

Daily Bible Readings

ISAIAH Chapters 1-12

© Toni Lindeback for Church Central Online

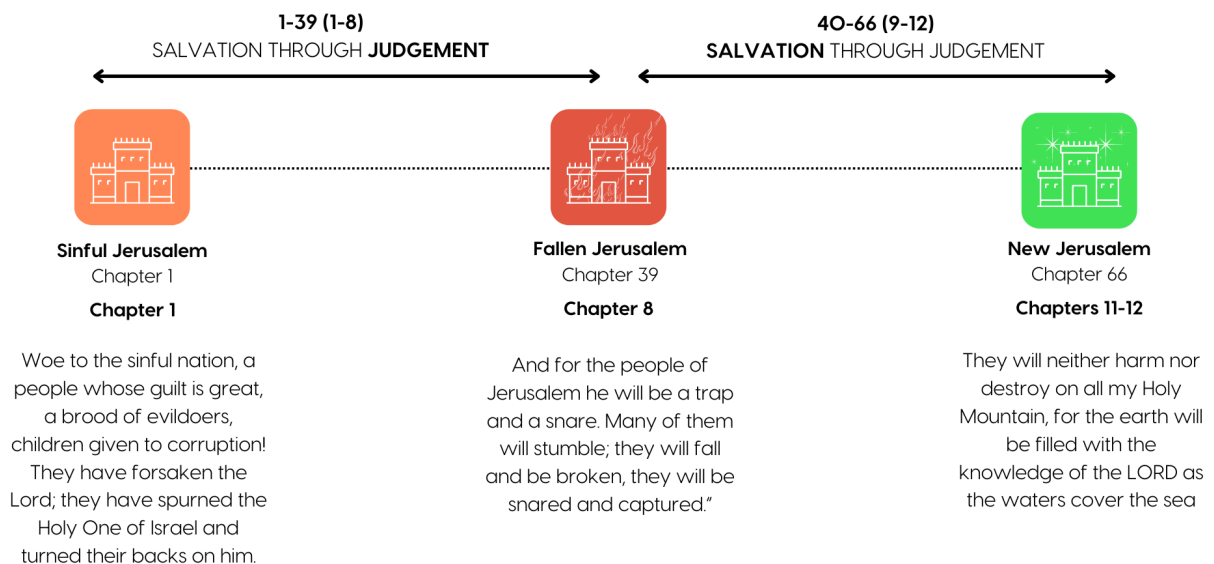
Isaiah 1-12 is a 'microcosm' of the book of Isaiah as a whole.

By focusing in on Chapters 1-12 we will gain a deeper understanding for the flow, content, and structure of the book and deeper our understanding of the book as a whole.

ISAIAH 1-12

As a MICROCOSM of the Whole Book

The Message of Isaiah:
Salvation through Judgement



© Nick Lindeback for Church Central Online

To aid our study of Isaiah 1-12 there are four readings each week, for eight weeks. If you are doing this as a church or with a friend, you might want to use the fifth day to share something that has encouraged or challenged you with someone else.

Our prayer is that these readings present you with the holy and merciful God, 'high and lifted up' and his amazing King. That you would grow in knowing God's immeasurable holiness, our need for his salvation. That in response to his mercy, you would live a life of repentance - trusting God, growing in holiness and proclaiming Jesus with joy and thanksgiving.

We hope you find Isaiah 1-12 as encouraging as we have,
Toni and Nick Lindeback

WEEK 1 - ISAIAH CHAPTER 1

Day 1: Isaiah 1:1-4

1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken:

“Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me.

3 The ox knows its owner,

and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.”

4 Ah, sinful nation,

a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers,

children who deal corruptly!

They have forsaken the LORD,

they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.

Exploring the passage

1. What did God do for Judah? 1:1-2

(Note: Judah was the southern kingdom of God's people, Israel. The capital of Judah was Jerusalem where God dwelt among his people in the temple.)

2. What charges did God bring against his people?

- 1:2
- 1:3
- 1:4a
- 1:4b

3. What do donkeys and oxen know that God's people don't know? 1:3

Explaining the passage

God revealed himself to Judah by his personal name, 'LORD', when he rescued them from slavery in Egypt to be his chosen people (1:2). 'The LORD' means the holy, promise-keeping God who saves sinners by his mercy to enjoy relationship with him. God dwelt among Judah in the temple in Jerusalem in order to make his people holy as he is holy and so that Judah would be a light showing all the nations that the LORD is God alone (see Exodus 3:15, 6:3 and 19:6).

But shockingly, Judah had forsaken God. Because they rebelled against their loving Father (1:2), they lived unholy lives (1:4). They were stupider than beasts because they did not know the caring master on whom their lives depended (1:3).

In love and mercy God brings sinners into relationship with himself and gives them the blessing of living in holiness. When love for God goes, commitment to God's holy ways go.

Day 2: Isaiah 1:5-10

5 Why will you still be struck down?

Why will you continue to rebel?

The whole head is sick,
and the whole heart faint.

6 From the sole of the foot even to the head,
there is no soundness in it,

but bruises and sores
and raw wounds;

they are not pressed out or bound up
or softened with oil.

7 Your country lies desolate;
your cities are burned with fire;

in your very presence
foreigners devour your land;

it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners.

8 And the daughter of Zion is left
like a booth in a vineyard,
like a lodge in a cucumber field,
like a besieged city.

9 If the LORD of hosts
had not left us a few survivors,
we should have been like Sodom,
and become like Gomorrah.

10 Hear the word of the LORD,
you rulers of Sodom!
Give ear to the teaching of our God,
you people of Gomorrah!

Exploring the passage

1. Judah has forsaken God (1:1-4). How is Judah's rebellion described in 1:5-6?
2. What are the consequences of Judah's rebellion? 1:7-8
(Note: Daughter of Zion is Jerusalem. The temple where God dwelt in Jerusalem was on Mount Zion.)
3. In his mercy God did not wipe out all of Judah in judgment as he did to the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in the time of Abraham. How was the remnant of Judah that survived God's judgment to respond to God's grace? 1:9-10

Explaining the passage

Judah will experience God's judgment because she will not turn back to God. She is like a beaten slave that, despite festering wounds, continues to rebel and receive more beatings (1:5-6). God will judge Judah through the invasion of foreign armies that will leave Judah desolate. God's city, Jerusalem, will be abandoned like a hut in a field (1:7-8). The only reason a remnant will be spared is because God is merciful (1:9-10).

Rebellion against God promises freedom but it is like an addiction bringing only harm. How stupid it is to forsake God and think we can determine what is holy and therefore for our good. Our only hope is to turn to God in repentance and listen to his word that teaches us his holy ways.

Day 3: Isaiah 1:11-20

11 “What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?
says the LORD;
I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams
and the fat of well-fed beasts;
I do not delight in the blood of bulls,
or of lambs, or of goats.
12 “When you come to appear before me,
who has required of you
this trampling of my courts?
13 Bring no more vain offerings;
incense is an abomination to me.
New moon and Sabbath and the calling of
convocations—
I cannot endure iniquity and solemn
assembly.
14 Your new moons and your appointed
feasts
my soul hates;
they have become a burden to me;
I am weary of bearing them.
15 When you spread out your hands,
I will hide my eyes from you;

even though you make many prayers,
I will not listen;
your hands are full of blood.
16 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your deeds from before
my eyes;
cease to do evil,
17 learn to do good;
seek justice,
correct oppression;
bring justice to the fatherless,
plead the widow's cause.
18 “Come now, let us reason together, says
the Lord:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.
19 If you are willing and obedient,
you shall eat the good of the land;
20 but if you refuse and rebel,
you shall be eaten by the sword;
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

Exploring the passage

1. Judah has forsaken God and yet was very religious. How does God feel towards their religious behaviour? 1:11-15
2. Why is Judah's religion unacceptable to God? Consider especially the last lines of verses 13 and 15.
3. What does God call Judah to do? 1:16-20

Explaining the passage

God despised Judah's religious assemblies because they were accompanied with sin 1:13. God didn't hear Judah's prayers because their hands were bloody from oppressing others 1:15. Judah did not love God in the way God desires because Judah was religious, not repentant.

In his mercy, God continued to invite Judah to repent – to wash (1:16), learn holiness (1:17) and come to him for forgiveness (1:18). We can no more remove our sin than we can wash out red dyes. Only God can forgive our sin. God's invitation to repent is received by being 'willing and obedient' (1:19-20) – a change of will leads to a change in behaviour. Obedience isn't self-saving works. It is the response of faith to God's offer of grace.

Day 4: Isaiah 1:21-31

21 How the faithful city
has become a whore,
she who was full of justice!
Righteousness lodged in her,
but now murderers.
22 Your silver has become dross,
your best wine mixed with water.
23 Your princes are rebels
and companions of thieves.
Everyone loves a bribe
and runs after gifts.
They do not bring justice to the fatherless,
and the widow's cause does not come to
them.
24 Therefore the Lord declares,
the Lord of hosts,
the Mighty One of Israel:
"Ah, I will get relief from my enemies
and avenge myself on my foes.
25 I will turn my hand against you
and will smelt away your dross as with lye
and remove all your alloy.
26 And I will restore your judges as at the first,

and your counselors as at the beginning.
Afterward you shall be called the city of
righteousness,
the faithful city."
27 Zion shall be redeemed by justice,
and those in her who repent, by
righteousness.
28 But rebels and sinners shall be broken
together,
and those who forsake the Lord shall be
consumed.
29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks
that you desired;
and you shall blush for the gardens
that you have chosen.
30 For you shall be like an oak
whose leaf withers,
and like a garden without water.
31 And the strong shall become tinder,
and his work a spark,
and both of them shall burn together,
with none to quench them.

Exploring the passage

1. What angers God about his once faithful city? 1:21-23
2. How will God make his city 'righteous and faithful' again? 1:24-26
3. What choice do the people of Judah face? 1:27-28
4. Why is it stupid to trust 'oaks and garden', that is, human strength? 1:29-30

Explaining the passage

God dwelt in Jerusalem in the temple that stood on Mount Zion so that Judah would be his holy people and a light to the nations. But God's city, his bride, has been unfaithful to God by becoming a whore (1:21). Having forsaken God, Judah became morally corrupt and unjust, and did not care for the vulnerable as God intended (1:21-23).

How will the faithless city become faithful again? In his mercy, God will restore his city to righteousness and faithfulness through judgment. He will bring a refining fire that will purify the repentant (1:25) and burn up the unrepentant (1:31).

How can we ever be in a relationship with a God who is holy and righteous? Our hearts show us that we are sinful and deserve God's condemnation. Human strength will not save us (1:29-31). Only God alone can bring salvation. How have you responded to God's offer of repentance? Are you continuing in repentance or relying on your strength and works?

WEEK 2: ISAIAH CHAPTERS 2-4

Day 1: Isaiah 2:1-5

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2 It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains,

and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, 3 and many peoples shall come, and say:

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,

to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.”

For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

4 He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples;

and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

5 O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

Exploring the passage

1. Isaiah ‘saw a word’ (2:1). What did this word describe? 2:2
2. Why will the nations flow to God’s house? 2:3
3. What will be the consequences for the nations as God’s word flows out of Zion? 2:4
4. How does Isaiah call Judah to respond? 2:5

Explaining the passage

Isaiah recounts ‘the word’ he saw about a future time when God’s dwelling place will be the highest, that is, without rivals. It is a description of heaven - of what the faithful city God is making will look like. God will bring the nations flowing into his house, eager to learn God’s word so that their lives reflect God’s holiness.

Because the world will be ruled justly by God’s word, people will experience the good government and peace we all desire. Isaiah calls Judah to respond to God’s word by walking in God’s light, not their dark sinfulness.

John 8:12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Day 2: Isaiah 2:6-22

6 For you have rejected your people,
the house of Jacob,
because they are full of things from the east
and of fortune-tellers like the Philistines,
and they strike hands with the children of
foreigners.
7 Their land is filled with silver and gold,
and there is no end to their treasures;
their land is filled with horses,
and there is no end to their chariots.
8 Their land is filled with idols;
they bow down to the work of their hands,
to what their own fingers have made.
9 So man is humbled,
and each one is brought low—
do not forgive them!
10 Enter into the rock
and hide in the dust
from before the terror of the LORD,
and from the splendour of his majesty.
11 The haughty looks of man shall be brought
low,
and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled,
and the LORD alone will be exalted in that
day.
12 For the LORD of hosts has a day
against all that is proud and lofty,
against all that is lifted up—and it shall be
brought low;
13 against all the cedars of Lebanon,
lofty and lifted up;
and against all the oaks of Bashan;

14 against all the lofty mountains,
and against all the uplifted hills;
15 against every high tower,
and against every fortified wall;
16 against all the ships of Tarshish,
and against all the beautiful craft.
17 And the haughtiness of man shall be
humbled,
and the lofty pride of men shall be brought
low,
and the LORD alone will be exalted in that
day.
18 And the idols shall utterly pass away.
19 And people shall enter the caves of the
rocks
and the holes of the ground,
from before the terror of the LORD,
and from the splendour of his majesty,
when he rises to terrify the earth.
20 In that day mankind will cast away
their idols of silver and their idols of gold,
which they made for themselves to worship,
to the moles and to the bats,
21 to enter the caverns of the rocks
and the clefts of the cliffs,
from before the terror of the LORD,
and from the splendour of his majesty,
when he rises to terrify the earth.
22 Stop regarding man
in whose nostrils is breath,
for of what account is he?

Exploring the passage

1. God rejected his people because they were indistinguishable from the nations. In what ways was Judah like the nations? 2:6, 7 and 8
2. God rejected his people because they were full of pride. What are some of the 'tall' things that Judah trusted which displayed her pride? 2:12-16
3. God has set a day when he will judge Judah - 2:12. How does God repeatedly describe himself and what image does he repeatedly use to show prideful being brought low? 2:10-11, 2:19, 2:20-21.
4. Why is it foolish to trust in man, rather than God? 2:22

Explaining the passage

Judah followed the religions, materialism, war strategies and idolatry of the nations. In their pride, they exalted themselves. They thought they could make themselves holy and secure by the 'tall' things they trusted in - the natural resources, defences and trading ships. The glorious and holy God alone is to be exalted but they worshipped created things rather than their creator.

God set a day for judgement when the prideful and lofty will be humbled and brought low before the terror of God and his majesty. On that day earthly wisdom and achievements will not provide any protection - people will fling away what God has commanded they are to cast away (2:19-21). In 2:22 Isaiah calls for an immediate response: stop trusting man; trust God. Why would you trust man who has a slender hold on life (breath)?

Day 3: Isaiah 3:1-11

3 For behold, the LORD God of hosts
is taking away from Jerusalem and from
Judah

support and supply,
all support of bread,
and all support of water;

2 the mighty man and the soldier,
the judge and the prophet,
the diviner and the elder,

3 the captain of fifty
and the man of rank,
the counselor and the skillful magician
and the expert in charms.

4 And I will make boys their princes,
and infants shall rule over them.

5 And the people will oppress one another,
every one his fellow
and every one his neighbour;
the youth will be insolent to the elder,
and the despised to the honourable.

6 For a man will take hold of his brother
in the house of his father, saying:
"You have a cloak;
you shall be our leader,
and this heap of ruins
shall be under your rule";

7 in that day he will speak out, saying:
"I will not be a healer;
in my house there is neither bread nor
cloak;
you shall not make me
leader of the people."

8 For Jerusalem has stumbled,
and Judah has fallen,
because their speech and their deeds are
against the LORD,
defying his glorious presence.

9 For the look on their faces bears witness
against them;
they proclaim their sin like Sodom;
they do not hide it.

Woe to them!
For they have brought evil on themselves.

10 Tell the righteous that it shall be well with
them,
for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds.

11 Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him,
for what his hands have dealt out shall be
done to him.

Exploring the passage

1. What is God taking away from Judah? 3:1-3
2. What will the result be? 3:4-7

3. What was the heart of Judah's problem? 3:8
4. Who will come through God's judgement? 3:9-11

Explaining the passage

God will take away from Judah the things they trusted in instead of God - their material provisions and human leadership. The results will be dreadful oppression, disrespect and the rule of children instead of good government. Pride is not self-defence but self-destruction.

The heart of Judah's problem is they did not glorify God as God. They have brought the dreadful consequences upon themselves because they have forsaken God and rejected God's word and his holy ways.

God assures the righteous, that is, those who are humbly repentant and trust God, that they will be saved (3:10). The wicked's punishment will fit their crimes (3:11).

Extra: Read 3:12-4:1 in your bible. In their greed, the rulers have exploited the people. The 'all-absorbing, earthly glory' lifestyle of the rich women has been supported by these injustices. But earthly glory ends in destruction and shame. Seek the everlasting glory of God.

Day 4: Isaiah 4:2-6

2 In that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honour of the survivors of Israel. 3 And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, 4 when the LORD shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem

from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. 5 Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy. 6 There will be a booth for shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.

Exploring the passage

1. Isaiah ends 2:1-4:6 as he started it with another description of heaven. What will God's people be like? 4:2-3
2. How will this happen? 4:4-5
3. What blessing will the people experience? 4:6

Explaining the passage

God's fiery judgment will cleanse and restore his people to be a beautiful and glorious people who are radically different from Judah. Cleansed by God, those whose names are written in the book of life, will be marked by holiness (4:3-4). Like in the Exodus, God alone will create a new creation over which his glory will shine (4:5).

In ancient times marriage vows took place under a canopy. The canopy is an image of marriage – of intimacy, love and faithfulness between God and humankind in which there is total security (2:5-6). The branch of the LORD (4:2), this new shoot of growth, will come through Jesus (11:1). God cleanses and restores sinners through the judgement Jesus bore on the cross. This vision of God's faithful city will be fulfilled when Jesus returns but we experience it now in the church. Pray we enjoy the new life God gives us by seeking his holiness and departing from idols.

WEEK 3: ISAIAH CHAPTER 5

Day 1: Isaiah 5:1-7

5 Let me sing for my beloved
my love song concerning his vineyard:
My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.

2 He dug it and cleared it of stones,
and planted it with choice vines;
he built a watchtower in the midst of it,
and hewed out a wine vat in it;
and he looked for it to yield grapes,
but it yielded wild grapes.

3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem
and men of Judah,
judge between me and my vineyard.

4 What more was there to do for my vineyard,
that I have not done in it?
When I looked for it to yield grapes,
why did it yield wild grapes?

5 And now I will tell you

what I will do to my vineyard.

I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.

6 I will make it a waste;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and briers and thorns shall grow up;
I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.

7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the men of Judah
are his pleasant planting;
and he looked for justice,
but behold, bloodshed;
for righteousness,
but behold, an outcry!

Exploring the passage

1. Chapter 5 begins with a parable. How does vineyard owner describe his love for his vineyard? 5:1-2
2. What was the problem with the vineyard? 5:2 and 5:7b
3. Vineyards were a major industry in Judah and required intensive work. How would the people of Judah answered the question of what to do with a vineyard that produces only wild grapes - 5:3-4?
4. What is the vineyard owner going to do with the vineyard that only produces wild grapes? 5:5-6
5. What was the twist in the tale of the parable for Judah? 5:7

Explaining the passage

Chapter 5 is a parable that brings home the anguish that the loving and holy God feels over Judah's sin, and the necessity of judgement. Appreciating everything that the vineyard owner did to produce good grapes, the listeners would have called for the vineyard to be destroyed as it only produced wild grapes. In doing so they called for their own destruction (5:1-6). Judah was God's beloved vineyard that lacked nothing. It was planted and protected for God's pleasure, but instead of a good vintage it produced wild grapes. Instead of reflecting God's character of justice and righteousness, Judah produced bloodshed and riot (5:7b).

In the bible, the footnote for Isaiah 5:7 notes: "The Hebrew words for justice and bloodshed sound alike. The Hebrew words for righteous and outcry sound alike." Judah looked religious but they were far from doing what God desired.

Day 2: Isaiah 5:8-17

8 Woe to those who join house to house,
who add field to field,
until there is no more room,
and you are made to dwell alone
in the midst of the land.

9 The LORD of hosts has sworn in my
hearing:

“Surely many houses shall be desolate,
large and beautiful houses, without
inhabitant.

10 For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but
one bath,
and a homer of seed shall yield but an
ephah.”

11 Woe to those who rise early in the morning,
that they may run after strong drink,
who tarry late into the evening
as wine inflames them!

12 They have lyre and harp,
tambourine and flute and wine at their
feasts,
but they do not regard the deeds of the
LORD,

or see the work of his hands.

13 Therefore my people go into exile
for lack of knowledge;

their honored men go hungry,

and their multitude is parched with thirst.

14 Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite
and opened its mouth beyond measure,
and the nobility of Jerusalem and her
multitude will go down,

her revelers and he who exults in her.

15 Man is humbled, and each one is brought
low,

and the eyes of the haughty are brought
low.

16 But the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice,
and the Holy God shows himself holy in
righteousness.

17 Then shall the lambs graze as in their
pasture,

and nomads shall eat among the ruins of
the rich.

Exploring the passage

1. The promised land was his gift to Judah and it was to be kept for each of the the families to which it had been allotted - “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine.” Leviticus 25:23. How has Judah sinned against God in 5:8?
2. What judgment would Judah receive? 5:9-10
3. How has Judah sinned against God in 5:11-12?
4. What judgment would Judah receive? 5:13-17?

Explaining the passage

These woes describe the ways Judah has disregarded God and his word and the resulting judgments. God’s punishments match Judah’s offences.

5:8-10 describes Judah’s self-indulgent greed. The rich dispossessed their brothers and sisters from the land God had given them. Therefore, God will dispossess them out of the land into exile.

5:11-17 describes Judah’s self-indulgent sensuality. They treated God’s good gifts as if they were the only thing that mattered and they did not seek first God’s kingdom and his righteousness. Therefore, they will no longer consume wine and sheep but they will be consumed by death and the sheep will consume the grass among their ruins.

The OT is written as a warning to us - 1 Corinthians 10:6-14. We need to take heed lest we fall. Where are you seeking greed and self-indulgence rather than seeking God’s kingdom?

Day 3: Isaiah 5:18-24

18 Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords
of falsehood,

who draw sin as with cart ropes,

19 who say: "Let him be quick,

let him speed his work

that we may see it;

let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw
near,

and let it come, that we may know it!"

20 Woe to those who call evil good

and good evil,

who put darkness for light

and light for darkness,

who put bitter for sweet

and sweet for bitter!

21 Woe to those who are wise in their own
eyes,

and shrewd in their own sight!

22 Woe to those who are heroes at drinking
wine,

and valiant men in mixing strong drink,

23 who acquit the guilty for a bribe,

and deprive the innocent of his right!

24 Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours
the stubble,

and as dry grass sinks down in the flame,

so their root will be as rottenness,

and their blossom go up like dust;

for they have rejected the law of the LORD of
hosts,

and have despised the word of the Holy
One of Israel.

Exploring the passage

1. What was Judah's sin in 5:18-19?
2. What was Judah's sin in 5:21-23?
3. What consequence will Judah's experience for her sinful rejection of the holy God and his word? 5:24

Explaining the passage

Judah delights in her sin and scoffs at God saying, 'if the holy God were concerned about it he would act' (5:18-19). Judah sinfully claims the right to determine what is right and wrong (5:20-21). In rejecting God's word, the people served their own appetites and neglected justice. They became great at the small (mixing drinks) and small at the great (justice) - (5:22-24).

Our sinful hearts reject God's good and holy will. We are not capable of determining right and wrong. We place our needs above the needs of others and injustice results. There is no life outside of our Holy God.

The bible isn't out of date. We need to listen to it. How are you growing in your understanding of God through his word? Where are you seeking to determine right and wrong?

"The only permanence humans have is in relation to the transcendent Creator, so it should not be surprising to them if, having rejected him, they are swept away like dry grass in a brush fire (v. 24a)." Oswalt, Isaiah - NIV Application Commentary

Day 4: Isaiah 5:24-30

24 Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours
the stubble,
and as dry grass sinks down in the flame,
so their root will be as rottenness,
and their blossom go up like dust;
for they have rejected the law of the LORD of
hosts,
and have despised the word of the Holy
One of Israel.
25 Therefore the anger of the LORD was
kindled against his people,
and he stretched out his hand against them
and struck them,
and the mountains quaked;
and their corpses were as refuse
in the midst of the streets.
For all this his anger has not turned away,
and his hand is stretched out still.
26 He will raise a signal for nations far away,
and whistle for them from the ends of the
earth;

and behold, quickly, speedily they come!
27 None is weary, none stumbles,
none slumbers or sleeps,
not a waistband is loose,
not a sandal strap broken;
28 their arrows are sharp,
all their bows bent,
their horses' hoofs seem like flint,
and their wheels like the whirlwind.
29 Their roaring is like a lion,
like young lions they roar;
they growl and seize their prey;
they carry it off, and none can rescue.
30 They will growl over it on that day,
like the growling of the sea.
And if one looks to the land,
behold, darkness and distress;
and the light is darkened by its clouds.

Exploring the passage

1. What consequences will Judah face for rejecting the word of the Holy One of Israel? 5:24-25
2. How specifically, will God judge Judah? 5:26
3. Because Judah has not 'walked in the light of the Lord' (2:5), what will she experience? 5:30

Explaining the passage

God sent the great and terrifying power of Assyria to destroy Judah for her continued forsaking of God and his word. Judah rejected living in God's light, in God's holy ways. Judah had become indistinguishable from the nations. The chapter ends without hope. Light becomes darkness.

Isaiah challenges us to consider whether we are continuing in the salvation God has given us - are we in the branch of the LORD in God's vineyard? Are we acknowledging our sin and casting ourselves on God's mercy in humble repentance? Are we in God's word, growing in love for God and in holiness? Am I abiding in Jesus and producing the fruit he desires or am I committed to 'my' lifestyle and ease, at the expense of others knowing God? Are my attitudes and behaviours determined by God's word or our society?

John 15:5-12: I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. ¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

WEEK 4: ISAIAH CHAPTER 6

Day 1: Isaiah 6:1-4

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.³ And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”

⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

Exploring the passage

1. How does the earthly king compare to the heavenly king? 6:1
2. How does Isaiah emphasise the unlimited and unapproachable holiness and majesty of God? 6:1-4

Explaining the passage

The book of Isaiah describes how God makes sinful people his holy people. Chapter 6 opens with the death of Judah’s king. Uzziah had been a godly king but, like his nation, became proud and flouted God’s holiness (see 2 Chronicles 26). With Uzziah’s death, Isaiah points Judah to their living, eternal king.

God is THE king enthroned, high and lifted up; the temple can’t even hold his hem. He is surrounded by seraphim who, though sinless, cover their faces because they are not fit to look at God, and cover their feet because they are not worthy to be seen by God. They unceasingly fly to serve and praise the holy God.

When God speaks the foundations shake. And smoke fills the house because God appears in fire - recall the burning bush in Exodus 33-4, and the burning mountain in Exodus 19:18.

There is hope - God is the king.

Day 2: Isaiah 6:1-4

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.³ And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”

⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

Exploring the passage

1. What attributes do the seraphim praise God for? 6:3

Explaining the passage

The seraphim praise God for his holiness, repeating 'holy' three times to emphasise God's immeasurable holiness. They call God 'LORD' - God's personal name that describes his character - the holy God who mercifully rescues and cares for his people so they can live in holiness and proclaim him (Ex 6:3, 19:6). 'Hosts' are vast armies - God is all powerful and everything is under his authority. The seraphim describe God's glory - God's holiness, mercy and power shines over the whole earth. Be awestruck and praise God.

There is hope - the holy God is merciful and powerful to save.

Day 3: Isaiah 6:4-7

⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

⁵ And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

Exploring the passage

1. What is Isaiah's response to hearing and seeing the King, the LORD of hosts? 6:5
2. Whose sin is Isaiah concerned about? 6:5
3. Where did the burning coal come from? 6:6
4. What did the coal do? 6:7

Explaining the passage

The heavenly beings praise God but when Isaiah sees and hears the holiness of God he is full of woe. Isaiah realises his lostness because of his and his people's sin. As God's prophet to Judah, Isaiah is the representative of the nation and he identifies with the people's extensive sin.

Immediately we see the glory of the holy and merciful God as he takes away Isaiah's sin and guilt. The live coal comes from the altar. The altar speaks of sacrifice and atonement - the penalty of sin was paid by a substitute offered in the sinner's place and brought personal forgiveness, peace with God.

There is hope. What God can do for Isaiah he can do for his people.

Day 4: Isaiah 6:8-13

⁸ And I heard the voice of the LORD saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me." ⁹ And he said, "Go, and say to this people:

"Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive."

¹⁰ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

¹¹ Then I said, "How long, O LORD?" And he said:

"Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, ¹² and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

¹³ And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled."

The holy seed is its stump.

Exploring the passage

1. What does God commission Isaiah to do? 6:8-9
2. What effect will Isaiah's preaching have? 6:9-12
3. What hope is there for Judah? 6:13

Explaining the passage

The holy and merciful God cleanses Isaiah's unclean lips so they can speak for him. Isaiah's message will harden people's hearts so they will not be saved. He is to preach until Judah is burnt stumps. This is the judgment of the unrepentant hearts from Chapters 1-5.

But it isn't without hope. The judgment clears the ground for new growth. The burnt stump that remains will be the 'holy seed', that is the holy offspring, people in relationship with God. No longer will God's people be the offspring of evildoers (1:4). God will make them holy offspring (6:13) and in doing so God will display his glory.

Isaiah goes from woe to go by the mercy of God. It is the same for us and we are to believe and proclaim the gospel by the mercy of our holy God.

There is hope - the holy God brings forth holy seed.

WEEK 5: ISAIAH 7:1-8:10

Day 1: Isaiah 7:1-9

7 In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it. ²When the house of David was told, "Syria is in league with Ephraim," the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.

³ And the Lord said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field. ⁴ And say to him, 'Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah. ⁵ Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying, ⁶ "Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it," ⁷thus says the LORD God:

"It shall not stand,
and it shall not come to pass.

⁸ For the head of Syria is Damascus,
and the head of Damascus is Rezin.

And within sixty-five years
Ephraim will be shattered from being a people.

⁹ And the head of Ephraim is Samaria,
and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah.

If you are not firm in faith,
you will not be firm at all."

Exploring the passage

1. What threat did the people of Judah face? 7:1, 4-6
2. How did the people respond to the threat? 7:2
3. How did God tell the people to respond to the threat? 7:4, 7-9

Explaining the passage

King Ahaz and the people of Judah are anxious because Syria and Israel (the ten northern tribes) plan to attack Judah and install their own king because Judah did not join them against Assyria (see 2 Chronicles 28 and 2 Kings 16). God graciously sends Isaiah and his son, whose name means 'a remnant shall return', to tell Ahaz to have faith (7:9b) and not to fear (7:4, 9) because Syria and Israel have no real fire (7:4). The threatening words of Syria and Israel are nothing compared to God's word (7:6-9), and they would soon be crushed (7:7-9). Assyria defeated Syria in 732BC and Israel from 734 to 722BC.

God is trustworthy no matter what our circumstances are. When we don't put our trust in God we give way to fear. To stand firm in our faith is to trust God (7:9b).

Week 5, Day 2: Isaiah 7:7 and 9b-17

⁷thus says the LORD God: ...
If you are not firm in faith,
you will not be firm at all.”

¹⁰ Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: ¹¹ “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” ¹² But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” ¹³ And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the LORD himself will give you a sign. Behold, the

virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted. ¹⁷ The LORD will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria!”

2 Kings 16:7-8

⁷ So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, “I am your servant and your son. Come up and rescue me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are attacking me.” ⁸ Ahaz also took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord and in the treasures of the king's house and sent a present to the king of Assyria.

Exploring the passage

1. Ahaz fears invasion by Syria and Israel. What does God offer Ahaz to ‘firm his faith’? 7:10-12
2. How does Ahaz respond to God’s offer of a sign? 7:11
3. How does God respond to Ahaz’s rejection of a sign? 7:13-15
4. What does God say will happen to Judah? 7:16-17

Explaining the passage

God graciously encourages Ahaz to faith by giving him the opportunity ask for a sign that will confirm God’s promises but Ahaz continues in his unbelief. Ahaz appears pious when he rejects God’s offer on religious grounds. To test God is to actually not trust his promises, so Ahaz was testing God when he said he wouldn’t test God! Ahaz was disobeying God’s word and all the while was plotting to befriend Assyria - see 2 Kings 16:7-8.

In response, God promises his own sign: the birth of a child, Immanuel, whose name means ‘God with us’. In the New Testament we learn that this prophecy was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus - see Matthew 1:23 below.

Because Ahaz did not trust God, God would judge his people by calling Assyria to invade their land.

Matthew 1:20-23

... an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³ *“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).*

Day 3: Isaiah 7:18-25

¹⁸ In that day the LORD will whistle for the fly that is at the end of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. ¹⁹ And they will all come and settle in the steep ravines, and in the clefts of the rocks, and on all the thorn bushes, and on all the pastures.

²⁰ In that day the LORD will shave with a razor that is hired beyond the River—with the king of Assyria—the head and the hair of the feet, and it will sweep away the beard also.

²¹ In that day a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep, ²² and because of the abundance of milk that they give, he will eat curds, for everyone who is left in the land will eat curds and honey.

²³ In that day every place where there used to be a thousand vines, worth a thousand shekels of silver, will become briers and thorns. ²⁴ With bow and arrows a man will come there, for all the land will be briers and thorns. ²⁵ And as for all the hills that used to be hoed with a hoe, you will not come there for fear of briers and thorns, but they will become a place where cattle are let loose and where sheep tread.

Exploring the passage

7:18-25 continues to describe God’s judgement on Judah for trusting in human powers rather than God.

1. Who really controlled Assyria? 7:18
2. What would God use Assyria to do? 7:18-20
3. What would be the effect of Assyria’s invasion? 7:21-25

Explaining the passage

God brought Assyria to attack Jerusalem in 701BC. The irony is Ahaz, the king of Judah, thought he was in control by hiring Assyria to attack Syria and Israel, but Assyria did God’s bidding and also attacked Judah. Because of Judah’s lack of faith - their failure to repent - the promised land of ‘milk and honey’ would revert to a wild, uncultivated land. God would not protect the vineyard of Judah and it would become a wasteland, as God said it would in Isaiah 5:5-6:

⁵ *And now I will tell you
what I will do to my vineyard.*

*I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.*

⁶ *I will make it a waste;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and briers and thorns shall grow up;
I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.*

Day 4: Isaiah 8:1-10

Then the LORD said to me, "Take a large tablet and write on it in common characters, 'Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz.' ² And I will get reliable witnesses, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, to attest for me."

³ And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the LORD said to me, "Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz; ⁴ for before the boy knows how to cry 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria."

⁵ The LORD spoke to me again: ⁶ "Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and rejoice over Rezin and

the son of Remaliah,⁷ therefore, behold, the LORD is bringing up against them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory. And it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks, ⁸ and it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck, and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel."

⁹ Be broken, you peoples, and be shattered; give ear, all you far countries; strap on your armour and be shattered; strap on your armour and be shattered. ¹⁰ Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us.

Bible footnote: Maher-shalal-hash-baz means The spoil speeds, the prey hastens

Exploring the passage

Note: Damascus was the capital of Syria and Samaria was the capital of Israel (the northern kingdom). Shiloah was the soft-flowing spring in Jerusalem.

1. What sign did God give to show Judah that his word, that Israel and Syria would be defeated, was trustworthy? 8:1-4
2. How did God's people respond to God's word? 8:6
3. What did God say would happen because Judah did not turn back to God and trust in him? 8:7-10
4. What was the only hope for Judah? See the very end of verses 8 and 10.

Explaining the passage

In his mercy, God told Judah that Syria and Israel would be defeated by Assyria. As a sign to testify to his word, God said Syria and Israel would be defeated by Assyria before Isaiah's son could talk (8:1-4).

But Judah refused to trust God's word and repent even though God's word was proved true when Assyria defeated Syria and Israel. Judah rejoiced over the defeat of Rezin and the son of Remaliah - the leaders of Syria and Israel. Judah did not turn back to God to enjoy the security of his quiet waters - of being his people in his city. Instead Judah continued to trust Assyria (8:5-6).

Because Judah trusted human powers and not God, Judah would be overtaken by the floodwaters of the "River" (Assyria), rather than enjoy the quiet waters of God (Shiloah) - (8:7-10). But there is a glimmer of hope - Immanuel, 'God with us' (8:8, 10).

Where do you need to repent of trusting in human powers rather than God's promises?

WEEK 6: ISAIAH 8:11-9:7

Day 1: Isaiah 8:11-15

¹¹ For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: ¹² “Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. ¹³ But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honour as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. ¹⁴ And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.”

Exploring the passage

1. What isn't Isaiah to fear? 8:11-12
2. Who is Isaiah to fear? 8:13
3. Why does it matter whether or not people honour and fear the LORD of hosts? 8:14-15

Explaining the passage

God gives Isaiah a strong warning not to be like the people of Judah and fear human powers, the other nations, as scary as they are. Judah reveled in conspiracy theories about threats and events that they could not control.

Isaiah is to fear the all powerful and holy God who controls everything. Fearing God is a clean, pure fear (Psalm 19:9).

Our response to God determines our destiny. When we fear God he is our sanctuary. When we reject God, he is the rock of stumbling on which we fall and are broken.

In the New Testament, we learn that Jesus is the stone that God has put in place. Those who have faith In Jesus will not be put to shame, but those who reject the gospel and pursue righteousness by their works will stumble over Jesus and face the shame of judgment - see Romans 9:30-33 and 1 Peter 2. Jesus also quotes this passage when he tells the parable of the vineyard tenants - See Matthew 21:44 and Luke 20:18.

Day 2: Isaiah 8:16-22

¹⁶ Bind up the testimony; seal the teaching among my disciples. ¹⁷ I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him. ¹⁸ Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion. ¹⁹ And when they say to you, "Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter," should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰ To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. ²¹ They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward. ²² And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness.

Exploring the passage

1. What is Isaiah to do in 8:16?
2. What will treasuring God's word require of Isaiah? 8:17-18
3. The people desire the word of the dead people rather than the word of the living God 8:19. Why don't the people seek God's word? 8:20
4. What does not seeking God's word result in? 8:21-22

Explaining the passage

Those who fear the Lord (8:10-15) are those who trust and treasure God's revealed word (8:16). Isaiah is to go on teaching God's word, especially to God's disciples who will 'bind up', that is, treasure God's word. Trusting God's word involves actively waiting on God to fulfil his promises; it is believing what we cannot see (8:17). Trusting in God's word involves proclaiming God's word to the world, even to people who do not listen (8:18).

People prefer to seek a word from dead people instead of the living God (8:19) because people's hearts are dark - they do not have the light of God in their hearts (8:20). God's word brings blessings, nourishment, life and light. To reject God's word is to treat God contemptuously and to experience hunger, distress, and the gloom of anguish. God will thrust them into deep darkness. (8:21-22)

The way we treat God's word is the way we treat God. How do you hold on to God's word in the midst of your anxiety and distress?

Day 3: Isaiah 9:1-5

But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

² The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.

³ You have multiplied the nation;

you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.
⁴ For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
⁵ For every boot of the tramping warrior in
battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.

Exploring the passage

1. In 8:19-22, we learnt that those who trust human glory rather than God will be thrust into great darkness and gloom. What is the message of hope in 9:1-2?
2. As a result of this light what will the people experience? 9:3
3. What will happen to war and oppression? 9:4-5

Explaining the passage

In the midst of Judah's anguish, a light is going to shine through. In the very areas where the Assyrian conquest of Judah began, Zebulun and Naphtali - Galilee of the nations, God promises a light will dawn (9:1-2). Their distress will turn to joy. Oppression and war will end. They will experience the joy of victory, in the same place Gideon defeated the Midianites (see Judges 7). It is all of God's grace, not their deserving.

As we will learn in the next part of the passage, God is going to bring this about through Jesus. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, Matthew recorded:

¹³ *And leaving Nazareth Jesus went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali,* ¹⁴ *so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:*

¹⁵ *"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—*

¹⁶ *the people dwelling in darkness
have seen a great light,*

*and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death,
on them a light has dawned."*

¹⁷ *From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
Matthew 4:13-17*

Day 4: Isaiah 9:1, 6-7

9 But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. ...

⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Exploring the passage

1. How is God going to restore his people? 9:6a
2. What will this child do? 9:6b
3. What will mark this child's kingdom? 9:7
4. How can the people be assured this will happen? 9:7

Explaining the passage

By his grace, God will restore his undeserving people through the birth of a child (9:6a) who will rule with righteousness and justice and bring everlasting peace (9:6-7). This child, born king, is Jesus.

Jesus' names show he is no ordinary ruler - he is God and man:

- Wonderful counsellor - wonderful is only used of God in the OT, counsellor describes a human with wisdom.
- Mighty God - mighty describes a powerful human; God is divine.
- Everlasting Father - only God is eternal; father describes a human provider, guardian.
- Prince of Peace - a prince is a human ruler; peace is the shalom that only God can give.

God will make David's kingdom the righteous and faithful city and we can be assured of this because the all-powerful, covenant-keeping LORD, will achieve it with his passion.

God is trustworthy. He keeps his word to save sinners. Live under the glorious rule of King Jesus - trust and hope in him alone.

WEEK 7: ISAIAH 9:8-10:34

Day 1: Isaiah 9:8-17

⁸ The Lord has sent a word against Jacob,
and it will fall on Israel;
⁹ and all the people will know,
Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria,
who say in pride and in arrogance of heart:
¹⁰ "The bricks have fallen,
but we will build with dressed stones;
the sycamores have been cut down,
but we will put cedars in their place."
¹¹ But the LORD raises the adversaries of
Rezin against him,
and stirs up his enemies.
¹² The Syrians on the east and the Philistines
on the west
devour Israel with open mouth.
For all this his anger has not turned away,
and his hand is stretched out still.

¹³ The people did not turn to him who struck
them,

nor inquire of the LORD of hosts.
¹⁴ So the LORD cut off from Israel head and
tail,
palm branch and reed in one day—
¹⁵ the elder and honoured man is the head,
and the prophet who teaches lies is the tail;
¹⁶ for those who guide this people have been
leading them astray,
and those who are guided by them are
swallowed up.
¹⁷ Therefore the LORD does not rejoice over
their young men,
and has no compassion on their fatherless
and widows;
for everyone is godless and an evildoer,
and every mouth speaks folly.
For all this his anger has not turned away,
and his hand is stretched out still.

Exploring the passage

Isaiah 9:8-10:4 focuses on God's judgment of the northern kingdom of Israel, also called Ephraim/Samaria.

1. What is the the attitude at the heart of Israel's sin? 9:9
2. How do the Israelites express their arrogance?
 - 9:10-11
 - 9:13-16
3. What will happen to Israel is she does not repent? 9:11-12, 17

Explaining the passage

This week's passage returns from the hope of Immanuel to the grim realities of sin and judgment. Again the arrogance that is at the heart of our sinful rebellion is highlighted (9:9). The fact that God keeps repeating this theme should make us sit up and listen. We need to carefully examine our hearts because every heart has the seeds of arrogance, and arrogance makes us blind to our arrogance.

In their pride Israel refused to face the facts of their situation - they lacked much needed bricks and wood but laughingly thought they could use dressed stones and cedar (9:10-11). They did not turn to God for help and guidance, but instead followed ungodly and self-serving human leaders (9:13-16).

If they do not repent God will bring their enemies against them and not have compassion on them (9:11-12 and 17). As the repeated refrain in 9:12 and 17 says, the unrepentant will face 'God's anger and upraised hand'.

Day 2: Isaiah 9:18-10:4

¹⁸ For wickedness burns like a fire;
it consumes briars and thorns;
it kindles the thickets of the forest,
and they roll upward in a column of smoke.

¹⁹ Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts
the land is scorched,
and the people are like fuel for the fire;
no one spares another.

²⁰ They slice meat on the right, but are still
hungry,
and they devour on the left, but are not
satisfied;

each devours the flesh of his own arm,

²¹ Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim
devours Manasseh;

together they are against Judah.

For all this his anger has not turned away,
and his hand is stretched out still.

10 Woe to those who decree iniquitous
decrees,

and the writers who keep writing
oppression,

² to turn aside the needy from justice
and to rob the poor of my people of their

right,

that widows may be their spoil,

and that they may make the fatherless their
prey!

³ What will you do on the day of punishment,
in the ruin that will come from afar?

To whom will you flee for help,

and where will you leave your wealth?

⁴ Nothing remains but to crouch among the
prisoners

or fall among the slain.

For all this his anger has not turned away,
and his hand is stretched out still.

Exploring the passage

1. What is the effect of Israel's wickedness and God response? 9:18-19
2. How do the people treat one another? 9:19b-21
3. How do the people treat the vulnerable? 10:1-2
4. How will God treat them on the day of judgment? 10:3-4

Explaining the passage

God judges Israel for her lack of brotherly love and injustice towards the vulnerable. Once again God's judgment matches Israel's sin. Israel's wickedness burns like fire (9:18) and so does God's judgment in response (9:19). God does not protect his rebellious people from the effects of their disastrous choices and so they descend into civil war (9:21). In their frenzy of self-destruction the tribes of Israel turn on each other.

Their government has legalised wrong and made themselves rich by oppressing the vulnerable. But on the day of judgment they will be the vulnerable without help - their riches won't deliver them from the enemy.

A life lived in arrogance thinks it is self-preserving but it is self-destructive. Consider how much of your day do you spend planning to self-sacrificially love others? How much of your day do you spend exerting your power over others inappropriately?

Day 3: Isaiah 10:5-19

⁵ Woe to Assyria, the rod of my anger;
the staff in their hands is my fury!
⁶ Against a godless nation I send him,
and against the people of my wrath I
command him,
to take spoil and seize plunder,
and to tread them down like the mire of the
streets.
⁷ But he does not so intend,
and his heart does not so think;
but it is in his heart to destroy,
and to cut off nations not a few;
⁸ for he says:
“Are not my commanders all kings?
⁹ Is not Calno like Carchemish?
Is not Hamath like Arpad?
Is not Samaria like Damascus?”
¹⁰ As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of
the idols,
whose carved images were greater than
those of Jerusalem and Samaria,
¹¹ shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols
as I have done to Samaria and her images?”
¹² When the LORD has finished all his work on
Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the
speech of the arrogant heart of the king of
Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes. ¹³ For
he says:
“By the strength of my hand I have done it,
and by my wisdom, for I have understanding;
I remove the boundaries of peoples,

and plunder their treasures;
like a bull I bring down those who sit on
thrones.
¹⁴ My hand has found like a nest
the wealth of the peoples;
and as one gathers eggs that have been
forsaken,
so I have gathered all the earth;
and there was none that moved a wing
or opened the mouth or chirped.”
¹⁵ Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it,
or the saw magnify itself against him who
wields it?
As if a rod should wield him who lifts it,
or as if a staff should lift him who is not wood!
¹⁶ Therefore the LORD God of hosts
will send wasting sickness among his stout
warriors,
and under his glory a burning will be kindled,
like the burning of fire.
¹⁷ The light of Israel will become a fire,
and his Holy One a flame,
and it will burn and devour
his thorns and briars in one day.
¹⁸ The glory of his forest and of his fruitful land
the LORD will destroy, both soul and body,
and it will be as when a sick man wastes
away.
¹⁹ The remnant of the trees of his forest will be
so few
that a child can write them down.

Exploring the passage

1. What is God's view of Assyria? 10:5-6
2. What is the king of Assyria's view of Assyria? 10:7-11
3. What will God do to Assyria? 10:12, 16-19

Explaining the passage

God rules and judges all nations. Assyria is God's instrument of judgment on his 'godless nation' Israel (10:5-6). The king of Assyria boasts of what his hand can, do not realising he is a tool in the hand of God. The Assyrian king sees himself as superior to God thinking he will do to Jerusalem what he wants (10:7-10). But God will hand Assyria over to destruction once Assyria has completed what God has for her to do in Judah. The least (thorns) and greatest (forest) in Assyria will be destroyed (10:12-19).

In 701BC, 185,000 Assyrians died in a single night. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, hastily departed with a few soldiers (10:16-19). Isaiah 37:36-38a records:

³⁶ *And the angel of the Lord went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.* ³⁷ *Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home and lived at Nineveh.* ³⁸ *And as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, struck him down with the sword.*

Day 4: Isaiah 10:20-34

²⁰ In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. ²¹ A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. ²² For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. ²³ For the LORD God of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth.

²⁴ Therefore thus says the LORD God of hosts: "O my people, who dwell in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrians when they strike with the rod and lift up their staff against you as the Egyptians did. ²⁵ For in a very little while my fury will come to an end, and my anger will be directed to their destruction. ²⁶ And the LORD of hosts will wield against them a whip, as when he struck Midian at the rock of Oreb. And his staff will be over the sea, and he will lift it as he did in Egypt. ²⁷ And in that day his burden will depart from your shoulder, and his yoke from your neck; and the yoke will be broken because of the fat."

²⁸ He has come to Aiath;
he has passed through Migron;
at Michmash he stores his baggage;
²⁹ they have crossed over the pass;
at Geba they lodge for the night;
Ramah trembles;
Gibeah of Saul has fled.
³⁰ Cry aloud, O daughter of Gallim!
Give attention, O Laishah!
O poor Anathoth!
³¹ Madmenah is in flight;
the inhabitants of Gebim flee for safety.
³² This very day he will halt at Nob;
he will shake his fist
at the mount of the daughter of Zion,
the hill of Jerusalem.
³³ Behold, the LORD God of hosts
will lop the boughs with terrifying power;
the great in height will be hewn down,
and the lofty will be brought low.
³⁴ He will cut down the thickets of the forest
with an axe,
and Lebanon will fall by the Majestic One.

Exploring the passage

1. Highlight the references to remnant in 10:20-23.
2. What will God bring about through his judgment? 10:20
3. How does God comfort his remnant people in the face of Assyria's attack? 10:23-27

Explaining the passage

In God's grace, a remnant will be saved through his judgment. The remnant will be small in number but they will trust in God, not human strength (10:20-23).

"Therefore" the people of God shouldn't fear Assyria (10:23-27). Although Assyria's invasion will be dreadful, God will protect his people as he did in the past when the Egyptians and Midianites were no match for the Lord of hosts - see Judges 7:25 and Exodus 14:26, and Exodus 15:4.

Assyria advanced through Judah but when they reached Jerusalem to chop it down, God chopped the Assyrians down (10:28-34). Human pride cannot stand before God. The king of Assyria isn't the mighty one as he claimed in 10:13. The true mighty one is God and he is the only one we should rely on.

WEEK 8: ISAIAH Chapters 11 and 12

Day 1: Isaiah 11:1-5

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

² And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

³ And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,

⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

Exploring the passage

Note: Jesse was the father of King David to whom God promised the Christ would come from his line and rule on his throne forever.

1. What grows out from the fire of God's judgment? 11:1
2. What will God give to his ruler? 11:2
3. As a result what will his rule be like? 11:3-5

Explaining the passage

Judah, Israel and Assyria arrogantly assumed they could live without God. Under God's judgment, they would be cut down and burned (see 1:7, 1:34, 4:4, 6:13, 9:5 and 18, 10:16 and 17). But in this field of burned-out stumps, a green shoot that is a fruit bearing branch, would grow (11:1). This shoot is God's King. God will give his people this king because he is merciful and he is faithful to his promises to redeem his undeserving people.

God's King would not rule like self-serving, corrupt and unjust human rulers. Instead God's king would have God's Spirit - he would rule by the life and breath of God himself. As a result, he would have the wisdom, power and relationship with God that would enable him to rule well (11:2). Fearing God, his concern will be to obey, please and glorify God. His rule will be hard won (11:4). He will rule with justice, righteousness, faithfulness and power he will protect and care for the 'poor and meek' - those who depend upon him (11:3-5). Jesus is God's amazing king.

Day 2: Isaiah 11:6-9

- ⁶ The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.
- ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
- ⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.
- ⁹ They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

Exploring the passage

1. Isaiah 11:6-9 continues to describe the rule of the God's king. What do the images of animals that usually prey on each other portray about the kingdom of God's king? 11:6-8
2. What else will mark the kingdom? 11:9a
3. Why will this be possible? 11:9b

Explaining the passage

God's King will bring peace unlike anything we have known. What was divided will be united in perfect harmony and security in the new creation. All will be holy (11:9).

This unity and holiness will be possible because 'the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD' 11:9b. 'Knowledge' implies intimate relationship - see Genesis 4:1. Thanks be to God's amazing King, Jesus, we can now enjoy a personal relationship with God and the privilege of being part of his people. Through Jesus' death and reconciliation, peace with God is really possible. In Christ, we have a foretaste of the reality to come.

Isaiah 12 is a picture of reconciliation, holiness and trust. Isaiah Chapter 1 described God's unholy people as stupider than brute beasts because they not 'know' their master who cares for them (1:3). Praise God - he has reconciled us to himself and made the unholy, holy.

Day 3: Isaiah 11:10-16

¹⁰ In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

¹¹ In that day the LORD will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.

¹² He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

¹³ The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart, and those who harass Judah shall be cut off;

Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim.

¹⁴ But they shall swoop down on the shoulder of the Philistines in the west, and together they shall plunder the people of the east.

They shall put out their hand against Edom and Moab,

and the Ammonites shall obey them.

¹⁵ And the LORD will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt, and will wave his hand over the River with his scorching breath,

and strike it into seven channels, and he will lead people across in sandals.

¹⁶ And there will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant that remains of his people, as there was for Israel when they came up from the land of Egypt.

Exploring the passage

1. What will God's King do? 11:10-12
2. How will Judah and Israel (Ephraim) relate to one another? 11:13
3. In what ways is rescue and restoration of God's people like their deliverance from Egypt in the first Exodus?(11:14-16)

Explaining the passage

God's King will be a signal, calling his people to himself from all the nations to their homeland and providing rest to those who trust in him. His people will be united. There will be no more division as there was between the northern tribes and southern tribes of Israel, between Judah and Ephraim (also called Israel).

Just like the Exodus out of Egypt, no barrier will stop God's people returning. Just like the Exodus out of Egypt, God's people will plunder their enemies and God will destroy their enemies (11:14-15). Just like the Exodus out of Egypt, God will dry up the river Euphrates, the life-blood of the Assyrian people to liberate his people just as he dried up the Red Sea to bring his people out of Egypt (11:15-16).

Day 4: Isaiah 12:1-6

You will say in that day:

“I will give thanks to you, O LORD,
for though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away,
that you might comfort me.

² “Behold, God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the LORD God is my strength and my
song,
and he has become my salvation.”

³ With joy you will draw water from the wells of
salvation. ⁴ And you will say in that day:

“Give thanks to the LORD,
call upon his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples,
proclaim that his name is exalted.

⁵ “Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done
gloriously;
let this be made known in all the earth.

⁶ Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of
Israel.”

Exploring the passage

Chapter 12 describes our people will respond to God’s salvation.

1. What will they say to God? 12:1
2. What will mark their lives? 12:2-3
3. What will they say to the nations? 12:4-6

Explaining the passage

Isaiah looks forward to the day when people will give thanks to God for his salvation. As God promised, he will turn away his anger so that he may comfort us, that is, forgive our sins and take away the judgment we deserve. No one other than God brings deliverance. In him alone, trust, strength and joy replace fear, want and distress. How can we not declare God to the nations and sing God’s praises with joy (12:4-6)? God is LORD and the Holy One of Israel.

The angels longed to see the fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecies about the grace of God that was to be ours in Jesus (1 Peter 1:10-12). What a privilege we have in knowing Jesus and his death and resurrection that bring us forgiveness and holiness.

End of the series ...

We have come to the end of our readings on Isaiah 1-12. Isaiah presents us with the holy and merciful God, ‘high and lifted up’ and his amazing King. As we grow in knowing God’s immeasurable holiness, we grow in knowing that our greatest need is his salvation. In response to his mercy, we will live a life of repentance - trusting God, growing in holiness and proclaiming Jesus with joy and thanksgiving.