

BIBLE STUDIES

FROM ISAIAH 1–39



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Introductions to the Book of Isaiah

Isaiah 1–5 God's City Trashed & Redeemed

Isaiah 6 God's Plan for Restoration from Ruin

Isaiah 7 Testing Times

Isaiah 8–11 The Hope of the Remnant

Isaiah 9 & 11 The King who Changes Everything

Isaiah 13–24 The Last King Standing

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Isaiah 38–39 The Predictable Ending

Isaiah 1–39 Pride and Humility

Isaiah 1–66 God & The Nations



1. THE BOOK OF ISAIAH: INTRODUCTIONS

If helpful for this study, refer to the 'Kings in Isaiah' and 'Places in Isaiah 1–12' Infographics on Church Central

The Book of Isaiah is very large with 66 chapters and dates back to the eighth century BC. The size of Isaiah and the foreign setting can make it a very intimidating read! However, it is well worth the effort. The writers of the New Testament obviously used it a lot to make sense of what Jesus did and said, because they quote Isaiah on 55 separate occasions. Furthermore, they clearly held that God was speaking through Isaiah, so **the message of this prophet is going to be powerful and life changing for us now.**

Our aim is to dig deep into this major part of God's word and uncover some of its riches. But before we delve into the detail, we need to become familiar with the key people and places that feature in Isaiah. Let's get into 'Introductions' for the book of Isaiah.

This is the opening line of the book: *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)

This points us to the lives and times we need to know to properly understand the book. Isaiah 1:1 invites us to interpret the message of the book in the light of the historical context. Isaiah 1 establishes the foundations of chapters 1–12, and indeed the whole book – judgement for God's people, with a promise of hope.

Let's introduce ourselves to some of these characters.

The task: For one of the following 'characters', look up the assigned passages and just the note what you learn about this 'character'. For a person: moral character, their faith, their role,...For a place: it's history, it's importance, ...anything you think is important to know this person or place.

Then, based on what you know, make a drawing of this 'character' that visually represents it's defining features.

You will then use this drawing as a basis for 'introducing' this character to the rest of the group [eg. Hi, I would like to introduce you to my friend Isaiah. He's the guy here with the beard and the dirty lips...]



ISAIAH: Isaiah 6, 20, and 37:1–6



JUDAH (place): 1 Kings 12:16–20



KING AHAZ: 2 Kings 16:1–9



JERUSALEM: Deuteronomy 12:1–7, 1 Kings 8:46–53, 9:3



KING HEZEKIAH: 2 Kings 18:1–12



Assyria: 2 Kings 17:3–13

Hopefully, as we read Isaiah now, we will be able to imagine more accurately the situation Isaiah originally spoke into. When we do that, we will see with sharper focus what God is saying to us today.

As we move into prayer – **were there things that rebuked or encouraged you as you researched these 'characters'?**

2. ISAIAH 1–5: GOD’S CITY TRASHED & REDEEMED

If helpful for this study, refer to the ‘Isaiah Overview in One Movement’ Infographic on Church Central

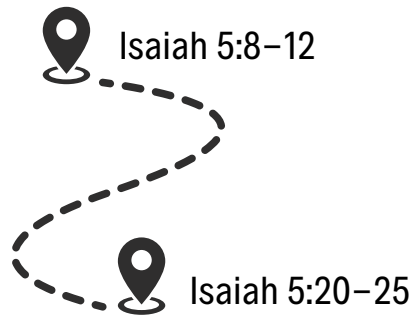
Last week we spent time introducing ourselves to the life and times of Isaiah. This week we will see that the book of Isaiah opens with a revelation of how ruined God’s city, Jerusalem, has become. But there is also a reminder of the vision God intends for this place.

Read Isaiah 1:1–4. What is wrong with Israel? *Note that here ‘Israel’ refers to Judah.*

Why is this so scandalous?

A majority of material in Isaiah 1–5 details for us how bad things have become in Jerusalem. We could imagine Isaiah as a **tour guide** exposing for us the reality of God’s city.

Follow Isaiah to the following places and report what he shows you:



As God sees these things, how would you describe how he feels?

Despite the moral ruin we see everywhere in the Israel Isaiah reveals to us, God still holds out hope for turning this place around.

Read Isaiah 1:16–20. What does God want his people to do?

What does God promise as a result of that?

Even though the Israelites have forsaken the LORD, He has not forsaken them! And He still has grand plans for his chosen city.

Take a tour led by Isaiah of the Jerusalem that God redeems, and note down the striking things that you see.



Look back at what you saw of the ‘trashed’ city and what you saw of the ‘redeemed’ city.
How does that parallel your own salvation?

3. ISAIAH 6: GOD'S PLAN FOR RESTORATION FROM RUIN

'... chapters 1–5 function as an introduction. As such, they contrast the rebellion and corruption of Judah and Israel in Isaiah's own day (1:1–31; 2:6–4:1; 5:1–30) and the future holiness and blessedness which the nation will enjoy (2:1–5; 4:2–6). ... God will not be content to leave his people in their humiliation.

But this raises a question: **how can the promised holiness and blessedness replace rebellion and corruption?** Chapters 1–5 do not provide an answer. The answer is found in chapter 6, which explains why the prophet's call is narrated only after the five preceding chapters.'

John Oswalt, New Dictionary of Biblical Theology



Read Isaiah 6 with someone being the narrator, a group being the seraphs, someone being God, and someone being Isaiah.

In verses 1–4 obviously Isaiah meets a holy God – the seraphs call him that 3 times!

From this chapter, what do you think it might mean for God to be holy?

Last week we saw Isaiah cry out 'woe' to those under God's judgement. Now he cries out "Woe is me!"

"The vision of God produces not rapture but sheer terror in the prophet. He knows himself to be utterly ruined, for two reasons: he is unclean, and he has seen God."

Why would Isaiah cry out "woe is me" in response to God's holiness?

Barry Webb, The Message of Isaiah, 59

Trace what happens to Isaiah in this chapter, and summarise each scene with 2–3 words in the boxes below.

v1	v5	v6–7
v8	v9–10	v11–13

How does Isaiah's experience show us how God might move Judah from ruin to restoration?

How does Isaiah's experience show us how God moves us from ruin to restoration?

In verses 9–13 God's words seem rather harsh. **But in the light of what we read last week, why do you think they are actually completely appropriate?**

How do these verses explain how God will move Judah from ruin to restoration?

Look at the New Testament passages below that quote from Isaiah 6, **what do they teach you about what Isaiah 6 might mean for us today?** *John 12:37–43 / Acts 28:23–31*

4. ISAIAH 7: TESTING TIMES

If helpful for this study, refer to the 'Isaiah Overview with Key Events' on Church Central

Recall what you remember about the characters: Isaiah; Israel; Jerusalem and Judah; Ahaz and Assyria.



ISAIAH: Isaiah 6, 20, and 37:1-6



JUDAH (place): 1 Kings 12:16-20



Assyria: 2 Kings 17:3-13



KING AHAZ: 2 Kings 16:1-9



JERUSALEM: Deuteronomy 12:1-7, 1 Kings 8:46-53, 9:3

Read Isaiah 7.

What crisis confronts Ahaz and the people of Jerusalem? (7:1-2)

What does God tell Ahaz to do? (7:3-9)

Complete this table: Fill out what options you think Ahaz has, and what the pro's and con's are for each

Option	Pro's	Con's
1.		
2.		
3.		

7:9 says – 'If you do not stand firm in your faith you will not stand at all'. **What do you think this means? Why might it be a great verse for us to remember in our everyday lives?**

What 'options' compete for your faith in God when trials come your way?

How does this passage in Isaiah strengthen you to trust in God?

God responds quite furiously to Ahaz's rejection of His offer of a sign. **Why would not asking for a sign by considered 'trying the patience of God?'** **How does God want us to respond to his words?**

Prophecies often have a near (partial) fulfillment that applies directly to their original hearers as well as a far (ultimate) fulfillment related directly to Jesus. – Garrett Kell, TGC

7:14 might be familiar words to us from the account of Jesus birth.

What was God on about originally when he made this prophecy?

What might the near (partial) fulfillment be?

How might that help us understand the significance of Jesus birth more?

5. ISAIAH 8–11: THE HOPE OF THE REMNANT

Last week we saw how King Ahaz was confronted with the choice of trusting God or turning to some other source of salvation in the face of military threat. This week we will see how those who trusted God in Israel (the remnant) were to face the turbulent and frightening times of judgement God intended for his people.

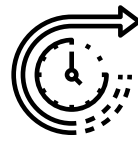
What was God going to do? **Look up the following passages and note what God had in store for the future.**



Isaiah 8:3–8



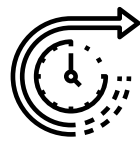
Isaiah 9:1–7



Isaiah 10:5–12



Isaiah 10:20–27



Isaiah 11:1–9

Summarise what God had in store for those faithful to him.

Read 11:10–16. What is God's ultimate plan for his remnant?

Read Acts 2:1–12. How do you think this passage relates to the prophecies of Isaiah?

How do we connect to the hope of God's remnant people?

6. ISAIAH 9+11: THE KING WHO CHANGES EVERYTHING

Prayer Starter: What are the biggest problems the world faces today?

Read Isaiah 8:21–9:7. Note down what life is like BEFORE and AFTER this King comes



Read Isaiah 11:1–9



What things 'define' this King? (11:1–5)

What does this King achieve? (11:6–9)

Who is this King? **Jesus!**

Read Matthew 4:12–17. What things show us that Jesus is the king who was promised by Isaiah?

How is Jesus the answer to the world's problems?

How is Jesus the answer to your problems?

7. ISAIAH 13–24: THE LAST KING STANDING

If helpful for this study, refer to the 'Nations in Isaiah' Map on Church Central

Prayer Starter: What powers exist in our world today that cause you to fear?

What powers exist in our world that hold others in fear?



The prophecies of Isaiah come in the context of the real threat of Assyria coming and conquering Judah from the north and a knowledge that many peoples mightier and stronger than the Jews surround them.

We have seen that God's ultimate plan was to re-gather a remnant people for Himself from all parts of the world. But **does God have ultimate power to carry out this ultimate plan?** Why trust Yahweh's word when many other powers asserted their claims to world dominance at once?

Skim through the pages of chapters 13–24 noting the chapter headings.

What is your sense of what this is all about?

Read one of Isaiah 14:24–27; 14:28–32 or 18.

What is the prophesied fate of these places? Where will victory be found in the end?

Chapter 24 gives a universal picture of what is prophesied for specific existing cities or nations of the time: God's judgement. **Read this chapter**, and discuss the following questions.

Who is the Lord's judgement aimed at? (24:1–3)

Why is this judgement coming? (24:4–5)

Summarise in your own words what change God's judgement will bring about (from 24:6–13).

What problem does the speaker express in 24:16? How is this problem answered in verses 17–23?

What words would you use to sum up this judgement that God is going to bring one day?

In the original time of Isaiah, what do you think this message was designed to achieve?

It is clear from Isaiah 13–24 that in the end God will conquer every power and every person that stands to threaten or destroy His people.

In what ways do we think we can assert our own individual power over God's?

How does this passage help us to see how foolish that is?

Knowing that Jesus has suffered the punishment for our sin, **how does God's coming judgement (2 Peter 3:7) actually provide comfort in our lives?**

8. ISAIAH 25–27: CLEANSING THROUGH JUDGEMENT

Isaiah 27 finishes the section that started from chapter 13. It's the climax, where all the enemies of God get summed up in one frightening image. Can God defeat Israel's enemies? Yes.

But not only does God defeat Israel's enemies – Isaiah is also presenting a glorious future. God has a plan which embraces all nations (see Isaiah 25:6–8 for a great example), and Israel (represented here by Judah and Jerusalem) is destined to play a central role in that plan.

But before Israel can fulfill its calling it must be cleansed.

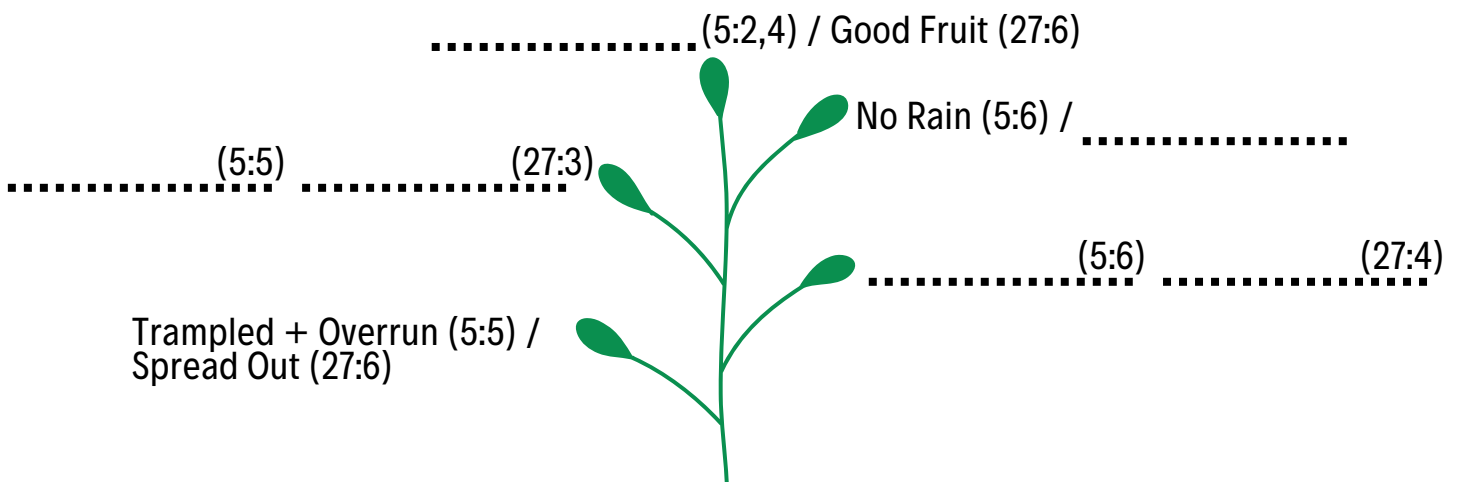
Read Isaiah 5

What is the state of the vineyard? (v1–8)

What does it need to be cleansed from? (v9–12, 18–24)

What is the role of the nations? (v13–17, 25–30)

Read Isaiah 27, as you read identify how Isaiah 27 contrasts with Isaiah 5.



The vineyard of Jacob is going to be so fruitful that it will fill “the world with fruit”.

What accounts for this radical shift? This is what this study is about.

Why the difference between the two vineyard songs? What is 27:6 saying?

In Isaiah's day, Israel (represented after the fall of the northern kingdom in 722 BC by Judah + Jerusalem) was very far removed from the ideal situation seen in 27:1–5. She is in the midst of a cleansing process.

What can we say about the Lord's judgement in verses 7 to 9?

Why did this have to happen? (verse 11)

What are the two images to express the final destiny of God's people in verses 12 to 13?

God's people will be set free by His grace and will respond with renewed obedience to the covenant. Jesus achieves this by dying on the cross & rising again. Isaiah predicts this hundreds of years before it happens.

Is it possible that in our suffering God has a cleansing process as the goal? Discuss.

How would you answer people who charge God with passivity and disinterest in not immediately curtailing the wicked activities of Satan?

9. ISAIAH 28–37: WHO WILL YOU TRUST?

If helpful for this study, refer to the 'Isaiah Overview with Key Events' on Church Central

In Isaiah 28–37 we step into the world of political intrigue and political crisis.

Break into groups and have each group read one of the following passages, then report back – **how the people wanted to respond to the crisis** and **what the outcome of this response would be**



Isaiah 29:13–21



Isaiah 30:1–5



Isaiah 31:1–3

Yet in each of these chapters we also have an alternative, a message of hope.

Break into groups and have each group read one of the following passages, then report back, **how should the people respond, what will the outcome be?**

Isaiah 29:22–24



Isaiah 30:15–19



Isaiah 31:6–9



Isaiah 32:1–4

Read Isaiah 36–37 and discuss:

Where do Hezekiah and Judah put their trust, human politics or divine promises?

At which points in the story would you have been tempted to trust in human politics not divine promises?

When are you tempted to seek political solutions (on a personal, local, and national level) before trusting in God's promises?

How does knowing that our salvation and deliverance comes in Christ change how we respond to immediate problems in our lives?

10. ISAIAH 38–39: THE PREDICTABLE ENDING

If helpful for this study, refer to the 'Kings in Isaiah' Infographic and 'Isaiah Historical Timeline' on Church Central

Last week we were introduced to King Hezekiah and read about a great victory God gave the people of Jerusalem over the threatening Assyrians.

What do you think was the 'take home message' from that story?

Read Isaiah 38:1–8. **What parallels are there between the message from the LORD to Hezekiah and the message of the LORD to the people in Judah in the book of Isaiah?**



Why do you think God responds to the prayer of Hezekiah?

Compare Hezekiah's response to the word of God to Isaiah's response to his vision of God in chapter 6 – **what is the same, what is different?**

What does this episode in Hezekiah's life tell us about appropriate human response to words of judgement from God? (recall Jonah 3:4–10)

What does this episode in Hezekiah's life tell us about the character of God?

Read Isaiah 39 (the last chapter in the 'first half' of the book of Isaiah).

Why do you think the king of Babylon may have sent gifts to Hezekiah? (39:1)

With that in mind, why do you think Hezekiah's actions are so heavily condemned by Isaiah?

What do you think of the character of Hezekiah at the end of chapter 39? What does this hint about the future of God's people in Jerusalem?



Jerusalem is eventually captured and plundered by the Babylonians (see 2 Kings 24:10–17). **How does the ending to the 'first half' of Isaiah vindicate what Isaiah has been preaching?**



How has Isaiah 36–39 encouraged you to trust in the word of God?



11. ISAIAH 1–39 RECAP: PRIDE + HUMILITY

What picture of God has come out in chapters 1–39?

What picture of humanity has come out in chapters 1–39?

The book of Isaiah shows us quite clearly how foolish human pride is and in contrast the righteousness of humility before the LORD. One way of helpfully revising what we have learnt is to look back focusing our attention on the topic of pride versus humility.

PROUD

HUMBLE

Look up the passages below and discuss the questions:

How is human pride showing itself according to Isaiah?

What lies are being believed to feed human pride?

How is God going to respond to human pride?



Isaiah 2:6–18



Isaiah 9:8–17



Isaiah 10:12–19

In contrast to the pride of so many, there are a couple of models of humility that are worth reflecting on:



ISAIAH: Isaiah 8:11–18



KING HEZEKIAH: Isaiah 37:14–20

What beliefs drive them to humility?

How is their humility expressed in their life?

Why do their actions seem to be the best thing to do in the light of what Isaiah teaches?

One major theme of Isaiah could be summarized by Proverbs 3:34: 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' James picks this up in his letter.

Read James 4:4–10 and think about what it might look like to humble yourself before the Lord in this day and age.

12. ISAIAH 1–66 TASTER: GOD + THE NATIONS

If helpful for this study, refer to the 'Isaiah Overview with Key Events + Explanation' on Church Central

Read Isaiah 1:7 – **What is the relationship between Judah and the nations?**

Read Isaiah 2:1–3 – **How will the relationship between Judah and the nations change?**

In the opening chapters of Isaiah we are introduced to the tension of Judah and the nations. Israel was meant to be holy (different to the nations) and so attract the nations 'in'. Instead they were attracted by the nations and so become sinful like the nations. Ironically, the nations will come 'in' to destroy Israel.

God uses the nations as his tool for judgement, even though they themselves are sinful and will one day flock to Judah.

Isaiah 13–27 contains God's prophecies of judgement to the foreign nations. *Remember, while the prophecy is about the foreign nations, it is meant to be 'overheard' by Judah.*



Flick open a chapter of 13–27 and read it. **How would you feel if you were one of the foreign nations? How would you feel if you were someone in Judah?**

Yet, as with chapters 1–12, God is prophesying Salvation through Judgement. We can see hints of salvation for the nations in 18:7 and 19:21–25. **Why might Isaiah 19:25 be confusing to the people of Judah?**

What does 19:25 tell us about God's plans for the nations?

The people of Judah want salvation *from* the nations around them. They are yet to realise that God's plan is to bring salvation to the nations *through* the people of Judah.

In the middle of this section (13–27) is chapter 20. It reminds the reader that God is in control.

God will use his control to bring about the salvation of the nations. While 13–27 started in Judgement, it ends with hope.

Read 25:1–9. **What do we learn about Judah and the salvation of the nations?**

As you know from our study of Isaiah 1–39, God delivers his people from the nations. But then promises that they will fall into exile. 200 years later the people of Judah are taken into exile by Babylon. **Isaiah 40 onwards speaks to the people returning from exile.** God has given Isaiah a prophetic vision into what will take place – and so the second movement of the Book of Isaiah (40–66) transports Isaiah (and us) into that future.



If Isaiah 1–39 was salvation through **judgement**, where God uses the nations to bring judgement on Judah. Then Isaiah 40–66 is **salvation** through judgement, where God promises to bring salvation to the nations through Judah. The emphasis changes. Firstly for the people of Judah, then the nations, and then the Kingdom of God where Judah and the nations meet.

God's plan was to bring salvation to the nations through the people of Judah, in 40–66 that sharpens into one **suffering servant**, through whom God will bring salvation to the nations.

Read Isaiah 42:1–13 and Isaiah 49:1–7. **What do they teach us about God's plan to bring salvation to the nations through his servant?**

Read the final paragraphs of the book, Isaiah 66:18–24.

How does it complete what Isaiah chapter 2 predicted?

How does it bring salvation to the nations through Judah (the servant)?

How does it make sense of Isaiah 19:25 and 25:1–9?

