

Book of Isaiah

LORD

of the Nations

Term 2 Study Booklet

About These Studies

Our Term 2 Bible Study series based on Isaiah 1-39 has nine pre-written studies. These studies are generally designed to be completed by your group after you have heard the passage preached on a Sunday. Each study consists of roughly seven to ten open-ended questions for your group to discuss.

It may help to think about these questions as 'discussion starters' rather than a set of questions to answer one after another. You should allow about 30 to 40 minutes for this discussion. The studies do not aim to guide your group in detailed exegesis of each passage.

Rather, they aim to:

- Revisit the exegesis that was presented in the Sunday sermon
- Help your group address remaining questions that you have about the passage
- Provide your group with ample opportunity to consider possible passage applications



This term we have again included some Head/Heart/Hand icons throughout the studies to help signal where a question is moving into application. The Head symbol indicates that the question is aimed at sharpening the way we **think**. The Heart symbol indicates a question more closely tied to our **desires/emotions/affections**. The Hand symbol indicates that we are getting more **practical** or moving toward **taking action**.

It is recommended that each group member listens to the relevant sermon before the group meeting. Members may also wish to listen to the corresponding episode of the Sermon Seasonings podcast (on the weeks when these are available).

Special thanks to Ross Hansen, Leigh Cartwright and Seb Lane who were involved in writing draft studies for this term. The studies have also been reviewed and given a final edit by Seb. The study booklet has been designed by Justine Kim. The Bible verses throughout this study booklet are generally quoted from New International Version (NIV), Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright© 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica Inc.

Special Request from our Mission Team – ‘2 for 2’

This term in Growth Group we want to continue encouraging group leaders and members to be thinking intentionally about those friends and family you have that do not yet know Jesus. We believe that only God can change the hearts of those who are dead in their sins. So, we must bring them before God in prayer.

If you are a leader it would be fantastic if you could continue to encourage each member of your group to choose two people in their life that they would particularly like to be praying for. Then share these names across the group and pray for them. It would be fantastic to spend some time early in the term praying together as a group for each member's 2 chosen people and then determine how you will keep praying together for these people ongoingly.

For example, our group (Braydon & Merryn's GG) will split in two's to pray for these people every second week as part of our normal group's time in prayer. This is just one way to keep these people in our prayers. Our Explore course will also be running again in Term 1 and Term 3 this year and could be an awesome goal to bring along the friend you have been praying for!

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Introduction

Author and Date

The first verse in the book of Isaiah begins like this, 'The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah' (Isaiah 1:1). Isaiah is the only author specifically identified here and in the rest of the book. His name also occurs multiple times throughout Isaiah 1-39. There is a technical debate amongst scholars related to multiple authorship, in part because Isaiah's name is not mentioned in chapters 40-66 and because the book addresses different historical settings both during Isaiah's lifetime and also events that happened well after Isaiah's death as well. For some scholars this raises issues related to the nature of Old Testament prophecy & how predictive we should expect it to be. However, there are good reasons to consider Isaiah as the primary author of the whole unified book. In relation to the complex topic of dates for the book of Isaiah, John Oswalt has some helpful introductory material in his commentary related to background dates.¹ He also comments about the opening verse that the time-span for Isaiah's vision covers at least twenty-five years (and possibly much longer), he notes, 'Uzziah died in 739 B.C., while Hezekiah took the throne not later than 716 B.C. With that date of accession Hezekiah reigned until 686 B.C. If Isaiah was active during the entire reign, his ministry would have spanned 55 years.'²

Structure³

The book of Isaiah is often divided by commentators into two larger sections (Isaiah 1-39 and Isaiah 40-66). The focus of our series is on the first of these two large sections, which has a greater focus on Judah's relationship to the Assyrian empire (8th C. BC).

Isaiah 1-39						
Chapters 1-12 Promise and Threat - The early years			Chs. 13-23 Lord of the Nations	Chapters 24-39 Judgement and Resue – the later years		
Ch.1-5 Introduction Judah's perilous situation	Ch.6 Isaiah's call and commission	Ch.7-12 The Ahaz disaster and the promise of Immanuel	Ch.13-23 God's universal sovereignty affirmed	Ch.24-27 God's sovereignty over the whole earth and	Ch.28-35 The vanity of trusting	Ch.36-39 Hezekiah's vindication... but the prediction of exile

¹ Oswalt, J. The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39 (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 4-17 (Accordance)

² Oswalt, J. The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39 (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 4. (Accordance)

³ Adapted from Jackman, Jackman, D. Teaching Isaiah: Unlocking Isaiah for the Bible Teacher (Christian Focus Publications, 2010), 29. (Kindle Edition)

Key Themes

The meaning of the name Isaiah is 'Yahweh is salvation' and this is one of the key themes in the whole book. The LORD himself is the 'Holy One of Israel' (Isaiah 1:4) and he is not only the Creator who has made everything, but he is also the King who rules sovereignly over the whole world, judges the nations righteously and redeems and saves a remnant people for himself. The book of Isaiah has some big picture movements in the way that it progresses. The first half of the book has more of a focus on the super-power of the day Assyria, the earthly Jerusalem and Isaiah's ministry of judgment. Whereas in the second half of the book there is a greater focus on the latter super-powers of Babylon/Persia, the New Jerusalem and God's eternal salvation. One commentator says about the movement of Isaiah's ministry of judgment in the first half of the book through to his ministry of comfort in the second half, 'It is a book about demolition and reconstruction, judgment and salvation. And the order is significant: paradoxically, salvation emerges out of judgment and is possible only because of it.'⁴

Historical Context

In his book, 'Teaching Isaiah: Unlocking Isaiah for the Bible Teacher'⁵, David Jackman writes the following about Isaiah's place in the world:

'What was going on in the wider world during that century had a profound effect on Isaiah's message, as it was destined to do on the whole nation of Judah. To tell the story in one word, it was Assyria. With the accession of Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul) in 745 BC, the nation began to stir itself, solve its internal problems, build up its formidable war-machine and, under its able and powerful leaders, fill the power vacuum in the whole region. The glory days of comparative prosperity and independence enjoyed by Israel and Judah, along with all the other smaller nation states, were numbered. Menahem, king of Israel, became Assyria's vassal (2 Kings 15:17-20), as did Ahaz, king of Judah (2 Kings 16:7-9), in events which Isaiah deals with in chapter 7 of the book. But this was only the beginning. Assyrian incursion into Israel increased during the reigns of Pekaliah (Menahem's son), who was assassinated by the usurper Pekah, who was himself killed and usurped by Hoshea (see 2 Kings 15:29). In 722 BC, after a three-year siege, Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, fell to Shalmaneser (2 Kings 17:3-6), and the northern kingdom was finished. 2 Kings 17:7-23 provides a very important theological perspective on this enormous tragedy.

But Isaiah's primary concern was of course with the southern kingdom, Judah, and its capital Jerusalem. Here too the Assyrian incursion would be felt, in all its remorseless, invasive power. Isaiah warns of 'the mighty floodwaters of the River - the king of Assyria with all his pomp. It will overflow all its channels, run over all its banks and sweep on into Judah, swirling over it, passing through it and reaching up to the neck' (8:7-8). This culminated in the attack on Jerusalem by the armies of Sennacherib in 701 BC, recorded in some detail in chapters 36-37 of Isaiah's prophecy. Yet as 39:6 makes clear, immediately after that account, it was not Assyria that Jerusalem and Judah needed to fear, but Babylon.

⁴ Webb, B. *The Message of Isaiah* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 30-31.

⁵ Jackman, D. *Teaching Isaiah: Unlocking Isaiah for the Bible Teacher* (Christian Focus Publications, 2010). (Kindle Edition)

God miraculously delivered Jerusalem from the Assyrians (37:36-37), but an equally terrifying conqueror was waiting in the wings, albeit over one hundred years still distant.

The second half of the book, from chapter 40 onwards, has its focus firmly on the Babylonian exile, which took place in stages, but climaxed in the destruction of the temple and city and the mass deportation of the people in 587 BC.

Nevertheless, Isaiah predicts a political deliverance when proud Babylon will bow to the conquering forces of the Medo-Persian armies, under their leader, Cyrus, whom God identifies as 'my shepherd' (44:28-45:4). The restoration of at least a remnant of the people to the land is clearly prophesied, but a greater servant-shepherd dominates these chapters as the political rescue of Judah pales alongside the spiritual rescue of a righteous remnant, from all over the world, created and redeemed by the work of God's suffering servant-Messiah.⁶

Some Reader Guidance

This helpful piece of advice is given to readers of Isaiah early on in the book 'Isaiah: Surprising Salvation' by Kirk Patston:

'Over the years of reading Isaiah I've come to see that its grandeur can mask its simplicity. It's the kind of book that keeps saying the same thing over and over again. In whatever period of history, in whatever military crisis, in whatever spiritual confusion, the book of Isaiah tells us all to trust in the Lord. Its message is that in hidden, surprising ways the Lord is always at work to save people. The Lord is always at work to save people from Jerusalem or Zion. And Zion is really just a special showpiece for what he can do because the Lord is keen to be at work to save people from every place on his earth. In the end, he is saving Zion as the first step in a plan to save the planet and the cosmos, to remake it into a place of beauty and joy. And the more we can know and love what he is doing, the easier it will be to trust him.'⁷

The same book also provides the following simple summaries to help readers feel more oriented to the historical context of the book:

'ISRAEL AND JUDAH IN THE TIME OF ISAIAH

Isaiah lived in the period when the people of God were divided into ten northern tribes (Israel) and two southern tribes (Judah). The word 'Israel' does not always refer exactly to the northern kingdom. It can sometimes be a theological term for the people of God, such as in the often-used expression, 'The Holy One of Israel'. During Isaiah's lifetime, the northern kingdom of Israel ceased to exist and the focus of Isaiah's work is on the south.

It seems that people from the south who were eventually taken to Babylon (100-150 years after Isaiah) can be referred to as Jacob-Israel or Zion.

⁶ Jackman, D. Teaching Isaiah: Unlocking Isaiah for the Bible Teacher (Christian Focus Publications, 2010), 19-21. (Kindle Edition)

⁷ Patston, K. Isaiah: Surprising Salvation (Aquila Press, 2010)

ASSYRIA

In the lifetime of Isaiah, the dominant power in the ancient Near East was Assyria. The so-called Neo-Assyrian empire had begun under the rule of Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 BC). The book of Isaiah makes mention of the Assyrian kings Sargon, Sennacherib and Esarhaddon.

Isaiah 1-12 features Assyria as a dangerous invading force that comes into Israel and Judah as an expression of God's judgment. Isaiah 7 especially focuses on Judah's response to an anti-Assyrian plan hatched by Israel and Syria. In the eighth century BC, small states oscillated between pro- and anti-Assyrian policies.

Isaiah 13-23 gives us glimpses of how the Assyrian presence was impacting on small states like Israel and Judah and their neighbours such as Syria in the north, Moab and Edom in the south-east and Philistia in the west. The threat of Assyrian invasion seems to be the background to the message of Isaiah 28-35. In Isaiah 36-37 Sennacherib's invasion of Judah and assault on Jerusalem is narrated. An important message in all of this is that even Assyrian power is no match for the power of the Lord. Assyria largely falls from view in Isaiah 40-66.

EGYPT

Despite its impressive history and culture, Egypt was not a strong power in the days of Isaiah. There was internal instability. In the late 700s BC a Nubian or Cushite king briefly ruled Egypt, and in the book of Isaiah Egypt and Cush are treated as though they are the same nation: Isaiah is a sign and portent 'against Egypt and Cush' (20:3) and Assyria will lead away 'the Egyptian captives and Cushite exiles' (20:4). Cush seems to be the Hebrew term for Nubia, the area of the upper Nile to the south of Egypt.

Egypt was no match for the superpowers of the periods in the book of Isaiah. The Assyrians invaded in the early 600s BC. The Babylonians threatened but did not invade. The Persians defeated the Egyptians in 525 BC and more or less ruled Egypt for the next 200 years.

In Isaiah, Egypt also functions as a reference back to Israel's years of slavery and God's glorious rescue of them as narrated in the book of Exodus.

BABYLON

Although beyond his lifetime, Isaiah could see that it would be Babylon who would plunder Jerusalem and deport its people (39:6-7). But he also saw Babylon's demise at the hand of the Medes (13:17-19; 47). Babylon took the Assyrian capital in 612 BC. They deported Judeans in 605 BC and 597 BC and took Jerusalem in 586 BC.

In some ways Babylon takes over the role of Assyria in the second half of the book of Isaiah. Like Assyria, it is the nation that God uses to judge his people. Then God judges it for its pride. But, unlike Assyria, Babylon is featured in both halves of the book. There is a major presentation of the humiliation of Babylon in Isaiah 13-14 and Isaiah 46-48. The importance of these chapters means that Babylon functions as something more than a historical reality. Babylon is the archetype of human arrogance and defiant opposition to God.

PERSIA

The Persian king, Cyrus, brought the Babylonian empire to an end and famously decreed that the exiled Israelites (and others) could return home (539 BC). This event is on view in Isaiah 40-48.⁸

⁸ Patston, K. *Isaiah: Surprising Salvation* (Aquila Press, 2010), 14-16.

Recommended Resources

Highly Accessible / Non – Technical

Sermon Seasonings



Apple iTunes, Spotify or, online via:
<https://anchor.fm/sermonseasonings/>

Isaiah Intro Night

Isaiah Intro Night with Michael Stead
Mon. 14 April 2025 @ Christ Church

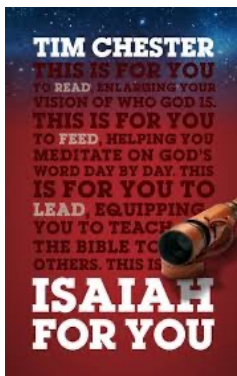
Big Picture Overview: Isaiah 1-39 by the Bible Project



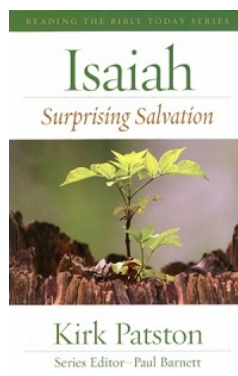
Isaiah: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/isaiah-1-39/>

Low/Mid-Range Accessible / Semi-Technical

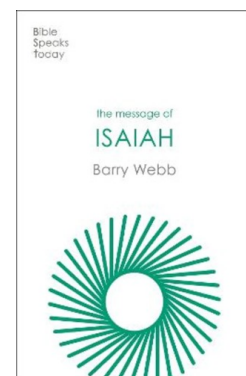
The first four resources (left to right) would be helpful for anyone in teaching roles at church, they are especially accessible for those who lead Bible Studies.



Isaiah For You
by Tim Chester
(BST)



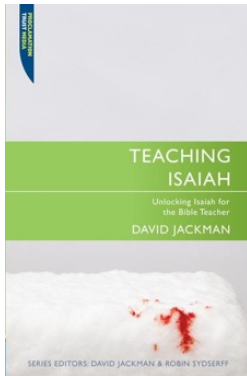
Isaiah: Surprising Salvation
by Kirk Patston



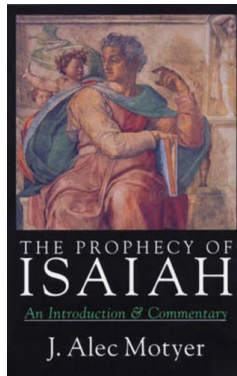
The Message of Isaiah
by Barry Webb (BST)

Highly Technical Commentaries

The last two books by Motyer and Oswalt are two of the leading commentaries on Isaiah. They provide highly technical commentary, incorporating insights from the Hebrew text & engaging with wide scholarship.



**Teaching Isaiah
(Proclamation Trust)**
by David Jackman



**The Prophecy of Isaiah an
Intro. & Commentary**
by J. Alec Motyer



**The Book of Isaiah Ch. 1-39
(NICOT)**
by John N. Oswalt

Study One | A God's-Eye View

Isaiah 1:1-31

Study Big Idea

God confronts his people with a prophetic vision of judgement through Isaiah because they have turned their back on the LORD – the Holy One of Israel, but not all is lost!

Discussion Question

When was a time that you realized you needed to look at things differently?

'Promise and Threat:

'The content of Isaiah 1-12 alternates between the motifs of promise and threat, effectively introducing the outline of chapters 1-39 as mainly threat and 40-66 as predominantly promise.' William Dumbrell, *Faith of Israel* (Leicester, UK: Apollos 1988) p100

Introduction - This first section of the prophecy is in many ways a microcosm of the whole. Introducing the theme of the whole book, the opening chapter poses the central dilemma, which is how the faithless, sinful city of Jerusalem, symbolising the people of God, is to be transformed into the faithful city in which righteousness dwells (1:21-26). How can men and women, who are sinners by nature, be transformed into the faithful, obedient people of the loving and powerful Lord, 'the Mighty One of Israel,' who is the only true and living God?

Jackman, D. *Teaching Isaiah: Unlocking Isaiah for the Bible Teacher* (Christian Focus Publications, 2010), 42. (Kindle Edition)

Brief Recap

What have been some of the big picture Bible timeline events from the Creation account in Genesis through to the start of the book of Isaiah? (Hint: how have we seen the theme of 'God's Kingdom' – i.e., God's people in God's place under God's rule & blessing developing)

Read Isaiah 1:1-17

1. a) In pairs, work through the table to see what kings were in charge up to this point in Isaiah's life:

	What is going well in Israel under this king?	What is not going so well in Israel under this king?
2 Chronicles 26:3-5, 16-22		
2 Chronicles 27:1-3		
2 Chronicles 28:1-6		

b) Share-back and discuss: What kind of picture does this paint of Judah's relationship with God over the time Isaiah was alive?

2. What stands out to you about some of the descriptive language for the condition of God's people and their situation in Isaiah 1:1-9? What might this teach us about the nature of sin?
3. What issue does God raise with the leaders and people of Judah in verses 10-17?

'The rebellion referred to generally in verse 2 is now specified: worship had been divorced from justice, and the fatherless and the widow had become the chief victims (17). Such disregard for justice was a fundamental violation of the Sinai covenant [...]. The exodus itself had flowed out of God's concern for the oppressed, (Ex. 2:23-25) and from the very beginning he had demanded that his people should have a special concern for the poor and defenceless among them." Furthermore, it is a requirement which has been intensified rather than diminished under the new covenant within which we ourselves now stand. If proof is required we need look no further than Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan (Lk.10:25-37), or James's description of religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless' (James 1:27). The cross places us under a far greater obligation to love than the exodus ever could.'

Webb, B. *The Message of Isaiah*
(Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 43.



4. Why do you think God cares about the inward heart of his people & not just the outward form of our religious practices? (See also, Matt 5:21-24, Eph 4:17-22, James 1:22-27)

Read Isaiah 1:18-31

5. What are some ways God continues to invite, warn and rebuke his people in Isaiah's day to respond in repentance? What hints of his grace & hope do we see in this section too?



6. What is the purpose of God's judgement against Judah; what is He trying to achieve? What does this tell us about God's character?



7. (Optional): How have you felt personally rebuked or challenged by some of the themes that have come up in Isaiah 1? What action could you take (if any) in light of this?

Read Revelation 7:9-14, 21:1-4

8. How does John's vision of the future city of God help us to better see where Isaiah's vision is ultimately pointing toward? How does the work of Christ make all the difference?

Pray in Response

Study Two | The Branch of the Lord

Isaiah 2:1-4:6

Study Big Idea

Jerusalem and Judah are responsible for their sin, but the Lord's coming glory is in store.

Discussion Question

What is something you are looking forward to in the near or distant future?

'Isaiah helps us set our hearts on God. The key is not just what we believe but what we value. Prophetic eyes look beyond the world as it is now to a new world in the future (2:2-4). We can live now in the power of that future (2:5). Our well-being does not depend on our present social construct, which Isaiah views with contempt (2:6-21). He invites us to join him in his unblinking realism about all false hopes (2:22). He is saying to us, "Relocate your happiness in the future, in a world that doesn't exist yet except in the promise of God. If you do that, you won't be devastated when the idols of human pride are trashed, as they will be. In God you can possess both the present and the future." Here are the terms: "Aim at heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in'; aim at earth and you will get neither." [C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (Macmillan, 1958), 104]'

Ortlund Jr., R.C.. *Isaiah: God Saves Sinners*
(Crossway, 2005), 49-50. (Accordance)

Brief Recap

What themes and ideas came up in the first chapter of Isaiah?

Read Isaiah 2:1-5

1. What is the picture like in Isaiah's vision at the start of chapter 2? When do you think the events of this vision will take place?
2. Split into 4 groups/pairs
 - Group A - Read Isaiah 2:1-5 and 4:2-6
 - Group B - Read Isaiah 2:6-9 and 3:18-4:1
 - Group C - Read Isaiah 2:10-3:3 and 3:16-17
 - Group D - Read Isaiah 3:4-7 and 3:12-15

For each group/pair, answer the following questions and report back to the Growth Group:

- a) How would you summarise the main idea of each section?
- b) How do they link/make a pairing?

	Passage 1: _____	Passage 2: _____
Passage		
Summary		
How do they link/pair?		

3. "Stop trusting in mere humans, who have but a breath in their nostrils. Why hold them in esteem?" (Isaiah 2:22) When do you need to be reminded of this too in your own life?



4. CS Lewis said in Mere Christianity, "*Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind..... it is pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began.*"

How accurately do you think this quote gets at the mindset behind all sin?

5. Where can you see any signs or seeds of pride in your own life presently?

Read Isaiah 4:2-6

6. What picture does Isaiah paint of God's relationship with the remnant who will be saved from judgement? (c.f. Exodus 13:21-22)
7. How does Jesus provide the ultimate fulfillment of this passage? (c.f. John 15:1-5, Revelation 21:22-27)

'The emphasis of the passage is the transformed remnant and their coming experience of safety. One of the ways God provides for them is 'the Branch of the Lord'. Whether 'Branch' should have a capital is a matter of interpretation. At face value a branch may simply be something that God is growing. It may be a general term for any work that he generates. But the book of Isaiah has a richness of language that means face value readings are not enough. Isaiah frequently presents images of trees, forests, plants, roots and shoots, and we read properly by noticing the repetitions and representations. As we read on in Isaiah we will encounter a fruitful branch from the stump of Jesse (11:1). Isaiah has more to tell us about who will be involved in bringing this new creation and new exodus for his remnant people.'

Patston, K. *Isaiah: Surprising Salvation*
(Aquila Press, 2010), 80-81.



8. In what areas of your own life are you tempted to compromise as a Christian or to place your confidence in the wrong places? How can we refocus our heart on God's plan for the future?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Three | Song of the Vineyard

Isaiah 5:1-30

Study Big Idea

The Lord has promised to one day restore his unfaithful people into a faithful city again, but first they need to be humbled as their sin & distrust is exposed in judgement.

Discussion Question

Share a time when you or someone you know has had a difficult experience trying to grow something in their garden?

'Isaiah lives always with the tension between what will be and what is; between the glorious destiny which beckons Israel and the awful reality of its present condition. It is a tension which ultimately only the LORD can resolve. Here, once again, as in 2:6, we plunge from the heights to the depths as the prophet returns to the thankless task of exposing the sins of his fellows and warning of judgment to come.'

Webb, B. *The Message of Isaiah*
(Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 54.

Brief Recap

How have we been seeing the themes of judgement and hope in Isaiah so far?

Read Isaiah 5:1-7

1. a) What do you notice about the emotional tone in verses 1-4?

- b) What does the vineyard metaphor reveal to us about God's relationship with Israel/Judah and his side of it? (see also, Psalm 80:7-9)

2. a) What fruit was expected in the song? What fruit was found instead?

b) How does Isaiah explain these metaphors in verse 7?

c) What can Israel expect next as a result?



3. Why does the LORD send his prophet to expose sin and warn of judgement to come?

Read Isaiah 5:8-30

4. What are some of the different sins described throughout the six woes?

5. How do the 6 'woes' show the problem of pride in Israel/Judah? What does this tell us about the way they have treated God?




6. When or where do you feel tempted in your own life towards any of the sinful attitudes highlighted in this section? Why is self-sufficiency especially dangerous for God's people?

'John the Baptist told us how to receive grace: "Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Luke 3:8, 9). With God, it is not heritage that counts. He wants results—the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23).

But none of us receives the grace of God with a whole heart. That's why the final answer to all our failure is the one who said, "I am the true vine" (John 15:1). When Jesus said that, he meant, "I am replacing all human failure. I am the one who bears fruit for God. Without me, you can do nothing. If you abide in me, you will bear fruit that will last." Don't rely on your relationship with Jesus to explain away your fruitlessness. Look at your fruit, your results, and ask yourself about your relationship with Jesus. Are you abiding in him? Are you what you think you are? "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples" (John 15:8).'

Ortlund Jr., R.C.. *Isaiah: God Saves Sinners*
(Crossway, 2005), 72-73. (Accordance)

7. How was the LORD planning to judge his people back in Isaiah's day (Isa. 5:13-14, 24-30)? In what ways should this judgement have been shocking to Israel?
8. What are a few ways the New Testament warns about an even greater judgement to come when Jesus returns? (see also, Matt 18:8-9; Luke 12:4-5, 15-21; 2 Peter 3:10-15)
-  9. How has a proper understanding of God's grace helped you to grow more dependent in your walk with Christ?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Four | Isaiah's Vision and Commission

Isaiah 6:1-13

Study Big Idea

In a time of uncertainty, God gave his sinful prophet Isaiah an awesome vision of his majestic kingship & fearsome holiness, to humble, cleanse & prepare him for service.

Discussion Question

When have you been engaged or captivated with a vision larger than yourself?

'[...] Isaiah cries out, "Woe to me! I am ruined!" (6:5). Back in 3:11 Isaiah had said, "Woe to the wicked! Disaster is upon them! They will be paid back for what their hands have done." But now, standing before the holiness of God, Isaiah himself cries, "Woe to me!" He recognises that he is one of the wicked and disaster is upon him. Similarly, in chapter 5 Isaiah declared woe on other people six times:

1. "Woe to you who add house to house" (5:8-10).
2. "Woe to those who rise early... to run after their drinks" (5:11-17).
3. "Woe to those who draw sin along with cords of deceit" (5:18-19).
4. "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil" (5:20).
5. "Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes" (5:21).
6. "Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine" (5:22-30).

But the seventh woe Isaiah declares against himself. "Woe to you" becomes "Woe to me" I wonder if you've made that movement yet. You can readily see the faults of other people. Maybe you feel quite good in comparison. But have you stood before the holiness of God and cried, "Woe to me"? [...] It's only before God that we attain true self-knowledge and it's devastating. [...] You will only get a true view of yourself when you get a true view of God.'

Chester, T. *Isaiah For You*
(The Good Book Company, 2021), 21-22.

Brief Recap

What stood out to you last week in the "song of the vineyard" (Isaiah 5)?

Read Isaiah 6:1-4

1. What do we know about King Uzziah's reign? (see 2 Chronicles 26:3-4, 16-23)

2. a) What attributes of God are emphasized in Isaiah's vision?

b) What similarities are there with John's vision in Revelation 4:4-8?

Read Isaiah 6:5-7

3. a) How did Isaiah respond to seeing God on His throne?

b) In what way might Isaiah's experience here be significant for more than just himself?



4. Why is it important to take God's holiness seriously? Why is it important to take our own sin and unworthiness to be in the presence of a holy God seriously?

5. Why is the live coal touching Isaiah's mouth significant? (see also, Lev. 16:11-17; Isa. 1:18, 25; 4:4)

Read Isaiah 6:8-13

6. a) What will Isaiah's mission involve? How are people going to respond to his message? (verses 9-10)

b) How did Jesus apply these verses to the Parable of the Sower? (Matthew 13:14-15)

7. What do the descriptions in verses 11-13 describe? What hint of hope is included? (Isaiah 11:1)

'It is an interesting exercise to consider how to live out Isaiah 6 today. One intuition we might have is that we should be like Isaiah, expressing to God a desire to be sent wherever he would send us. I think this intuition is not a bad one, but we need to consider why. It is not enough to think that Isaiah is a positive figure in an Old Testament text, therefore we should copy him. [...] The prophets lived in unique times and were uniquely given instructions by God. They are not instructions that we can claim for ourselves. However in Isaiah 1-6, the text has given us clues on how to read the account of Isaiah. In 1:9, we are invited to read the book of Isaiah as though we are survivors of an act of God's judgment. We stand stunned that we are still alive and wondering what to do next. We are urged to walk in the light of the Lord and to stop trusting human beings. Then in Isaiah 6 we are given a close up of another survivor. By writing Isaiah 6 in the first person, the writer lets us into Isaiah's world. This makes it possible for us to identify with Isaiah, to stand with the man Isaiah. When Isaiah says he is a man of unclean lips who lives among a people of unclean lips, we hear ourselves described. We then read that Isaiah stood in the presence of God's superlative holiness and lived! The next thing he did was to utter 'Send me!' [...] Isaiah becomes a picture of the transformation of God's people and is the first of a number of presentations of people willing to be God's servants. The text seems designed to persuade us to be like him. We live in times when God's sending agenda is different from what it was in the eighth century BC. We live in a time when the gospel is to go into all the world. Perhaps God is sending us to speak to our children or to our siblings, to people interstate or people overseas. If we are people who have encountered the holiness of God and have been suddenly touched by the mercy of God, we become the kind of people who are really glad to be sent.'

Patston, K. *Isaiah: Surprising Salvation*
(Aquila Press, 2010), 93-94.



8. What opportunities are available in your life at the moment to speak with others about Jesus? Have you considered any opportunities to be sent out elsewhere with the gospel?

9. How can we specifically encourage and pray for our group's mission partner at this time? Is there anyone else in mission or ministry to uphold in prayer?

Pray in Response

Study Five | The Hope of Immanuel

Isaiah 7:1–9:7

Study Big Idea

God used two children (Isaiah's son & a virgin's son-'Immanuel') as part of his message to the king of Judah about the coming flood of judgement & the remnant to be saved.

Discussion Question

Does someone in your family or a friend you know have a particularly meaningful name?

'Isaiah 7:1 to 9:7 follows logically from chapter 6. We expect that the next thing we will encounter is Isaiah preaching to people who will not listen. We expect to see how resistance to Isaiah's message will result in destruction of the land and its people. This is exactly what we find in a narrative involving King Ahaz and Isaiah. It is unusual for the book of Isaiah to have such an extended narrative and this alerts us to the important connections between these chapters and the core narratives involving King Hezekiah (Ahaz's son) and Isaiah. Indeed, the stories concerning Ahaz and Hezekiah share locations, language and themes, so that we read noticing the similarities and differences between how the two kings responded to military threat and prophetic word. [...]
In broad terms the passage charts a progression from a portrait of a fearful King Ahaz (7:1–6) to a portrait of a royal son who exercises his dominion for the good of the world (9:6–7). These portraits are bridged by Isaiah's oracles of judgment and hope.'

Patston, K. *Isaiah: Surprising Salvation*
(Aquila Press, 2010), 95.

Brief Recap

What stood out to you about Isaiah's commissioning in chapter 6?

Read Isaiah 7:1-25

1. a) Who does the LORD send to King Ahaz in verse 3? What is significant about the name of Isaiah's son?

- b) How does King Ahaz respond throughout this chapter? How should he have responded?

2. How might we understand the sign of 'Immanuel' (verse 14) in Isaiah's context?
In what way does the sign of 'Immanuel' also ultimately foreshadow Christ's birth?
(Matt 1:22-23)
3. What is the tone of the warning in verses 17-25?

Read Isaiah 8:1-22

4. a) Why is the name given to Isaiah son's (verses 1-4) also significant?

b) What is the flood imagery in verses 6 to 8 intended to convey?

c) What warnings and encouragement for Isaiah are given in verses 11-18?
5. How is the extent and outcome of Israel's unbelief described in verses 19-22?

'One of the most amazing things about God in Scripture is the fact that he is never frustrated by human sin and never gives up his plans for our good. When we are frustrated in some endeavour, we often make radical changes and start on a different track. But not so the God of the Bible. For example, after the fall in Genesis 3, when the offspring of Adam and Eve continue to reject him in all sorts of ways, God acts in judgment but continues to engage with rebellious humanity for their salvation (Gen. 4 - 9). After the tower of Babel incident in Genesis 11, he seeks to establish a new humanity in Abraham who will recognize and serve him (Gen. 12 - 17).

Moving on to Isaiah 7-8, we read of the terrible judgment coming upon the people of God in the eighth century BC because of their unfaithfulness. The northern kingdom is to be wiped out by the Assyrian invasion and the southern kingdom decimated. But God will not give up on his people entirely. A remnant will be saved and become the nucleus of a renewed Israel.'

Peterson, D. *Christ and his People in the book of Isaiah*
(Inter-varsity Press, 2003), 77.

Read Isaiah 9:1-7

6. Summarise the future reversal of punishment and defeat that verses 1-5 portray in the table:

Words/phrases in Chapter 8	Parallel Words/phrases in 9:1-5
No light of dawn (8:20)	
Fearful gloom (8:22)	
Hungry and famished (8:21)	
Be shattered (8:9)	

7. How is this reversal applied to Jesus' ministry in Matthew 4:13-17? In what ways has Jesus brought light into your own life?

8. Why are the names given to the royal son (verse 6) so significant? What will characterize his reign?

 9. How can we grow to trust God more deeply in light of his promises?

10. In what way do you find God's ultimate solution in the form of a long-promised child surprising? What do you find comforting about the names and roles given to Jesus?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Six | God's Discipline and Hope

Isaiah 9:8–12:6

Study Big Idea

God's people in the northern kingdom are under his judgement too & Assyria will be an instrument of his discipline, but praise God for the hope in his Davidic king to come.

Discussion Question

What is one of your favourite Christian songs to sing about God's character, work or name?

'Ahaz's big mistake was to think that if his kingdom in Judah was threatened by Israel and Syria, he needed to turn to a power big enough to trump them: Assyria. This section of text broadens beyond Judah and asserts that God is at work in and against Israel and Assyria, thus portraying him as the biggest power of all. This makes Ahaz's refusal to engage with the Lord seem all the more foolish and tragic. When this section offers images of hope, its scope includes the entire creation, underlining the limitless grandeur of the purposes and power of the Lord.'

Patston, K. *Isaiah: Surprising Salvation*
(Aquila Press, 2010), 111.

Brief Recap

What are some of the key themes in Isaiah 9:1-7?

Read Isaiah 9:8 to 10:4

1. What refrain is repeated throughout this section? What is the impact of repeating this phrase?

2. List the charges God has against Israel and the consequences of their sin:

	Their sinful acts/attitude	The consequences/ judgment
Isaiah 9:8-12		
Isaiah 9:13-17		
Isaiah 9:18-21		
Isaiah 10:1-4		

3. How is a progression in wickedness portrayed throughout these four oracles?

Read Isaiah 10:5-34

4. a) Who is the “godless nation” in verse 6? (see verses 10-12a) Why is this ironic? (Isa. 10:5-6)

b) Why will the LORD also punish Assyria?


5. What encouragement and hope is intended by this section for Israel, Judah and Jerusalem?

Read Isaiah 11:1 to 12:6

6. What are some of the ways the Branch is described in Isaiah 11:2-5?
7. How do we see this passage partially fulfilled already in Jesus? What are some of the ways we are still waiting for the fulness of its fulfilment to come?

'Isaiah 11:1–9 is one of the most magnificent passages in the Bible. It is hard to capture the depth of its ideas and its comforting, emotional resonance. It presents us with a figure called a shoot or branch. It describes his person (11:1–3a), his actions (11:3b–5) and the consequences of his actions (11:6–9)—all of which are highly unusual and highly appealing.'

Patston, K. *Isaiah: Surprising Salvation*
(Aquila Press, 2010), 116.

8. What reasons are given for praising God in Isaiah 12:1-6?
-  9. Praise and thankfulness for our undeserved salvation should spur us on to share the good news with the world. How can we continue to grow in both ways?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Seven | King of the Nations

Isaiah 13–23

Study Big Idea

God the Holy One of Israel is also the king who sovereignly rules the world & judges every nation righteously. He declares his judgements but also offers Zion-centred hope.

Discussion Question

What countries around the world do you feel connected to any way or take an interest in?

‘When reading the Old Testament it is sometimes possible to focus so much on Israel and Judah that the rest of the world can seem irrelevant. The same thing can happen in our own lives today—our own country or city or suburb can occupy our attention so much that we forget that the Lord is the Creator of all people everywhere. Our small-mindedness fails to come to terms with God’s plans for the whole earth to be filled with knowledge of him (11:9). Isaiah 11 had pictured a gathering of God’s people from across the world and this idea is developed in Isaiah 13–27. The section is good therapy for our small-mindedness. It places the events in Judah and Jerusalem in their international and even cosmic context.’

Patston, K. *Isaiah: Surprising Salvation*
(Aquila Press, 2010), 125.

Brief Recap

What was the emotional tone in Isaiah 12? Why so?

Read Isaiah 13:1-14:2

1. Who is this first prophecy directed against? What additional symbolism might be intended in starting with this city? (see also, Gen 11:1-9, Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10)
2. What are some ways the terrifying nature of judgement is underlined in this chapter? (see also, Heb 10:31) What are some reasons explained for this judgement (esp. vs 11, 19)?



3. Why is pride and seeking human glory so offensive to God? What are some potential antidotes to pride in our lives? (See also, Luke 18:9-14)

4. Who are we told will execute Isaiah's prophetic word of judgement historically (verses 17-18)? Who stands behind the judgement ultimately (verses 6-8, 19)? Why does this matter?

5. How does God's response differ towards his own people in Isaiah 14:1-2?

'The historical invasion may be attributable to the Medes, who with the Persians under Cyrus conquered Babylon, but the true agent, as with the ultimate eschatological judgement, is God himself (13:19). Even more significant, however, is the reason for this action, which is the focus of the unit at 14:1-2. In Scripture, judgement and salvation are the two sides of one coin because the justice and mercy of God are two aspects of his unchanging character. So while God's judgement must fall on all ungodliness, these verses teach us that his ultimate purpose in defeating and destroying the forces of evil is the settlement and security of his people, who in keeping with the eschatological context are now revealed as a universal community.'

Jackman, D. *Teaching Isaiah: Unlocking Isaiah for the Bible Teacher* (Christian Focus Publications, 2010), 78-79. (Kindle Edition)

6. Divide your group into pairs or smaller-groups. Allocate a section in the table below to each group. Read the passage through together and make a short summary including a few key verses to share-back to the wider group.

	A Short Summary + A Few Key Verses:
Isaiah 14:3-23 (Babylon Ctd.)	
Isaiah 15:1-16:14 (Moab)	
Isaiah 17:1-14 (Damascus & Ephraim); 18:1-7 (Cush)	
Isaiah 19:1-25 (Egypt)	
Isaiah 22:1-25 (Jerusalem)	
Isaiah 23:1-18 (Tyre)	

Share-back with the wider-group your group's short summary and a few key verses.

‘Concerning Tyre (23:1-18)

This prophecy of the fall (1-14) and subsequent rise (15-18) of Tyre is a minor landmark within this part of the book.” It is the last of the series of oracles concerning particular nations which began in chapter 13, and is followed by what scholars commonly call the ‘Isaiah Apocalypse’ (chapters 24 - 27) in which cosmic acts of judgment and salvation bring history to a close. It stands at the end of a distinct block of material within the larger unit, chapters 13 - 27.

Tyre probably closes the series of oracles against the nations for the same reason that Babylon opens it; it was so famous for one particular aspect of worldly achievement that it had a symbolic value that could be used to good effect by Isaiah and others who followed him.” As Babylon was proverbial for its military might and cultural achievements, Tyre was proverbial for its commercial wealth. Standing in the first and last positions as they do, then, Babylon and Tyre sum up all that is impressive and alluring in the world.’

Webb, B. *The Message of Isaiah*
(Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 103.



7. What are some ways we need to guard against worldliness today in our lives as Christians? (see also, 1 John 2:15-17, James 4:4, Titus 2:11-12, Matthew 6:24)

8. (Optional): How has this section reminded you of God's sovereign rule? Why is it important to remember that God is ultimately in control always? What difference does this make?

Pray in Response

Study Eight | Prophecy, Praise & Deliverance

Isaiah 24-27

Study Big Idea

There will come a final day when the LORD will judge the whole world, but God's redeemed people will also sing praises to God for his triumph & Israel will be renewed.

Discussion Question

When have you had a longing for justice in light of news you've heard?

'The Isaiah Apocalypse (24:1-27:13)

These four chapters together constitute the climax of the whole second part of the book (chapters 13 - 27). Here particular nations are lost to view as the focus broadens to encompass the whole earth (24:1). Devastating judgment (chapter 24) is followed by song (25:1-5), feasting (25:6-8), song (25:9-12), more song (chapter 26) and still more song (27:1-11). The final two verses (27:12-13) act as a summary conclusion to the whole. The theme is the triumph of God, which is good news (hence the singing) because it means that the reign of sin and death is at an end; the kingdom of God has at last come in its fullness. This 'apocalypse' or 'unveiling' of the end (for that is what the word means) in many ways anticipates that better-known apocalypse, the book of Revelation, which serves as the grand finale of the Bible as a whole.'

Webb, B. *The Message of Isaiah*
(Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 105.

Brief Recap

Who were some of the nations & empires Isaiah prophesied against in chapters 13-23?

Read Isaiah 24:1-13, 21-23

1. How would you paraphrase verses 1-3 in your own words?
2. What are some of the images used by Isaiah to describe God's judgement in verses 4-13, 21-23?

3. (Optional): What are some ways verses 4-6 might allude back to the Old Testament? (see also, Gen 3:17-18, 4:9-11, 9:6-17)



4. What are some reasons Christians can be certain that one day God will judge all of the earth? (see also, Acts 17:30-31, 1 Cor 15:20-25, Heb 9:27)



5. Why are Christians urged to live expectantly for Jesus' return in the New Testament? (see also, Luke 12:35-40, 2 Pet 3:10-14) What practical difference does this make in your life?

Read Isaiah 25:1-9

6. What are some reasons Isaiah sings praise to the LORD in verses 1-5?



7. How are verses 6-9 intended to instill hope in God's people? What do you find comforting about these promises personally? (See also, Luke 14:12-16, 1 Cor 15:54-57, Rev 21:1-4)

Read Isaiah 26:1-11, 27:1-6

8. What stands out to you about the LORD and his people in these songs of praise?

‘Concerning God’s people: The slaying of Leviathan (27:1)’

This section of Isaiah reaches a climax here as all the enemies of God get summed up in one frightening picture. We had noted that at the beginning of the section (chapters 13–14) the king of Babylon was compared to a mythical being who wanted too much and reached too high. Once again Isaiah turns to ancient myths but in a way that seems to be more than poetry. The final triumph of God will be over a gliding sea monster called Leviathan. We don’t know a lot about Leviathan. The word suggests a coiling creature like a snake. References in Job and the Psalms make us think of a terrifying, many-headed sea monster who is the pinnacle of pride (Psalm 74:14; Job 41:34). Genesis 3 makes us think of the serpent as a manifestation of Satan and the book of Revelation connects the Bible’s serpents and dragons into a portrait of Satan or the devil (Revelation 12:9). Isaiah is presenting a glorious future for the cosmos. It’s not just that God will end the Assyrian or Babylonian empire. One day, he will utterly defeat the devil and so put an end to his deceptions, temptations and crippling accusations. One day there will be no death (25:8) and no reason for death to ever spoil the human condition again.’

Patston, K. *Isaiah: Surprising Salvation*
(Aquila Press, 2010), 164.



9. (Optional): How can we turn some of the verses in these songs into mini-prayers that stir and deepen our own affection and love for God?

Pray in Response



Extra Notes

Study Nine | Judgement and Joy

Isaiah 28–35

Study Big Idea

Through a series of ‘woes’ God denounces Israel’s leaders for their faithlessness, but he also promises hope for the redeemed in his kingship, victory & their entry into Zion.

Discussion Question

Where has been the most arid or desert-like place you’ve ever visited? What about the most beautiful garden?

‘The most obvious structural marker in this section is the word ‘woe’ which is used repeatedly through chapters 28–35. Following a string of woes directed at God’s people (28:1–32:20) there is a woe directed at Assyria (33:1). In contrast to these woes are recurring pictures of transformation, climaxing in the pictures of desert (Isaiah 34) and garden (Isaiah 35).’

Patston, K. *Isaiah: Surprising Salvation*
(Aquila Press, 2010), 172.

Brief Recap

What was a memorable point or a key personal take-away from last Sunday’s sermon?

Read Isaiah 28:1-17

1. What are some ways Ephraim (the northern kingdom) is described in verses 1-4?

2. How is this contrasted with the LORD in verse 5-6?



3. What are some ways we can be in danger of putting our confidence in the wrong crowns? What difference does it make when God himself is our crown and treasure? (see also, 2 Tim 4:8, Matt 13:44-45)

4. What stands out to you about Isaiah's 'woe'-passage in relation to the leaders of God's people in Ephraim (verses 7-10)? How does the LORD respond? (verses 11-13)
5. What does Isaiah critique the leaders of Judah for in verses 14-15? What is the LORD's response in verse 16-17? (see also, 1 Peter 2:4-8)

'The key issue in chapters 28 - 35 is whether Judah, and in particular its leaders, will rely on Egypt or on the LORD in the face of the growing threat posed by the ever-increasing power of Assyria. Chapters 30 and 31, which stand more or less centrally within the unit, are wholly taken up with this issue, with 31:1 providing perhaps the most pointed and succinct statement of it:

Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses,
who trust in the multitude of their chariots...
but do not look to the Holy One of Israel,
or seek help from the LORD.'

Webb, B. *The Message of Isaiah*
(Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 116.

Read Isaiah 31:1-9

6. How does Isaiah highlight the folly of trusting in Egypt compared to trusting in the LORD in Isaiah 31:1-5?
7. What sort of response does the LORD want from his people (verses 6-7)? Why can they be confident in the LORD (verses 8-9)?

Read Isaiah 30:15-18, 33:5-6, 33:22

‘God’s willingness to come to the aid of his people is staggering. His power to actually achieve transformation is indisputable. All that he asks is a willingness to let him use his power for us. In repentance and rest is our salvation, in quietness and trust is our strength (30:15).’

Patston, K. *Isaiah: Surprising Salvation*
(Aquila Press, 2010), 184.

8. How has your view of God and his salvation been enlarged from studying Isaiah this term?

9. What have been any key personal take-aways for you from our series?

Pray in response



Extra Notes

