 15-17*)

5. (5:18-21) This section is central in that it describes sinful attitudes. What is really wrong with these people's hearts? When have you had or witnessed attitudes like this before?

6. (5:22-25) What is God's complaint and how does he say he handled it? Is he finished?

7. (5:26-30) What is God depicting in this section? Why would he depict it in this way as opposed to flatly saying what is coming?

ISAIAH 6

Isaiah 6:1 says this vision took place in the year King Uzziah died (639 BC). Isaiah rarely gives historical markers for his visions, so keep this in mind as you read this chapter. Uzziah's reign ended a time marked by Judah's strength and prosperity. Ahaz's reign began a time that was characterized by war and weakness.

1. (6:1-7) Pause and picture the scene that takes place here. What stands out to you and impresses you? Why?

2. (6:1-8) How do you think this experience affected Isaiah's preaching? What are we meant to gain from seeing his vision? (*note: the title "Holy One of Israel" occurs 20x in Isaiah, 6x elsewhere*)

3. (6:9-13) What will be the effect of Isaiah's preaching? Why would God send Isaiah if this is the case? How can Isaiah's experience motivate/encourage you?

4. (6:13) What is the meaning of verse 13 (i.e., what is all this leading to?)

CONTEXT FOR ISAIAH 7-12

Isaiah 7-12 is one long prophetic section in one continuous context. Ahaz is king of Judah and he is facing serious threats from Israel and Syria. Take a few moments to read a summary of the historical context for this section by Gary Smith (below). Read **2 Kings 16** and **2 Chronicles 28** to become familiar with King Ahaz and the events of that time. Though Jerusalem was not destroyed, they faced a serious and trying time in these days.

This introduction to Isaiah 7-12 was authored by Gary Smith in his Isaiah 1-39 commentary

"HISTORICAL SETTING. This long section is set in the reign of Judah's King Ahaz, the son of Jotham and grandson of Uzziah (7:1). The events described in chaps. 7-8 recall circumstances surrounding the Syro-Ephraimite War (734-732 BC) when the Israelite king Pekah and the Syrian king Rezin attacked Judah. These kings wanted to force Ahaz to join their coalition against the mighty Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria, or to replace Ahaz with a more cooperative ruler if Ahaz would not join them (Tabeel in 7:6). Second Kings 16:1-4 and 2 Chronicles 28:1-4 describe Ahaz as a wicked king who did not follow David's godly ways but led the people of Judah to worship Baal and even sacrificed his own son to a pagan god. Therefore, as punishment for these sins, God brought the Syrians and Israelites against Judah (2 Chr 28:5,9). In this war the Syro-Ephraimite armies killed over 120,000 soldiers from Judah, took around 200,000 people captive, and plundered the land (2 Chr 28:6-8). Nevertheless, the city of Jerusalem was not conquered. Since Ahaz saw no way to win this war, he sent gold and silver from the royal palace and the temple (2 Kgs 16:8-9) to the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III and offered to be his vassal if the Assyrians would rescue him from these enemies. The Assyrians came and after attacking Syria, destroyed Damascus (2 Kgs 16:9). Then the Assyrian king made Israel and Judah his vassals. It appears that Isaiah first spoke to Ahaz early in this war when preparations were being made to protect Jerusalem's water resources (7:3), before the king appealed to the Assyrians for help. Isaiah offered Ahaz God's protection for Judah, if the king would put his trust in God. Ahaz "piously" refused to trust God (7:12) and consequently God promised that the Assyrians would actually become Judah's conqueror (Isa 7:17)." *(Smith, pg. 199)*

ISAIAH 7:1-9

Isaiah 7-12 is one long prophetic section in one continuous context. Our stopping points will be mostly arbitrary. Try to review and remember the context surrounding each text as we study. Remember, Isaiah is not simply speaking to the people, but also to the king.

1. (7:1-9) What were King Rezin (Syria) and King Pekah (Israel) plotting and doing? Describe what it might look like for this to happen in the U.S., Houston, or to Christians so you can relate to the situation.

2. (7:1-9) How do King Ahaz (Judah) and the people feel? What is Isaiah's message? On what basis does the Lord want Jerusalem to live and make decisions in this trying time?

3. (7:1-9) Is this reasonable? What situations could arise in our personal lives, churches, cities, or country where we should operate by the same basis? (Faith, not by how much water is in the reservoir, etc.) What would this faith look like?

Isaiah is told in 7:3 to bring his son Shear-jashub with him when he tells Ahaz to trust God. Shear-jashub's name means "a remnant shall return." Isaiah's son was a walking reminder that God would eventually bring punishment, but he would allow leftovers to remain alive and return to Judah one day (*cf.* 8:18).

ISAIAH 7:10-8:22

1. (7:10-13) What does the Lord generously offer King Ahaz? Why would he or anyone refuse such an offer? (consider what this forces you to do when you normally do 8:19)

The term “curds and honey” is not descriptive of good food and good times. It represents the only food that will be available to the distressed remnant in the coming disaster. You want milk and honey as long as you have basic sustenance just like you want cake after a good meal. Neither sound great if they are spoiled and they are all you have left. God is essentially saying, “Judah refuses to trust me? Let them eat *spoiled* cake!”

2. (7:13-17) A young woman/virgin will have a son as a sign to Ahaz and Judah of the coming disaster from Assyria against Syria, Israel, **and eventually** Judah. His growth as a young man will be a ticking time marker against Judah regarding what is coming.

- ✓ 7:16 — Before this boy grows up to become a righteous man (refusing evil, choosing good), what will happen? (cf. 8:3-4)

- ✓ 7:15 — After this boy has grown up into a righteous man (refusing evil, choosing good), what will he be doing?

- ✓ 7:17 — Why will verses 15-16 happen to Syria, Israel, and Judah?

3. (7:17-25) What will this coming peril from Assyria look like? How would this make the people feel? (Note how the people already felt because of Syria and Israel/Ephraim in 7:2)

Israel paid Assyria to rescue them from Syria and Israel instead of trusting the Lord. Therefore, Assyria wouldn't just clean out Syria and Israel, they'd come for Judah too. Keep in mind, however, that this is not a prophecy of the final destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon.

ISAIAH 7:10-8:22 (continued)

4. (8:1-4) What does Maher-shalal-hash-baz mean? How was he a sign to Ahaz and Judah?

5. (8:5-10) What could Ahaz and Judah experienced if they would have trusted God and humbled themselves over the destruction of Syria and Israel? What will happen instead?

6. (7:14; 8:8, 10) What is the meaning and connotation of this Immanuel sign in Judah's lifetime? How is this sign and its connotation reversed in **Matthew 1:18-25**?

Though God had planned how he would bring the Christ into the world well before this time, this sign did not originally point to the Christ. This shows us that Scripture is fulfilled in Jesus in deeper ways than a simplistic "prediction-completion" formula. Jesus shockingly fulfills - repeats, supersedes, and completes - a host of biblical histories, descriptions, motifs, prophecies, and more.

7. (8:11-22) What was everyone fearing then? What were they running to for answers? Who should they fear and run to for answers? How might we make the same mistake?

God makes a bold judgment of the people's hearts in 8:20. Because the people refused to inquire of God and his teachings in their darkness, God judges them as having no dawn - no light - in them. Therefore, they will be plunged into even thicker darkness.

ISAIAH 9:1-10:4

Note the geographical location stated in **Isaiah 9:1, 8-9, 21**. These prophecies of hope and of continuing doom are directed toward the northern portion of Israel (Ephraim). This area was very close to Gentile areas and seemed to be inhabited also by other peoples.

1. (9:1-7) Describe the transformation that would come around the Sea of Galilee. How is this prophesied to come about?

This prophecy would have been relatively shocking to hear in original context of the hearers since Ephraim (Israel) had not lived under the rule of a Davidic king for about 200 years. Furthermore, at this time, Israel had appeared to be more powerful than the location of David's throne in Jerusalem. Imagine how shocking it would be to hear a prophecy saying the United States would one day come under the crown of a future king in Britain forevermore.

2. (9:1-7) How is this text applied in **Matthew 4:12-17**? Based on Isaiah's prophecy, how would people (and how should we) interpret Jesus words, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand"?

Note the hope that the government will be on the shoulders of this child who will be born. The increase of his government and of peace will never end. He will rule with justice and righteousness. It is important for us to appreciate our personal salvation, but to also see God's vision for his kingdom and government increasing and bringing justice through a Davidic king. This king will reign forever - crushing oppressors and bringing light to those in darkness. We may appreciate certain aspects of the governments God has given power to in the world, but we should ultimately long for the righteous government of Jesus Christ to increase, fill, and overtake the earth (cf. Daniel 2:35, 44-45; 7:13-14; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28). We should pray for people to do God's will on earth just as his will is obeyed in heaven (cf. Matthew 6:10). We should speed ahead God's purpose by personal lifestyles of righteousness. Some days it does not seem like the King Jesus will overcome the nations, but **Revelation 17:14** guarantees it.

ISAIAH 9:1-10:4 (continued)

As you describe why God's anger has not turned away from Ephraim in **Isaiah 9:8-10:4**, try to relate God's disappointments to spiritual, moral, and ethical lessons for us today.

3. (9:8-12) Why does God say his hand is still stretched out against Israel here?

4. (9:13-17) Why does God say his hand is still stretched out against Israel here?

5. (9:18-10:4) Why does God say his hand is still stretched out against Israel here?

6. (9:8-10:4) Along with reasons for his wrath, God strikes fear into his hearers hearts by speaking of what is coming. What images of God's wrath against Israel stand out to you?

ISAIAH 10:5-19

1. (10:5-11) What is God's plan with Assyria? What is Assyria's plan?

2. (10:12-15) What is the attitude and demeanor of the king of Assyria? In what ways could we make the same mistake today?

3. (10:16-19) How does God picture the coming destruction of Assyria and her armies?

ISAIAH 10:20-12:6

1. (10:20-23) What hopeful, yet sobering future does Isaiah point towards? How does Paul apply this text in **Romans 9:27-29**?

2. (10:24-27) What hope does God give his people in this section? What images does he use to give them hope and why would he use these images?

Isaiah 10:28-32 pictures the king of Assyria gradually drawing nearer to Jerusalem and causing dread wherever he goes. It seems Jerusalem is doomed. But, in **10:33-34**, a turn! The Lord's axe has gone too far and God will cut them down (Lebanon is in Assyria). As God said in **10:24-25**, he really doesn't want his people in Zion to fear Assyria.

3. (11:1-5) God gives his people hope by speaking of a future Davidic ruler who will work righteousness in the earth and slay the wicked. Many of the images here play on previous images in Scripture. Jot down how the passages below relate to this text.

Isaiah 5:1-7

1 Samuel 16:13

Isaiah 10:1-2

4. (11:1-5) This text clearly speaks of Jesus Christ (cf. Romans 15:12). Does this text help you learn anything about Jesus that you have not considered much in the past?

ISAIAH 10:20-12:6 (continued)

5. (11:6-9) What is the significance of the images in this text? Why will this happen?

6. (11:10-16) Describe the various images of God's future salvation here and how they find fulfillment in Scripture.

The book of Exodus paints the picture of how God redeems - sets free - his people from slavery so he can live among them (cf. Ex. 29:45-46). The people of Israel and Judah would eventually go into exile in Assyria and Judah. Though some would prosper there, many had difficult lives and longed to return home (cf. Ps. 137). When the prophets speak of a future day of salvation, they often compare it to the exodus from Egypt — saying that God would work an even greater exodus and gather his people from the northern lands (cf. Isa. 11:11-12:2; 43:14-21; 48:20-21; 49:24-26; 51:9-11; 52:11-12; Jer. 16:14-15, etc.). Ezra and Nehemiah tell their narratives with language reminiscent of the exodus to show how God was beginning to work this new exodus in stages. But these stages still let God's people as slaves in their own land. Many images in the gospels paint Jesus as the new Moses and the God who works power similar to the original exodus. In Acts 2, this picture of God's people gathering from the nations at Zion is repeated. In Christ, God's people experience this new exodus as they are freed from sin and its curses to experience freedom with God. Yet, as Romans 7 paints, we sometimes still feel like we are slaves to sin. Many passages in speak of a future day when we too will be fully set free from sin and its curses - the final stage of our Exodus when God will finally and fully dwell with his people (cf. Rom. 8; 1 Cor. 15; Rev. 21-22).

7. (12:1-6) What stands out to you from the song of God's salvation in **Isaiah 12**?

ISAIAH 13-14

Isaiah 13-24 records Isaiah's vision regarding God's judgment against the nations. We will spend 4-5 classes in this section. Determine to not gloss over these visions. Feel the weight of God's judgments and relate to the attitudes that lead to God disciplining a nation. Take time to consider God's aim in these judgments. Though these judgments are against the nations, it is probable that they were only proclaimed to Judah. As you read, listen from their perspective. Don't only hear the warning, but hear the call to hope in God who really will judge their oppressors along with the arrogant around them. Also, keep in mind the poetic and apocalyptic nature of the language here - exaggeration for effect will be used. But why?

BABYLON (13:1-14:23), ASSYRIA (14:24-27), and PHILISTIA (14:28-32)

1. Why is God bringing judgment against these nations? (i.e., what is their guilt?) Note specific texts. What lessons can you draw from this?

2. What descriptions of God's judgments stand out to you and why? What will it be like for the people to endure God's wrath? What lessons can you draw from this?

3. What purposes does God have in this retribution? To what end is he pouring out his wrath?

Don't get hung up on the phrase "the day of the Lord." Isaiah isn't writing a systematic theology book to nail down all that will happen in one single day. Scripture speaks of many days in which the Lord will - in a sense - "have his day."

Many people get hung up on the prayer for God's judgment in Psalm 137. Notice Psalm 137 in conjunction with Isaiah 14:15-18. Those who sang Psalm 137 were simply calling on God to carry out the judgment he promised to bring here - something we can do as well.

ISAIAH 15-18

MOAB (ISAIAH 15-16)

1. Why is God bringing judgment against Moab? (i.e., what is their guilt?) Note specific texts.
2. What descriptions of God's judgments stand out to you and why? What will it be like for the Moab to endure God's wrath? What lessons can you draw from this?
3. Isaiah 16:1-4a is most likely a characterization of what Moab is saying in a message to Zion (Jerusalem). What is their message and plea? What is the response?

SYRIA AND EPHRAIM (ISAIAH 17:1-11)

4. What will the coming desolation look like for Syria and Ephraim? What will this force people to do? What can we learn from this?

Isaiah 17:12-18:7 should be seen as one section. It probably addresses the nations who fear the ever-spreading branches of the Assyrian empire. Ethiopia (the land beyond Cush) had taken over Egypt (Cush) and may have been sending ambassadors to try to gather the nations against Assyria. But God tells his people to send messengers back to Ethiopia: God will swiftly lop off the branches of the enemy (Assyria). Ultimately, God's vision is that people will no longer send tribute to Ethiopia for help, but Ethiopia will bring tribute to the Lord of Hosts on Mount Zion.

ISAIAH 19-20

1. (19:1-10) What will happen when the LORD rides “on a swift cloud” against **Egypt**? Where appropriate, compare the description of judgment to events in Exodus.

2. (19:11-15) Who is God making fun of here and why would he make fun of them? As we seek answers and security from various people, how can this text be a helpful warning to us?

3. (19:16-25) What is God’s aim in his judgment against Egypt? What strikes you as significant from these pictures God gives of his plans for Egypt, etc.?

4. (19:16-25) As we live in this time when God has begun to fulfill these promises, but not yet completed them, how all do you think we should react to reading God’s vision for his kingdom?

5. (20:1-6) What does God command Isaiah to do as a sign against Egypt and Cush? Why would God tell him to do this (since Egypt would never see Isaiah as a sign/warning)?

ISAIAH 21-22

Fallen is Babylon, again? **Isaiah 21:1-10** speaks of the coming destruction of **Babylon**. The famously repeated phrase “fallen, fallen is Babylon” speaks of Babylon’s fall as if it has already happened. The fall is certain. This language is repeated in **Revelation 14 and 18** (this reminds us of how Babylon became symbolic of a repeated historical city/pattern). It always seems like Babylon keeps rising up, but we can take hope: its ultimate demise is as certain as it was then.

Isaiah 21:1-10 is challenging because God already described the demise of Babylon in Isaiah 13-14 as a happy occasion for God’s people, yet Isaiah is upset at Babylon’s fall here (21:3-4). I’ll present *one* common way to harmonize this discrepancy. While Babylon was finally overthrown in 539 BC and this was great news for God’s captive people then, this was not Babylon’s only trial. In fact, Babylon’s largest *destruction* happened in 689 BC. Babylon had been controlled by Assyrian kings since the 800s BC, but Babylonian rulers repeatedly rebelled. This text was probably written in the late 700s during a time when Babylon was **not** controlled by an Assyrian king. **Isaiah 39** shows us how King Hezekiah of Jerusalem actually had a good relationship with Babylon. Jerusalem probably had hopes in the days of Hezekiah that Babylon could be their ally in overthrowing the destructive Assyrian empire. But, Babylon’s gods will not be able to save her just as alliances with Babylon and Egypt will not be able to save Jerusalem. In this interpretation, the “traitor” and “destroyer” is Assyria (*cf.* 33:1) while verse 2 would be depicting what Isaiah overhears in his vision from the kings of Judah and Babylon (i.e., “We’ve had enough of Assyria’s reign of terror. Let’s put an end to this!”). But Isaiah is dismayed because he knows how their plans will end. Our hope against political and economic demise is not in any human alliance nor in military strength, but in trust of the LORD of hosts.

What time of the night? **Isaiah 21:11-12** contains a simple message, but our lack of contextual clarity makes determining its significance challenging. **Edom** (Dumah/Seir) calls to a watchman (Isaiah?) wanting to know the time of the night. Night is probably symbolic of political darkness and oppression. Edom wants to know when day is coming, when oppression will end. The answer? Morning is coming... but so is more night. A time of lasting day - freedom - is not here yet. Inquire again later. This would have been a discouraging, yet realistic picture of the world. We want to know when the darkness will be over, but the reality is that - in this era - any periods of light are always followed by periods of night. The everlasting daylight is not here... yet.

The glory of Kedar will come to an end. **Isaiah 21:13-17** says that **Kedar's** (“mighty”) glory will soon end. Kedar was a large city in Arabia. Isaiah tells the Dedanites and Temanites that Kedar’s fall is so certain that they need to get ready with bread and water to help those who escape.

What do you mean by this exultation? **Isaiah 22:1-7** returns to chide **Jerusalem**. Isaiah knows a siege is coming (vs. 2b, 7) and he is terribly upset. None can comfort him over his soon to be dead daughter (Jerusalem). He weeps bitterly because he knows what is coming. And yet, Jerusalem is acting like they have no knowledge. People are partying on their roofs. The tumult and shouting in Jerusalem is happy now (vs. 2), but soon the shouts and tumult will be for a different reason: confusion as Jerusalem is trampled. While we should rejoice in the Lord and enjoy what he gives us, we should also join Isaiah and have a more somber mood amidst the mad exultation of our world. We should warn them. The ones around us who we love shout for joy now, but the Lord has a day when they will shout in confusion and terror.

ISAIAH 21-22 (continued)

1. **(22:8-11)** When trouble comes for Jerusalem, how will they respond (cf. 2 Kings 18:13-16; 20:20)? What was the LORD hoping for? What can we learn from this?

2. **(22:12-14)** When Jerusalem realizes she will not be able to save herself, how will she respond? What was the LORD hoping for? What can we learn from this?

3. **(22:15-22)** What was this Shebna - this servant over the king's household - planning and doing for himself at the time? What will happen to him instead?

Note the change in office that happens in **Isaiah 37:2**. The Lord didn't wait long to start fulfilling his word. While Isaiah is crying out that Jerusalem's doom is soon coming, Shebna is making great plans to dwell secure and even to be honored in his death. He is an individual example of Jerusalem's problem: they aren't taking the God's promise of destruction seriously and they aren't trusting in God to deliver them, they are trusting in themselves.

Note **Isaiah 22:20-25**. Shebna will be demoted and Eliakim will take his place. Eliakim will have great influence in the house of David and will receive great honor. People will see Eliakim as they see a sturdy peg on which they hang the heaviest of loads - they will start trusting in him. But ultimately Eliakim will be cut down too. J. Alec Motyer summarizes the message of this text well in his commentary on Isaiah. "Thus human beings are neither self-sufficient (Shebna) nor sufficient for others (Eliakim). In each case there is a fatal usurpation of the place due only to the Lord. Isaiah reiterates the message of 2:22, 'Stop trusting in man.'" (*Motyer, 186*).

ISAIAH 23

Use these notes to assist your study and meditation on the vision concerning **Tyre** in **Isaiah 23**.

Outline (from Gary Smith's Commentary on Isaiah 1-39)

Lament over the fall of proud Tyre	23:1-7	
Wail for merchant Tyre	1-3	
Wail, Tyre's trading partners	4-7	
Explanation of God's plan	23:8-14	
God's plan to humble Tyre	8-9	
No harbor, joy, or rest	10-12	
Like Babylon, Tyre will be destroyed	13-14	
Restoration after seventy years	23:15-18	
Forgotten for seventy years	15-16	
Restoration and gifts to God	17-18	(Smith, pg. 397)

Geographical Markers

Tarshish: most likely Tartessos of Spain - a far away trading partner of the sea.

Cyprus: large island not terribly far from Tyre; likely trading partner.

Sidon: very close to Tyre on the north; worked closely with Tyre and will fall with her.

Notes on Challenging Language

- Verse 4: Sidon (and Tyre) will be ashamed because their stronghold (the sea) has declared that the destruction to come will make it as if it had never had children at all. It will be as if everything Sidon and the sea did together never happened.
- Verse 6: It seems that Tyre used to restrain Tarshish (vs. 10), but this verse speaks of a reversal of fortunes. The refugees of Tyre and Sidon are instructed to seek refuge in Tarshish.
- Verse 10: J. Alec Motyer has a helpful note on this verse in his Isaiah Commentary. "Verse 12 should be translated, 'Traverse your land like the Nile, Daughter of Tarshish; no longer is there restraint.' Tarshish can move without restraint through her own land as the Nile through Egypt since the power of Tyre has been broken." (Motyer, pg. 191).
- Verse 13: The land of the Chaldeans suffered a difficult blow in 703 BC. Isaiah is telling Tyre to look at what Assyria did to their land. Like Babylon, Tyre should start wailing now (v. 14).

Summary

Tyre and Sidon were masters of trade via the sea. Like a prostitute, Tyre was willing to travel anywhere and do business with any nation for money. They became prideful, so it was time to dishonor her (23:9). Her allies will be in anguish (23:5), but those restrained by her will rejoice (23:10). "Sennacherib laid the mainland waste in 701 BC and did vast damage to Tyrian trade. According to Erlandsson 'only with the decline of Assyria around 630 did Tyre regain complete independence and the capability of creating new riches,'" (Motyer, pg. 192). Verses 15-18 speak of this hope for Tyre. Like a forgotten prostitute, she will go about the city singing many songs to get attention. Tyre had provided materials for Solomon's temple, but Tyre will be restored to help with the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 3:7). But the return from captivity and the assistance of Tyre were only shadows of the future fulfillment of this text (Isa. 60:5ff; Rev. 21:24-26; see Motyer, pg. 193). Deuteronomy 23:18 forbade a prostitute's wages from coming into the LORD's house, but this converted prostitute won't hoard her wealth any more, but her future wealth will be holy to the Lord (23:18-19; cf. Luke 7:11ff). Many depend on their wealth, but God's aim is to humble and convert the nations so they will use their strength for his name.

INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 24-27

Isaiah 24-27 can be a challenging section to interpret because the destruction described seems so complete while the life and joy described seems so permanent and full. It seems to point towards God's end times judgment and a salvation. What is being described here? A summary of Isaiah 13-23? Something future for them, but past for us? Something now? Something future? These are the questions that can plague readers of this section. But asking "when?" isn't always the most helpful question. If that was the most important question God wanted us to ask, he probably would have made the answer to that question more clear (cf. Tyre in 23:15). "What?" is often a far more important question to ask and it can help us read with the eyes God desires. However, let's indulge our "when?" curiosity a little so we can focus on the important "what?"

Noticing how this section is alluded to in the New Testament writings is helpful. When John the Baptist sends messengers from prison to ask Jesus if he really is the one to come (it's tough to believe that when you are in prison), Jesus' response alludes to many texts in Isaiah. **Luke 7:22**, *"And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them."* These signs were associated with the reversal of sins curses that would take place when God's kingdom broke into the world. The reference to the dead being raised up could be taken as an allusion to **Isaiah 26:19**, *"Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise."*

John describes the experience of the souls around God's throne in the terms of **Isaiah 25:8**. **Revelation 7:17**, *"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."* Yet, he also uses this imagery when he speaks of the experience of God's people in the resurrection to come in **Revelation 21:4**. *"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*

When Paul speaks of the day when all the dead in Christ are bodily raised to put on imperishable bodies, he alludes to **Isaiah 25:8**. **1 Corinthians 15:54**, *"When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'"*

There are other allusions (cf. Matthew 8:11-12 and Isaiah 25:6), but we have enough evidence to start drawing conclusions. As you can see, the "when" does not seem to be very specific or important to nail down. Isaiah 24-27 speaks of judgment that will consume the earth. It speaks of a curse devouring the earth because of sin. It speaks of a day when those curses will be ended. It speaks of the songs people will sing in the day salvation is brought. It also speaks at times from the perspective of people who are still waiting for that salvation. Based on Jesus' allusion in Isaiah 26:19, it seems the days of God reversing the curses of sin began in Jesus' first coming. Based on Paul's allusion to Isaiah 25:8, it seems that this reversal of curses and destruction of God's enemies will not be completed until the resurrection in the last day. From our perspective, this text refers to the past, present, and future. This aligns with how we have interpreted Isaiah alongside **Acts 3:19-21**. When we repent, we enjoy times of refreshing from the Lord (refreshing that Isaiah spoke of). But, we still wait for the restoration of all the things about which the prophets spoke. Jesus will remain in heaven until this time for full restoration. Per the judgment language in Isaiah 24-27, Paul says in **1 Corinthians 15:25** Christ is reigning until God puts all enemies are under his feet. Enemies have been, are, and will be put under his feet. Today, we are tasting the powers of the age to come, but we are still waiting for this age to fully come (cf. Hebrews 6:5). Now, onto more important things. *What* are we tasting? *What* is the age to come?

THE CHIASTIC STRUCTURE OF ISAIAH 24-27

This chiastic outline of Isaiah 24-27 was authored by J. Alec Motyer in his Isaiah commentary

A1	The Lord's harvest from a destroyed world (24:1-13) Destruction (1-12) Gleanings (13)
B1	The song of the world remnant (24:14-16a)
C1	The sinful world overthrown (24:16b-20)
D1	The waiting world (24:21-23)
E1	The song of the ruined city (25:1-5)
F	MOUNT ZION (25:6-12)
E2	The song of the strong city (26:1-6)
D2	The waiting people of God (26:7-21)
C2	Spiritual forces of evil overthrown (27:1)
B2	The song of the remnant of the people (27:2-6)
A2	The Lord's harvest from a destroyed people (27:7-13) Destruction (7-11) Gleanings (12-13)

(Motyer, pg. 194-5)

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 28-35

This partial introduction to Isaiah 28-35 was authored by J. Alec Motyer in his Isaiah commentary

"As we shall see, the occasion is that of the 'Egyptian alliance' ... in the days of Hezekiah. Judah is seen willfully refusing the way of trust in the Lord for trust in Egypt; Egypt is revealed as blustering and ultimately ineffective; and the Assyrian army, bending its colossal power to punish the rebels, is destroyed by the/(an) angel of the Lord..."

"Chapter 28-35 have their own six-part unity, marked by the recurrence of the word 'Woe' or 'Ho!' (28:1; 29:1, 15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1). The presentation is balanced between the first three woes, offering principles of divine action, and the second three, giving matching applications to history and eschatology.

Principles

28:1-29 When God's people reject his word (9-13) and covenant (14-15), destruction follows (18-22), held within divine purposes (23-29)

29:1-14 There is disaster and deliverance (1-8) but historical deliverance does not change people spiritually. This needs a further divine action (9-14), which is already planned

29:15-24 People may think to run the world without God (15), but he is sovereign and his transforming purposes (16-17) will work out spiritually (18-19), morally and socially (20-21), fulfilling what began in Abraham (22) and establishing a truly renewed people (23-24)

Applications

30:1-33 Refuge is sought in Egypt (1-7), rejecting the Lord's word (8-12), but his ultimate (13-26) and immediate (27-33) purposes are settled

31:1-32:30 Divine deliverance scorns both Egypt's help and Assyria's enmity (31:1-9). Beyond lies the perfect kingdom with true king (32:1) and transformed people (3-8). The pattern of history will be repeated: overthrow (9-14) and transformation (15-20)

33:1-35:10 Treacherous people (33:1, 8) may seem to rule but divine sovereignty remains (33:3, 10). The perfect kingdom (33:13-24), morally and socially (33:15) and spiritually (33:24), will come. The enemy will be finally destroyed (chapter 34) and the redeemed will gather to Zion (chapter 35)"

(Motyer, pg. 227-8)

ISAIAH 24-27

1. Isaiah 24 describes the current plight of the earth, the future destruction on it, and even the response to God's judgments (24:14-16a). What is the current situation of the earth? What does it look like/will it look like when God brings devastation on it?

2. Isaiah 25 is a prayer both of thanksgiving to God for his future works (spoken of in the past tense) and of testimony to others about God's future works. What stands out to you as awesome and praiseworthy about what God is doing and will do in the world?

3. Isaiah 26 seems to be a song of what God's people will sing in the restored city of God (1-6), a prayer expressing hope in God to act (7-18), and God giving assurance to his people while they wait for him (19-21). What stands out to you from each section?

4. Isaiah 27 declares the reversal that God's judgments will bring in the future. What hope does God give his people here? How will Jacob be dealt with until this day?

ISAIAH 28

1. (28:1-6) What picture does God paint of **Ephraim**? How does God plan to deal with them?

Motyer characterizes the scene in 28:7-22 as a possible “leadership banquet celebrating the return of the ambassadors from Egypt (cf. 30:1-7), secure in the agreement they have signed (14-15), with Isaiah intruding as a disgusted watcher,” (Motyer, pg. 231).

2. (28:7-13) “*These also...*” refers to the leaders of **Jerusalem** (7, 14). How does Isaiah describe what he sees (7-8) and hears (9-10) from them? How will the Lord respond to this (11-13)?

Notice vs. 10 and 13. While the ESV rightly *translates* “precept upon precept,” it doesn’t capture how this *sounded* in Hebrew. The Easy-to-Read Version captures the sound of vs. 10 and 13 well: “*Saw lasaw saw lasaw, Qaw laqaw qaw laqaw, Ze'er sham ze'er sham.*” It sounded like unintelligible chatter - that of a baby in vs. 10 and that of a foreigner in vs. 13. There are two main options for interpreting vs. 9-10. Regarding vs. 10, option #1 has the priests and prophets mocking the teaching of Isaiah as pedantic and boring (blah blah blah). Option #2 has Isaiah mocking their counsel as pedantic, drunken nonsense. Ultimately, since they reject God’s counsel towards rest, God will speak to them by foreign lips. Then YHWH’s word really will sound like unintelligible chatter (13).

3. (28:14-22) God offers a stone that Jerusalem can cling to in distress, but what is their attitude toward this? Characterize how we might see this attitude today. How will God handle them?

By the time Judah realizes their covenant with death [Egypt] is insufficient, it will be too late. They will be terrified. They thought their covering was adequate, but it will turn out to be like a bed that is too short and a blanket too narrow (19b-20). Therefore, Isaiah offers two parables in vs. 23-26 and vs. 27-29 to encourage them to listen to God’s counsel. God teaches farmers to not plow continually, but to stop to sow seed. Furthermore, farmers use the Lord’s counsel as they harvest different crops in appropriate ways. The rulers of Judah need to note how farmers don’t reject this simple counsel. Pride ruined Ephraim, so Judah should stop scoffing (22) and listen to the simple path of belief (16) and rest (12) God offers.

ISAIAH 29

NOTES: The word “ariel” refers to Jerusalem in (see vs. 8, “Zion”) and to an “altar hearth” in vs. 2c. Ariel will become like an ariel. The historical reference for 29:1-8 is probably Sennacherib’s attack on Jerusalem in 701 BC (cf. Isaiah 36-37).

1. (29:1-8) What all does Isaiah prophesy will happen to Ariel (Jerusalem)? How would this cause Ariel to feel? Why would God cause this all to happen? (note similarity to Isaiah 10:28-34).

STRUCTURE (29:9-14)

A	Divine declaration (9-10)
B	Human condition (11-12)
B'	Human condition (13)
A'	Divine declaration (14)

(Similar to Motyer, pg. 238-9)

2. (29:9-14) ATTITUDES TOWARDS GOD’S WORD

a) **(28:7-13)** What was the attitude toward Isaiah’s teaching? How would God handle this?

b) What does God declare here that he has done/will do towards the prophets and wise men?

c) What is the attitude of the people towards the vision of Isaiah here (29:11-12)?

d) How do the people behave toward the Lord on the outside (29:13)?

e) What warnings and lessons can we draw from Isaiah 28:7-13 and 29:9-14?

3. (29:15-21) Since the clay is acting like it is the potter, how all does God declare that he will reverse everything in the future?

4. (29:22-24) How did Jacob feel when he saw his children before? What would change and why?

ISAIAH 30

STRUCTURE (30:1-33)	A ¹	Contemporary events: Egypt no help (1-7)	
	B ¹	Coming human events: the refusal of the word, the way of death (8-17)	
	B ²	Coming divine events: the waiting God, the sure glory (18-26)	
	A ²	Contemporary events: Assyria no threat (27-33)	(Motyer, pg. 244)

NOTES: Zoan and Hanes are references to regions in Egypt. The Negeb was an arid region in Southern Judah on the way to Egypt. KM Hebrew Dictionary says of "Rahab": a sea monster of chaos that opposes God; used of the land of Egypt..."

1. (30:1-7) What were Jerusalem's leaders doing? What does God say about this?
2. (30:8-17) What was God offering Judah? What was Judah's response to God's messengers?
3. (30:8-17) Why? (see #2) How all were they planning to keep safe? How will this work out?
4. (30:1-17) How and/or in what situations could we be tempted to act in similar ways? Explain.
5. (30:18-26) What change will happen in future days for those who will wait for the Lord?
6. (30:27-33) What will God do now to Israel's enemies? How will Judah feel when this happens?

This chapter presents a shocking picture of YHWH. He has relentlessly offered Judah rest and they have stubbornly refused it. Yet, God will crush Judah's enemies and cause her to sing for joy.

ISAIAH 31-32

STRUCTURE (31-32)	A ¹	Prologue: disaster and deliverance (31:1-5)	
	B ¹	Call to return in the light of future and immediate prospects (6-9)	
	C ¹	The King and the new society (32:1-8)	
	B ²	Call to hear in the light of immediate and future prospects (9-14)	
	C ²	The Spirit and the new society (15-18)	
A ²	Epilogue: humiliation and blessedness (19-20)		(Motyer, pg. 254)

1. (31:1-5) Why does Judah trust Egypt? Why is it so foolish for them to trust Egypt?

Isaiah 31:6-9 urges his children to consider their current actions in light of the future. One day, the Assyrians will fall without a sword being raised, their mighty will be in terror, and people will throw away their idols. So, they should return to YHWH now. This logic can motivate us today. One day, at the Lord's coming, all will wish they had thrown away their idols. What turning back do you need to do now?

2. (32:1-8) What hope does God promise and what are the agents of this hope? As a contrast, how were people behaving at that time?

3. (32:9-14) What does God call for? Why? Why is this so shocking for *these* women to hear?

4. (32:15-20) What transformation does God promise? Who is the agent of this? When do we see this *start* to play out in Scripture?

This is a picture of God's life-giving presence being poured upon his people and creation - giving life as water in a desert. God began pouring out his Spirit in Acts 2. In faith and baptism, God pours his Spirit on us richly - causing us to experience a renewal (Tit. 2:5-6). We are the temple of the Lord through the Holy Spirit - individually and collectively (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Eph. 2:22). God's presence inside us causes spiritual fruit (Gal. 5:22-23). The Spirit seals us with God's image and is a downpayment on our full inheritance (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14). But we have only received the *firstfruits* of the Spirit (Rom. 8:23). We can thank God for what he has done in us through the Spirit today, and we should long for the day when God's Spirit will give life more abundantly to his people and creation, as Isaiah pictures here.

ISAIAH 33

Isaiah 21:2 and 33:1 refers to Assyria as a destroyer and betrayer. Assyria probably earned this name because of events similar to **2 Kings 18:13-17ff**. In that instance, Sennacherib king of Assyria mowed down the cities of Judah and eventually came to Jerusalem. Sennacherib demanded 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold from King Hezekiah of Judah - only then would he leave. Hezekiah obliged and paid up the tribute. But Assyria didn't keep their word. They came back for more.

1. (33:1-6) Keeping in mind Jerusalem's previous attitudes towards Isaiah's message in chapters 28-32, what all do they confidently state here? Explain how this could be important for us to keep in mind when we as individuals, communities, cities, and countries face dark times.

NOTES: As you read 33:7-12, remember how Jerusalem tried to save herself. Also, Motyer suggests that Lebanon represents a permanent city, Sharon - beautiful, Bashan and Carmel - fertile (Motyer, pg. 265).

2. (33:7-12) What vision does Isaiah see here? Why would YHWH arise and be exalted now?

3. (33:13-16) Considering previous attitudes towards YHWH in chapters 28-32, how do they consider him now? What do they realize? Why do they finally realize this?

4. (33:17-22) What hopeful vision of Zion's future does Isaiah paint here?

Verses 23-24 seem to summarize and expand the message of this chapter. Jerusalem is an unkept ship, but even the weakest among them will take spoil. She will be healthy and forgiven her iniquities.

ISAIAH 34-35

1. (34:1-17) What is the message of Isaiah's oracle here? What stands out to you as important, interesting, or applicable from Isaiah 34? Note New Testament allusions to this chapter.

Isaiah 34 declares God's anger and destruction against all nations and the host in heaven. This chapter can be challenging to interpret since the target of God's anger seems to vary. While verses 1-4 refers to "*all the nations*" and "*all the host of heaven*," verses 5-6 refer to God's judgment descending upon Edom. Edom was a nation that descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob (Israel). It was foretold that Israel and Edom would struggle against each other (Gen. 34:22-23). Edom was hostile and unhelpful toward Israel (Num. 20:14-21), so God prophesied that Edom would be dispossessed (Num. 24:18). Saul routed Edom (1 Sam. 14:47) and David made them his servants (2 Sam. 8:14). But Edom made a comeback when Solomon turned from the Lord (1 Kings 11:14-22). Later, Edom would stand aloof, gloat, and seize spoil when Judah was destroyed (cf. Ezek. 25:12:14; 35:1-36:15; Obad. 10-14). Edom was heartless toward his brother Israel. Just as Babylon often represents the arrogant city that rises above its place, Edom seems to often represent enemies of God's people. Though a temporary judgment may have descended upon Edom, it would have only been a taste of the day when God slays all the physical and spiritual hostiles - for the judgment in this chapter seems to refer to a more permanent and global judgment for the cause of Zion. Second Peter 3:2 says it is helpful for us to remember predictions like these from the holy prophets. Why?

2. (35:1-10) What is the message of Isaiah's oracle here? What stands out to you as important, interesting, or applicable from Isaiah 34? Note New Testament allusions to this chapter.

Isaiah 35 offers an encouraging vision of the transformation of a desert and of the creation of a safe highway in the desert that leads to Zion. It may be possible to interpret this as the transformation of the desert of Isaiah 34, but it is more likely Isaiah is referring to the desert Israel would become (Isa. 32-33). Not only did Isaiah portray the whole land of Israel as a desert in Isaiah 32, he says in 33:7-9 that their highways would lie waste and their land would languish and wither away. The vision of Isaiah 35 directly reverses the picture in 33:7-9. God would make Israel a desert, but he will later rise to bring eternal retribution against their enemies (Isa. 34) and life to their own land (Isa. 35). God would create a safe highway for them to return to Zion. Many images in Isaiah 34-35 are picked up by Jesus and the writers of the New Testament. We can see how the space around us was like a dry land, but waters have broken forth around us. We are the redeemed returning to Zion on the Way of Holiness (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22).

ISAIAH 36-37

Isaiah 36-39 serves as a perfect bridge between the first and second portions of Isaiah's vision. Many themes from Isaiah's preaching in Isaiah 1-35 find their completion in this narrative section - including many historical predictions (*cf.* 10:5-34; 29:1-8; 31:6-9). Other themes introduced in this section are also picked up in Isaiah 40-66, including God's purpose to prove to everyone that he alone is God.

- 1. (36:1-10)** What is Judah's situation? How does the Rabshakeh try to discourage Hezekiah?
- 2. (36:11-20)** How does the Rabshekah try to discourage the soldiers and people of Jerusalem?
- 3. (36:21-37:7)** How do King Hezekiah and his servants respond to the Rabshekah's threats? What does Isaiah declare?
- 4. (37:8-20)** What stands out to you from King Hezekiah's prayer regarding the further threats?
- 5. (37:21-39)** What stands out to you from God's response to Hezekiah concerning Sennacherib?
- 6. (36-37)** As you meditate on these chapters, what can we learn from what happens here?

ISAIAH 38-39

Keep in mind that **Isaiah 38** takes place in the midst of the Assyrian crisis from Isaiah 36-37 (*cf.* 38:1, 6).

1. (38:1-8) What stands out to you from Hezekiah's predicament and interaction with the Lord?

2. (38:9-22) What stands out to you from Hezekiah's reflections after he recovered?

It seems Isaiah sets up a deliberate contrast between Ahaz's (7:10-13) and Hezekiah's (38:22) responses to personal and communal threats. Ahaz refused to trust in the Lord and even to ask for a sign from him whereas Hezekiah both sought the Lord for help and asked for signs to know God would act. God is continually pictured as ever-present, ready to answer prayer, and eager to prove he will be faithful so Jerusalem can trust him. There is a strong lesson in this contrast: the problem throughout Isaiah rarely seems to be "Will God act?" but rather, "Will his children ask?"

3. (39:1-8) Consider Hezekiah's actions in light of Isaiah's many oracles regarding mankind (*cf.* 2:22). Why all do you think Hezekiah does this? What opportunity does he miss here?

4. (39:1-8) Contrasting with what Hezekiah may have hoped, what will happen? How might we mistakes similar to Hezekiah's today?

REVIEW OF INTRODUCTION AND ISAIAH 1-39

Many wonder *why* we should read Isaiah. Others want to know *how*. There are healthy and unhealthy ways of reading Isaiah. Consider the texts below as a brief guide to healthy reading.

1. As you read the texts below, consider **why** we should read Isaiah/the prophets and/or **how** we should read it. If you are able, also think of ways we **should not** read or think of Isaiah.

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Romans 15:4

1 Peter 1:10-12

2 Peter 1:19-21

Acts 3:19-21

2. What kind of literature is Isaiah? How should/shouldn't we read this kind of literature?

3. What are some key themes from Isaiah 1-39?

4. What is the general structure of Isaiah's written message?

1-39:

1-12:

13-27:

28-39:

40-66:

40-48:

49-55:

56-66:

ISAIAH 40

Verse 27 may explain why Jerusalem needs to hear the message throughout this chapter.

1. (40:1-11) What messages is this voice of consolation supposed to cry out to Jerusalem and the surrounding cities? What stands out to you as interesting or important here?

“Although the prophet’s audience in Jerusalem had many fears, God announced that he was stronger than any nation or any pagan gods, controls history, and will eventually establish justice on earth through his servant (40:12-42:13),” (Smith, pg. 3).

2. (40:12-26) What stands out to you from this “interrogation” exposing God’s wisdom/might?

3. (40:27-31) Considering that people could be hearing/reading this in different historical contexts, why all might Israel feel this way (vs. 27)? Why/when might we feel this way? What do we need to understand?

4. (40:29-31) How is this power and renewing of strength possible? What does this look like in practice/reality?

ISAIAH 41:1-42:13

“Although the prophet’s audience in Jerusalem had many fears, God announced that he was stronger than any nation or any pagan gods, controls history, and will eventually establish justice on earth through his servant (40:12-42:13),” (Smith, pg. 3). **41:1** plays on **40:31** — a key question this section asks is, “Who will Israel and the coastlands draw their strength from?”

1. **(41:1-4)** What is the message of verses 1-4? What is God’s invitation?

2. **(41:5-16)** How are the nations responding to this one who tramples from the east? How does God want his servant Israel to respond?

3. **(41:5-16)** What was God promising to do? Put yourself in their shoes. Why would God’s plea be so challenging to listen to and obey?

Notice **41:17-20**. God’s people have been depicted as desperate for water since the days of Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 21; 26). Israel thirsted in the desert, but God brought out water abundantly (Ex. 17:1-7; Num. 20:1-3). This need for water has been present in Isaiah too. When Isaiah went to assure Ahaz of God’s protection in the Syria/Israel crisis, it seems Ahaz was checking the water supply (Is. 7:3). This was a concern in Hezekiah’s day with the Assyria crisis as well (Is. 22:11; 36:2, 12, 16). But God promises in Isaiah 35 and here: I will bring out water for my poor, thirsty people in the desert so all can see what the Holy One has done. Consider how God would also desire that we would seek him to quench our thirst today so that all would see our satisfaction in him and know he has done it (*cf.* John 14:13-15). Our hope is that God will finally quench our thirst with water from his throne (Rev. 22:1, 17).

4. **(41:21-29)** What is God’s challenge here? Why is God sending a herald of good news now?

5. **(42:1-9)** What all will God’s servant do? How does this answer previous concerns in Isaiah?

42:10-13 is the singing and praise God is calling for in light of what he is doing. Note how God calls for the singing to come not from Israel, but from Kedar (Arab), Sela (Edom), coastlands, and the ends of the earth.

ISAIAH 42:14-43:28

“Many of God’s people have acted sinfully like his blind servants; therefore they were fearful because of their present crisis of divine judgment. Nevertheless, in the end God promises to be with them, forgive their sins, and eventually restore them to their land (42:14-44:23),” (Smith, pg. 3).

Israel has been described as spiritually blind and deaf to Isaiah’s message throughout the book (6:10; 29:9, 18). They hear and see, but not really. Isaiah’s message offers rest, but they are bored by his message and too lazy to listen and read it (28:7-13; 29:11-12). Yet, Isaiah 35:5 and this section offer an amazing hope that is anticipated in many of Jesus’ signs (*cf.* John 9, etc.) and *hopefully* fulfilled in us.

1. (42:14-17) After God has held his peace for so long, what will he now do?

2. (42:18-25) What is God explaining here? Considering God’s declaration/promise in vs. 14-17, why would he need to explain this?

3. (43:1-13) What is God’s promise to Israel? Why is he doing this?

4. (43:14-21) What is God promising to do? Explain God’s use of this imagery. Why would he use this language?

5. (43:22-28) Despite God’s promises, how was Israel currently behaving? Compare with Exodus from Egypt (*cf.* Deut 9:6-7ff; Amos 5:25). What can we learn from this?

ISAIAH 44:1-23

1. (44:1-5) What does God promise to do? What will this cause? How does should this inform/affect our interpretation of New Testament passages regarding God's Spirit?

2. (44:6-8) What is the Lord's argument for why he is the only God? Consider this in contrast to other "gods"/religions. How can we use this same argument today?

3. (44:9-20) What stands out to you from Isaiah's portrait of idolatry? As you consider the folly of idolatry portrayed here, what lessons do you learn?

God's plea to Israel in **verses 21-22** is to not forget this picture of idolatry. Idols are formed by humans and cannot help their makers, but the Lord formed Jacob and will not forget him. He will forgive and redeem him. **Verse 23** reminds us of the purpose of God's words and predicted activity by ending this second song (42:14-44:14) with a call for all creation to glorify God for what he has done. In **Isaiah 1:2**, the heavens and earth were called to note Israel's rebellion; now they are called to proclaim Yahweh's faithfulness.

ISAIAH 44:24-45:25

The Lord has been assuring Israel that he hasn't forgotten them and has been preparing them to hear a new message of hope. These themes will continue as God urges them to listen, but the comforting prophecies and challenging indictments will continue to grow in specificity - especially here.

1. (44:24-28) What is God's message to his people? What is his purpose in saying all this?

2. (45:1-7) What all does God say he will do for/with Cyrus? What are God's purposes in this?

Verse 8 is God's call to creation to bring about the salvation, righteousness, and fruitfulness he is aiming for. This fruitfulness is the purpose of God's work with Cyrus, but also his purpose and vision for Israel and the world throughout Isaiah. The symbolic vision throughout Isaiah seems to be this: God nurtured his vineyard so it would be fruitful, but bad fruit was borne, so God afflicted the earth and made it a desert, but only that he might pour out water and cause the earth to be full of fruitfulness - as he always intended.

3. (45:9-13) What is God's warning to Cyrus (or to any who would stand in God's way)? Contemplate God's purposes here with Cyrus and with us ultimately. How might we tend to "strive with him who formed" us?

4. (45:14-19) How does God declare he will be exalted and idol-makers shamed?

5. (45:20-25) What is God's declaration and plea to the nations? What will happen in the end that should motivate Israel and the nations?

ISAIAH 46

NOTE: Bel and Nebo are two prominent Babylonian gods. Many Babylonians were named by these gods.

1. (46:1-7) What contrast is presented here? What is God's implied plea with the house of Jacob?

2. (46:1-7) How do modern idols fit this contrast? Give examples and discuss.

3. (46:8-13) What all does God want the transgressors/stubborn to realize?

4. (46:8-13) Considering your previous answer, how should this inform our evangelistic approaches/purposes as the "witnesses" of God?

ISAIAH 47

“After proving God’s superiority over all idols by pointing to his ability to carry, deliver, save, declare what will happen, and accomplish what he plans, now the prophet illustrates the powerlessness of the mighty Babylonian empire. While Zion looks forward to the time of God’s salvation (46:13), Babylon will soon face the day of its destruction,” (Smith, 216). **NOTE:** ESV’s “mistress” (vs. 5,7) may be better translated “queen.”

1. (47:1-4) What does Isaiah call the daughters of Babylon to do? Considering how they might appear now, what horrors does Isaiah say will come upon them? Why give this picture?

2. (47:5-11) What is Isaiah’s explanation for why the daughter of Babylon will go into darkness and for why this will be so shocking? What warnings can you glean from this today?

3. (47:12-15) What does Isaiah call the Babylonians to do? What will be the result?

4. (47) These boasts and reliances - power, wealth, sorceries, idols, business - seemed to give Babylon solid, reliable places to stand for some time (hence their trust in them), but they would all fail. This should cause us to take a hard look at our own practices and potential reliances, loves, and idols. Of what might we be ashamed in a day of turmoil and wrath? How could you be caused to look foolish or to be ashamed?

NOTE: Isaiah 21, 47 and Jeremiah 51 provide much of the source imagery for John’s description of Babylon’s fall in Revelation 18.

ISAIAH 48

1. **(48:1-2)** Who is this message directed to? Explain what this type of person would look like.

2. **(48:3-5)** What were the former things God declared? What does he say he declared them? (compare with Jeremiah 44:15-18) How could you make the same mistake?

3. **(48:6-11)** Why all would God now do a new thing and defer his anger? What can we learn from this today - both when we see God afflict and when we see him restrain his anger?

NOTE: reference other translations like the NIV and NLT to help with the ambiguities in vs. 14-16.

In **verses 12-15** God is calling Israel to trust him as the one who was here before them and will be here after them, the one who made the ground they stand on, and who calls out the luminaries every night. Everyone needs to listen - no other god can claim or has claimed such things. As surely as God has done and does these things, the Lord has a "chosen ally" (NIV) who will perform God's purpose against Babylon. This ally - who would seem to be Cyrus - will be successful. Israel must have no fear.

Verse 16 introduces a new speaker. It seems most likely that the speaker is Isaiah - referring to himself (as he did in 8:17-18) - though others also see Cyrus or the servant of the Lord (Isaiah 49) as possible speakers here. Focus less on the identity of the speaker and more on the message he has been sent with.

4. **(48:16-19)** What message does God send his messenger with? How is this message meant to affect us?

5. **(48:20-22)** When God calls his people to leave Babylon, why does he see the need to encourage them with his past action (vs. 21) and with a warning (vs. 22)? Why would it be so challenging to heed God's call? How are we called to "go out from Babylon" today?

ISAIAH 49:1-50:3

1. (49:1-7) What is the big picture message from God's servant to the "peoples from afar"?

Note in **verse 3** how God describes the speaker as "my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." God originally called the nation of Israel to be priests to the nations, but Isaiah has described them as wicked, deaf, and blind. But God promises to raise up a new servant who will be the Israel that Israel never was. Much of the gospels - especially Matthew 1-4 - pictures Jesus as the true Israelite who succeeds where Israel failed. The fulfillment of these images continues today. In line with Paul's statement in **Acts 13:47**, we can also be the light to the nations and true Israel of God.

2. (49:4-12) What is the concern of God's servant? How all does the Lord respond to his concerns? Summarize the various pictures and promises.

God promises a day of salvation in **verse 8** when he will help his servant - ensuring sure his labor was not in vain. Paul picks up this text in **2 Corinthians 6:1-2** to explain why he is encouraging the Corinthians. Paul encourages the Corinthians to not receive God's grace in vain because he was seeking to be the answer to Jesus' concern (labor in vain) and God's promise (help). Just as Paul worked together with God to ensure Jesus' labor isn't in vain, we can do the same by diligently encouraging one another to stay the course.

3. (49:13-14) What is Zion's response to God's promise to comfort his people? Why would the city feel this way? (NOTE: this concern sets up God's 3-fold response)

4. (49:15-50:3) In each section summarize the hope God gives Zion. As you note how God completed this work in the past, consider how we can draw hope from the images in this chapter as we look forward to the New Jerusalem/Zion.

49:15-21 —

49: 22-26 —

50:1-3 —

ISAIAH 50:4-51:8

1. **(50:4-9)** How does God's servant describe himself and his confidence?

2. **(50:10-11)** In light of verses 4-9, what is the application for Israel? How is the servant an example they should obey (remember the context of exile and the concern of 49:14).

Gary Smith's brief breakdown of Isaiah 51:1-8 is helpful. "The paragraph is structured around three imperative verbs that encourage listening to God (51:1, 4, 7), which are followed by three words of assurance and consolation." (Smith, pg. 308)

3. **(51:1-8)** In each section, identify what God wants his people to know and the reality/support he uses to back up his consolation.

51:1-3 —

51:4-6 —

51:7-8 —

ISAIAH 51:9-52:12

This poem is held together by four imperatives to “awake, awake” and to “depart, depart.” The people call to God to awake, but God returns the imperative to Jerusalem: prepare for the LORD to return to Zion.

1. **(51:9-16)** What is Zion’s plea to God? What is his response?
2. **(51:9-16)** Put yourself in the shoes of God’s city. Why is it so challenging to express the faith expressed here and to match the trust God calls for?
3. **(51:17-23)** What is God’s call to Jerusalem and his comfort for her in this passage?
4. **(52:1-6)** What does God call Zion to do here? Why? What motivates and moves God’s hand?
5. **(52:7-10)** What comforting picture does Isaiah paint here? How does this further inform our understanding of what the gospel is? How does Paul apply this text in **Romans 10:14-17**?
6. **(52:11-12)** What does God call his people to do because God reigns? Remembering how they would have applied this text, how does Paul call us to apply this text in **2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1**? Why can this be so challenging? (If it helps, consider this in light of Revelation 13:11-18)

ISAIAH 54

1. **(54:1-8)** Paint a picture of Israel's current outlook according to Isaiah. What picture does God want her to sing about and hope in?

2. **(54:1-8)** Consider this idea of the barren/desolate one having more children than the one who is married as more of a biblical theme and explanation of how God works — where all can we see God demonstrate this as the way he works across the Bible? What do we learn from this?

Paul quotes **54:1** in **Galatians 4:27** as part of an answer to a larger question about who God's people really are. There are other elements to this text, but his message to these Gentiles is one of assurance: circumcised Jews are children of Mt. Sinai and they are slaves (like Hagar), but we who have faith are children of the Jerusalem above and we are free. We are children of promise like Isaac. This is a good reminder: the assurances we are reading in Isaiah are ultimately for us as children of promise. As Paul says in **Galatians 6:15-16**, circumcision doesn't matter, so we who are a new creation are the Israel of God.

3. **(54:9-10)** What comforting image and reassurance does God give his people? How can we take comfort in this image? (see also Romans 8:31-39)

4. **(54:11-17)** What pictures does God use here to give Zion confidence in their city?

Jesus quotes **54:13** in **John 6:45** to explain why the Jews he is talking to aren't coming to him in faith. Only people who have learned from the Father will come to Jesus, because Isaiah said all the children of Zion will be "taught by God." These Jews probably saw themselves as the true Israel and Zion awaiting redemption because of their lineage and location. But they weren't actually listening to God. Here's a good reality check: do we think we are sharing/will share in Zion because of who our family is or because of the pew we sit in? All the true children of Zion are taught by God.

ISAIAH 55

1. (55:1-5) What is God's invitation here? Consider for yourself, how do you tend to spend your money/labor on that which does not satisfy? Why?

*Isaiah 55:3b-5 is somewhat challenging - this is my feeble attempt to explain and apply these words, but I welcome your thoughts in class to help us understand God's assurances here. In the past, God's covenants only seemed to benefit Abraham's offspring, but now God shows how his faithfulness to David will bless all nations. God now invites **all** the thirsty and poor to come - he will make an everlasting covenant with them and show them the faithful love he shows toward David. God promised David that his son would sit on his throne forever as long as his sons were faithful. David's sons were disobedient, so this covenant seemed to be in question. But Isaiah has been renewing people's hopes that a Davidic child would be born who would faithfully obey God and execute justice for Israel and the nations (Isaiah 9:1-7; 16:4b-5). God would honor his covenant to David by being faithful to a new king - Jesus. God showed Jesus, the son of David, steadfast love by raising him from the dead (cf. Acts 13:34) and by making him a witness and commander of the peoples. The exaltation of our leader leads to the glorification of us - Jesus' holy city and kingdom. We are now God's ambassadors. The nations now run to us for guidance and restoration.*

2. (55:6-9) What does God tell those who respond to his invitation to do? What is his reasoning?

3. (55:10-13) What further assurances does God give in vs. 10-11 and vs. 12-13 for why people should return to YHWH - the LORD?

4. (55) How can we use Isaiah 55, its invitation, and its promises to help us proclaim the good news to the world?

J.A. MOTYER'S INTRO TO ISAIAH 56-66

(THE FOLLOWING IS FROM PAGES 461-462 OF MOTYER'S ISAIAH COMMENTARY)

“Within the editorial unity of the Isaianic literature we are intended to read straight from 55:13 into 56 and to note that 56:1de recapitulates 51:5, the imminence of the Lord's ‘righteousness’ and ‘salvation’. We could therefore, entitle these final chapters, ‘Characteristics of a waiting people’. But, reading further, we discover that it is a world-wide people Isaiah has in mind (e.g. 56:1-8; 65:1; 66:18ff) and that while they engage themselves in this interim with seeking the blessings of an obedient life (56:1-8; 58:1-14) they are also to watch for new acts of the Lord. For at the heart of these chapters lies the vision of the Anointed One (59:21; 61:1-3; 61:10-62:7; 63:1-6) with the double task of salvation and vengeance (e.g. 61:2; 63:4-5). It is this figure, the Anointed Conquerer, who like the King in chapters 1-37 and the Servant in chapters 38-55, stamps his person and work on the final movement of Isaiah's thought as the following diagrammatic outline shows.

- A¹ The world-wide people keeping the Lord's Sabbath (56:1-8)
 - B¹ Two parties in tension: opposition, peace and no-peace (56:9-57:21)
- A² The Sabbath-test: standards for a holy people (58:1-14)
 - C¹ Sin and need: the Lord's people confess (59:1-13)
 - D The Lord and his Anointed: the day of vengeance, the year of redemption (59:14-63:6)
 - C² Sin and need: the Lord's people intercede (63:7-64:12)
- A³ The world-wide people responding (65:1)
 - B² Two parties in tension: opposition, inclusion, and exclusion (65:2-66:17)
- A⁴ The world-wide people keeping Sabbath with the Lord (66:18-24)

This balanced presentation has a distinct ‘story-line’: the Lord's world-wide people are introduced as the Sabbath-people and as such are called (56:1-8) to live in righteousness until the Lord's righteousness is revealed (56:1). But all is not well among those who claim to be the Lord's people. There is failure (56:10-11) and religious declension (57:3ff), as well as righteousness (57:1), contrition and humility (57:15), and between these two groups, tension and animosity even to the extent that the righteous are perishing (57:1). Yet, there is also the promise of peace (57:1-14), though not for all. But what is involved in this call for righteousness? The Sabbath (58:1-14) is the standard to be applied, but the initial command (58:1) to make the people aware of rebellion and sin indicates that it is a test which all alike fail. Consequently, in 59:1-13 the charge of sin is levelled (59:1-3), sin is described (4-8) and confessed (9ff.). But what can be done about it? The words ‘The LORD looked’ (59:15) indicate a dramatic turning point. Taking note of his people's inability to live up to the standards of righteousness he has set (56:1; 59:14), the hostility faced by those who would live by the truth and shun evil (59:15) and the absence of any to help (59:16), the Lord clothes himself for the tasks of salvation and vengeance (59:16-17). This thought forms an inclusio (63:4-5) to the whole mid-section. In the event, however, the Lord's proposed action devolves upon his Anointed One (61:1-2, 10; 63:1-6). The remaining chapters consist of prayer (63:7-64:12) and response (65:1-66:24). According to 62:6, the Anointed One appoints ‘watchmen’/‘remembrancers’ (*mazkirim*) to pray for divine intervention...

(Continued on the next page)

J.A. MOTYER'S INTRO TO ISAIAH 56-66 (continued)

“63:7 introduces a ‘remembrancer’ (‘azkir), praying that the Lord would ‘rend the heavens and come down’ (64:1). The divine response begins (65:1) by affirming the success of the objective world-wide people and proceeds to promise a final settlement; the apportioning of mutually exclusive destinies and the setting up of the new heavens and the new earth (65:2-66:17). The culmination of it all is the vision of the world-wide people keeping the Sabbath with the Lord (66:18-24). Thus, in the foregoing outline, sections A¹, B¹, A² and C¹ develop the theme of the needs of the true people of the Lord world-wide to be rescued from their experience of sin and failure and to be delivered from their enemies. The great central section (D) is the Lord’s commitment to this work of salvation and vengeance, acting through the person of the Anointed One, and sections C², A³, B², and A⁴ reveal the Lord, in answer to prayer, pledging to do all that he has promised. We would indeed be blind to not observe that 56:1 reflects precisely where the church stands today: looking back to the once-for-all redemption at Calvary (52:13-53:12) and awaiting a final act which will rescue the church from sin, failure and opposition and deal finally with any and every counterforce.” (Motyer, pg. 461-462)

ISAIAH 56-57

1. (56:1-8) What is God's hopeful message to foreigners and eunuchs (*cf.* Deut. 23:1)? How should they prepare to receive God's promises (*cf.* Isa. 5:7b)?

God's desire for foreigners to keep the Sabbath may seem out of place, but the Sabbath was not an arbitrary work restriction. It was a celebration of God's deliverance from Egypt (*cf.* Deut. 5:12-15) and an external sign of God's presence among his people (*cf.* Ezek. 20:12). Pharaoh didn't give Israel rest, but God rested and was refreshed on the seventh day, so he wanted his people to remember this and rest accordingly (*cf.* Exod. 31:12-17). Foreigners keeping the Sabbath would have been showing both a respect for Yawheh and a desire for inclusion in the covenant community. Of course, none of this is without the justice, righteousness, and covenant-keeping God desires. However, based on the words of James and the apostles in Acts 15 and Colossians 2:16-17, we should probably apply this more generally today: no matter who we are or where we are from, we who enjoy the grace of God should respect the place he has given us in his house by faithfully keeping God's covenant and commands today.

2. (56:9-57:2) Why does God call for the beasts to devour his watchmen/shepherds? What has their failure lead to? (NOTE: the NIV's paraphrase may capture the correct sense of 57:1-2)

3. (57:3-10) *Here, Isaiah addresses the "offspring of the adulterer and loose woman" - he characterizes the sins of this evil offspring as following in the steps of their parents (as a prostitute or adulteress carrying on an affair). This section is reminiscent of Hosea 1-3 and Ezekiel 16 and 23 and is a stark contrast with Isaiah 54's picture of Zion as a wife restored to her husband (Smith, pg. 466). What are these evil offspring doing to cause God to use such graphic language?*

4. (57:11-13) What stands out to you from God's final cry to this adulterous offspring?

5. (57:14-21) What is the surprising declaration of the "One who is high and lifted up" (*cf.* 6:1ff)? What do you learn from this text? How does it help better you appreciate our God?

ISAIAH 58-59

- 1. (58:1-5)** What disconnects exist between Judah and God here?
- 2. (58:6-14)** What kind of fasts and Sabbaths does God really want? What will be the result for them if they choose God's fasts and Sabbaths?
- 3. (58)** How could we fall prey to similar faults and misunderstandings with what God wants? In what ways should this chapter refine our approach to God?
- 4. (59:1-8)** There are many picturesque images of Judah's sins here. Characterize the general nature of their sins and explain why Isaiah makes their sins known to them in this context.
- 5. (59:9-15a)** How does Isaiah characterize the response of Judah? Consider, in what situations would verses 1-15 be helpful to share with others? (don't forget about vs. 1-2)
- 6. (59:15b-21)** How all does God declare he will handle this displeasing situation? What is God's ultimate goal in his actions?

ISAIAH 60

1. (60:1-9) Soak on this vision. Describe and explain the vision and picture Isaiah is painting. How should our knowledge of this vision affect our thinking and lives now?

2. (60:10-16) What picture is being painted here? How does this contrast with the past? How do we see this play out in reality?

3. (60:17-22) What hopeful vision does Isaiah paint of the future Zion here? How does John use and point to these pictures in **Revelation 21-22**?

ISAIAH 61-62

Keep in mind: Jesus said he was fulfilling this picture in **Luke 4:16-21**. It's possible Isaiah could be seen as the original Spirit-anointed proclaimer of good news, but Jesus is the truest embodiment of this picture.

1. (61:1-3) What is the mission statement of this one who is anointed with God's Spirit? How do you see these images play out in your's and others' lives?

2. (61:3b-9) What is God's plan with this group that has been rescued, healed, and comforted? (i.e., who will they be in the world? What will they do?) How should this shape your identity and your perception of yourself?

3. (62:1-12) What hopeful vision does this Spirit-anointed speaker paint of Zion's relationship with the Lord? What all does he call us to do until this vision is fully realized?

ISAIAH 63-64

As you read, keep in mind the previous visions of Zion: she is the broken down taunt of the nations, but she will be rebuilt and put on top of God's new world. "The watchmen are on the lookout" for this salvation to come, but now they see a terrifying person they don't initially recognize (Motyer, pg. 509).

1. (63:1-6) How is God characterized here? Why? How is this picture meant to affect us?

Bozrah was the capital city of Edom. Historically, Edom was heartless toward his brother Israel. Just as Babylon often represents the arrogant city that rises above its place, Edom seems to often represent enemies of God's people. Though a temporary judgment may have descended upon Edom, it would have only been a taste of the day when God slays all the physical and spiritual hostiles. See page 34 for more.

From this point on, much of the rest of Isaiah will address the servants of God as people who are anticipating God's promises - for judgment and for restoration - to be fully realized. In particular, 63:7-64:12 is a lament and a request for God to do his work. It is easily a prayer we could make ours today.

2. (63:7-14) What does Isaiah recount? Why? (In light of his call for God to act in 63:15-64:13)

3. (63:15-64:12) This section features a natural mixture of lament and hopeful questioning about the coming of God's salvation.

a) What stands out to you from Isaiah's characterization of Judah's lament? How do they feel?

b) In light of this lamentation, what all do they desire from God?

When Mark records Jesus baptism, he uses the language of the prayer in **Isaiah 64:1**. Isaiah prayed, "*Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down.*" Using the same language as the Greek translation of Isaiah, Mark records that Jesus saw "*heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.*" Mark is showing us that God is finally starting to answer this prayer in the Spirit-anointed person of Jesus.

J.A. MOTYER'S INTRO TO ISAIAH 65-66

(THE FOLLOWING IS FROM PAGES 522-523 OF MOTYER'S ISAIAH COMMENTARY)

“In these chapters there is a closely integrated structure, with balancing themes and a tremendous climax. The overall picture is the same as in 56:1-59:13. The Lord's people (his true, believing ones, often in these chapters called his ‘servants’) are set alongside others who are either compromisers or outright pagans. But it will not always be so, for the Lord will bring his servants into a new heaven, a new earth and a new Zion, while dreadful judgment awaits the rest. Undeniable greatness sits alongside unimaginable glories...

- A¹ The Lord's call to those who had not previously sought or known him (65:1)
 - B¹ The Lord's requital on those who have rebelled and followed cults (2-7)
 - C¹ A preserved remnant, his servants, who will inherit his land (8-10)
 - D¹ Those who forsake the Lord and follow cults are destined for slaughter because he called and they did not answer but chose what did not please him (11-12)
 - E Joys for the Lord's servants in the new creation. The new Jerusalem and its people (13-25)
 - D² Those who have chosen their own way and their improper worship. They are under judgment because the Lord called and they did not answer but chose what did not please him (66:1-4)
 - C² The glorious future of those who tremble at the Lord's word, the miracle children of Zion, the Lord's servants (5-14)
 - B² Judgment on those who follow cults (15-17)
- A² The Lord's call to those who have not previously heard (18-21)
- Conclusion: Jerusalem, pilgrimage centre for the whole world (22-24)

Like all ‘archway’ patterns, the first purpose of this is to draw attention to the central truth (E), the new creation and its new Zion. The second purpose is to show the steps to the fulfilment of the vision, the conditions upon which it can be enjoyed (A¹-D¹); and the third (D²-A²) is to reiterate and add greater fulness to those same truths. In the present pattern 66:22-24 could very well be included in A², for the topic is the same, but the particular emphasis on the Sabbath suggests that these verses were placed at the end to form an inclusio with 56:1-8 (with which there are marked similarities) and to conclude what has been a special emphasis throughout.” (Motyer, pg. 522-523)

ISAIAH 65

1. (65:1-7) What is God's response to the lament preceding this chapter? How does he characterize his people and his response to them?

2. (65:8-12) What assuring picture does God offer his servants? What will be the terrifying destiny of the others? Why? (note: Sharon was in West Israel and the Valley of Achor was in East Israel; "Fortune" may be an allusion to a Syrian/Phoenician god, Gad and "Destiny" to an Arabian god, "Meni")

3. (65:13-16) What stands out to you from the contrasting futures of "you" and God's servants? What is God's intention here?

4. (65:17-25) What stands out to you from Isaiah's vision of a new heavens and new earth? How should we interpret and apply this text? (cf. 2 Peter 3, esp. vs. 13; Revelation 21-22, esp. vs. 1-4)

ISAIAH 66

- 1. (66:1-2)** What do you believe the purpose of this statement here is? What is God trying to help his people (or the rebels) understand? (cf. 1 Kings 8:27-30)
- 2. (66:3-4)** Explain the meaning of God's depiction of those who will receive harsh treatment.
- 3. (66:5-14)** What picture does God paint of his coming deliverance and Zion's future in order to console his scorned servants? What stands out to you as significant or comforting here?
- 4. (66:15-21)** Describe God's two-fold vision of how he will restore Jerusalem (and the world). What stands out to you as interesting or significant here?
- 5. (66:22-24)** What final assurance does God give his servants - the righteous offspring - here?

It is helpful and encouraging to compare what Isaiah sees in chapters 56-66 with what John sees in Revelation 20-22. Though much of Revelation 20-22 draws from Ezekiel 37-48, what John saw has many similarities to and further expansions of the vision Isaiah proclaimed here.