

23 - Isaiah

Isaiah

Key Verse:

INTRODUCTION OF ISAIAH

Isaiah's life was spent under the cloud of rising Assyrian world domination. He lived in Jerusalem and was the counselor of kings. He prophesied during the reigns of the four kings mentioned in Isaiah 1:1. God's call came the year King Uzziah died (740 B.C.).

Kings put their trust in political alliances, military strength and even in pagan religions rather than in God, and the people followed them. Many people were tempted by the materialistic cultures of the powerful nations that surrounded Judah.

Isaiah proclaimed the sovereignty of God who is the ruler of all nations. He called God's people to put their trust in God and to obey him. He warned that failure to obey God would bring down God's wrath and national destruction. Judah's greatest enemy was her own moral corruption. Salvation could not be found in foreign alliances, but in the Sovereign God.

Isaiah prophesied about events that happened long after his death. He spoke about the Babylonian exile and he wrote words of comfort and hope to the exiles. Isaiah also looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, a descendant of David who would usher in a kingdom of peace and justice and righteousness. Isaiah described the Suffering Servant and looked forward to his coming.

The Book of Isaiah may be divided into 3 parts:

Chapters 1-39: God's judgment on Judah and the nations

Chapters 40-55: God's Servant

Chapters 56-66: Repentance and restoration.

COME, LET US REASON TOGETHER

Isaiah 1:1-31

Key Verse: 1:18

1. My people have rebelled (1-17)

In the face of growing threats from powerful neighbors, fear filled the hearts of the people. Many sought help in the immoral and idolatrous religions of foreign nations. But they needed to fear God, not men, and repent. God was the one who could help them. Because they rebelled against God, violence, injustice and moral corruption were rampant. Israel was more stupid than a dumb animal: Oxen and donkeys know their masters, but Israel rebelled against her Maker. God hates

meaningless religious ceremonies; he wants his people to love him and to practice justice and mercy. In any age a godless society becomes violent, corrupt and full of injustice.

2. Come now, let us reason together (18-31)

God invites rebellious people to a personal relationship. He invites us to talk with him and he offers to cleanse our sins. Obedience leads to life, rebellion, to death. Read verses 21-31 and find God's warning and promise.

Prayer: Lord, take away my rebel heart and give me a heart that loves and obeys you.

One Word: Come, let us reason together

THE LAW WILL GO OUT FROM ZION

Isaiah 2:1-22

Key Verse: 2:3

1. All nations will stream to it (1-5)

God's great purpose and vision for his people is that they be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests--a nation of Bible teachers and shepherds for the world. He wants his word to go out from his holy hill to the ends of the earth, so that all people might repent and walk in his ways. Then they will beat their swords into plowshares and there will be peace on earth.

2. The Lord alone will be exalted (6-22)

When God's people turn from God's ways to follow other gods or when they depend on man rather than on God (6-9,22), they cannot teach God's ways to anyone. Proud people who depend on themselves cannot serve God. When the day of the Lord dawns, proud people will be humbled and the Lord alone will be exalted. Spiritual order will be restored and God will rule in peace.

Prayer: Lord, you established this country to be a city on a hill, a holy nation and a kingdom of priests. Fulfill your purpose for us. Let the word of the Lord again go out from this land.

One Word: A kingdom of priests and a holy nation

SIGNS OF NATIONAL CORRUPTION

Isaiah 3:1-4:1 (Key Verse: 3:14)

1. A nation without shepherds (3:1-12)

When there are no heroes, no great men to be role models for the young, no responsible leaders who are concerned about the nation, moral and spiritual chaos results. People oppress each other; no one wants to be a leader; blatant immorality like that of Sodom becomes commonplace. God will rise to judge his people. How can a once godly nation become like this? If they abandon God, this is the inevitable result.

2. God's judgment (3:13-4:1)

When the Lord rises up to judge his people, he accuses the leaders and the women of ruining the vineyard of Israel. The leaders have abused their trust and exploited the people. They have become rich by grinding the faces of the poor in the dirt. The women became proud and unspiritual. They were only interested in clothes and men. God would take away both. Defeat and captivity was coming.

Prayer: Lord, raise up leaders who care about justice and about people. Help the women of our land to repent and turn to you in prayer.

One Word: Repent or face God's judgment

THE BRANCH OF THE LORD

Isaiah 4:2-6

Key Verse: 4:2

1. The Branch of the Lord (2)

Prophecy in the Bible is God's promise. God keeps his promises. The Branch of the Lord is the Messiah. God began the fulfillment of this prophecy when he sent Christ to live as his servant and to give his life as a ransom for sinners to save God's remnant. When Jesus comes again in glory to usher in his Messianic kingdom, the fruit of this beautiful Branch will be glorious indeed. God's promises are the real hope of all people.

2. A remnant in Israel (3-6)

The day of the Lord is a day of destruction for the wicked, but a day of restoration and salvation for the remnant of God's people. After the time of destruction, a remnant preserved by God's grace will remain. The Lord himself will wash away the filth and the bloodstains and make a shelter, a place of rest and refuge for his people. Let's be a part of that remnant.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the glorious hope you have given us. Keep me as one of your remnant people.

One Word: Rejoice in the glorious Branch

THE SONG OF THE VINEYARD

Isaiah 5:1-7

Key Verse: 5:1

1. My loved one had a vineyard (1-2a)

God is the vinedresser. Israel was his lovely vineyard. God cared for his vineyard and worked hard to help his people bear good fruit. Like the vineyard owner who built a watchtower and dug a winepress, he expected a crop of good fruit. Today, the people of Jesus are the new Israel of God (Mk 12:1-12). God saved us and made us his people so that we might bear the good fruit of Christian character and good fruit of preaching the gospel to all people. His name is glorified by good fruit.

2. Bad fruit (2b-7)

The vines that had been so carefully nurtured and so lovingly cared for produced bad fruit. Israel became proud and selfish instead of loving, obedient and thankful. She served idols. She disappointed God. God punished her by removing his loving, protecting hand and withholding his blessings from her.

Prayer: Lord, let the fruit of my life be good fruit that pleases you.

One Word: My Loved One's vineyard

WHEN GOD'S WORD IS NEGLECTED

Isaiah 5:8-30

Key Verse: 5:24b

1. Those who ignore what God is doing (8-16)

God blessed his people. But the people of Israel only thought about building houses and having fun. They were not interested in what God was doing in his world. Isaiah said that they would go into exile because of their ignorance (13). They did. When people are selfish and only seek pleasure, they will perish in their ignorance. The arrogant will be humbled and the Lord will be exalted (15,16).

2. Those who call evil "good" and good, "evil" (17-30)

The sophisticated people of Jerusalem seemed to be very clever. They were wise in their own eyes and they made light of God's work. They did "their own thing" with no sense of right and wrong, taking no responsibility for their influence. Their heroes were heroes at drinking and champions at mixing drinks. Justice disappeared from the land. When God's word is neglected, people call evil

“good” and good, “evil.” Growing young people are ensnared in a morass of moral confusion. And God is angry.

Prayer: Lord, raise up people of God who obey your word and care about your work.

One Word: Don't neglect God's word

WHOM SHALL I SEND?

Isaiah 6:1-13

Key Verse: 6:8

1. A vision of the Holy, Almighty God (1-7)

During King Uzziah's 52-year reign there had been peace and prosperity. People became selfish and corrupt. In the year of Uzziah's death, Isaiah saw a vision of the Holy God whose glory fills the whole earth. Isaiah repented, for he had not used his mouth to praise God--he had only complained and spoken words of despair. He cried out, "Woe to me." God sent a seraph to touch his mouth with a burning coal and take away his sin.

2. Here am I. Send me! (8-13)

God wanted to send Isaiah to his people with a message of repentance. Isaiah accepted God's cleansing and answered God's call. But the people were hardened by sin and pleasure-seeking; God knew that they would close their ears to his message. How long must God's servant preach to them? He must declare God's word to the end. Then, God's precious remnant would be saved--the holy seed in the stump. God works through a remnant.

Prayer: Lord, I and my people have unclean lips; cleanse me and use me.

One Word: Here am I. Send me!

THE SIGN OF IMMANUEL

Isaiah 7:1-25

Key Verse: 7:14

1. Two smoldering stubs of firewood (1-11)

Aram made an alliance with Israel to attack Judah. King Ahaz and his people trembled in fear like leaves in the wind because he put his trust in men and materials instead of in God. Isaiah took his son and went to help Ahaz to see himself and his enemies from God's point of view. It was not the time to tremble in fear; it was the time to trust in God. The enemy who threatened him would soon

be extinguished like two smoldering sticks of firewood.

2. Immanuel (12-25)

When Ahaz refused to ask God for a sign, God promised to give him a sign anyway--the sign of Immanuel--God with us. He promised that a virgin would give birth to a child, Immanuel. Even when Assyria overwhelmed the land, God would be with them, and his remnant would be left. Jesus came as Immanuel God to be with us (Mt 1:22,23).

Prayer: Lord, be with me and my people forever. Help us to trust you, not high tech.

One Word: Immanuel God is with us

DO NOT FEAR WHAT THEY FEAR

Isaiah 8:1-22

Key Verse: 8:12,13

1. Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (1-10)

Ahaz and the people of Judah feared an invasion by Aram (Syria) and Israel (Northern Israel). But the real threat was the one from whom they sought help--Assyria. The name of Isaiah's second son is God's message to Ahaz. God would use Assyria as his instrument of judgment to plunder and destroy Northern Israel and Aram. The floodwaters would come up to Judah's neck--Jerusalem would be besieged, but it would not fall because Immanuel God was with her.

2. Fear the Lord (11-22)

Fear makes people do strange things. The Lord warns us not to follow other people's ways, or fear what they fear. Some people consult spiritists; others seek help from psychiatrists, or from other people. But we should fear God and consult him. When we seek God's way in the word of God, we have the light of dawn. God is a stumbling stone for those who fear men, but a shelter for those who fear him.

Prayer. Lord, teach me to fear you and walk in your ways.

One Word: Don't fear what others fear

THE PRINCE OF PEACE

Isaiah 9:1-21

Key Verse: 9:6

1. A Child is born (1-7)

Isaiah saw that his nation was rushing headlong toward disaster. Because of their sins, the people sat in darkness, burdened by the yoke of guilt and fear. But God promised a Child who would break the yoke. His name is Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. He is the Christ, the promised descendant of David and Son of God who breaks the yoke of sin and guilt.

2. The people have not returned (8-21)

When God disciplined Israel, she did not repent. She rebelled against God. The people were godless; they were proud and arrogant. When God punished them, they confidently said, "We'll build back better houses and plant better trees." They did not humble themselves and turn to God. God's punishment is meant to lead his people to repentance, but when people do not repent, his wrath burns hot, and his hand of judgment is upraised.

Prayer: Lord, give me a repentant heart and simple faith to welcome the Prince of Peace.

One Word: Jesus is the Prince of Peace

A REMNANT WILL RETURN

Isaiah 10:1-34

Key Verse: 10:20,21

1. The rod of God's anger (1-19)

God is concerned about human rights; he hates injustice. He warned the leaders of Israel that he would use Assyria as a rod to discipline them for making unjust laws, for depriving the poor of their rights, for oppressing God's people and making weak people their prey. These selfish leaders would fall with the slain or cringe among the captives. He wants his people to repent and turn to him for healing and victory.

2. A remnant will return (20-34)

Assyria would not dominate the world permanently. God's anger against his people would soon turn. He would punish the king of Assyria for his arrogance and wilful pride. A remnant of Israel would repent and turn to God. God always works through a holy remnant. Although the majority of those who taste his blessings turn from him; there is a holy remnant who will repent and become stewards of his history.

Prayer: Lord, help me to remain as one of your holy remnant. Give me a repentant heart each day as I come into your presence in prayer.

One Word: Be one of God's remnant people

THE ROOT OF JESSE

Isaiah 11:1-16

Key Verse: 11:1

1. A fruitful Branch (1-9)

Isaiah looked forward to Christ's coming. He would be a descendant of King David, son of Jesse. When Jesus walked the earth the Spirit of the Lord rested on him. He feared and loved his Father God with a holy love. He revealed God's love and righteousness to sinsick and dying people. Jesus' kingdom in our hearts brings forgiveness and peace. When he comes again to establish his Messianic kingdom, he will not judge by superficial appearances, but with righteousness. In his kingdom, natural enemies will all become friends. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

2. He will stand as a banner for the peoples (10-16)

The Lord knows his own people. On the day of judgment the Lord will gather his elect people to himself from the ends of the earth. He will give them victory, and they will reign with him.

Prayer: Lord, rule my heart with your righteousness and peace, for I am one of your own people. Come quickly, Lord Jesus.

One Word: God's kingdom--our real hope.

DRAW WATER FROM THE WELLS OF SALVATION

Isaiah 12:1-6

Key Verse: 12:2,3

1. The source of joy (1-3)

The exiles in Babylon could find nothing in their circumstances to make them joyful. They knew that they deserved God's punishment. But they also knew that God is a God of mercy. They could say, "God is my salvation." They remembered God's grace in the Exodus from Egypt (Ex 15:2). They could trust God and not be afraid. When everything seems to go wrong, and sorrow overwhelms us, it is the time to draw water from the wells of salvation and be filled with joy in the Lord (1Th 5:16).

2. Make it known among the nations (4-6)

God saved his people from Egypt so that they could be for him a kingdom of priests --to bring the

world to God (Ex 19:6). When God brings us out of bondage, we should thank him--and make known among the nations what he has done. God saved us so that we might be a channel of God's blessing to the whole world. Great is the Holy One among us!

Prayer: Lord, help me to draw water from the wells of salvation and make your saving grace known to all the world.

One Word: Draw water from the wells of salvation

THE DAY OF THE LORD

(Judgment against the nations--13:1-23:18)

Isaiah 13:1-22

Key Verse: 13:9,11

1. I will punish the world for its evil (1-13)

This is a prophecy about Babylon, the proud and arrogant people who invaded the land, ravaged Jerusalem and took the people into captivity. God's judgment on Babylon would be a preview of the day of judgment, the day when the Lord would come to punish the world for its evil and put an end to the arrogance of proud people. When the Lord's army musters and his banner is raised on a bare hilltop, all those who love God will rejoice (3), and all those who have lived their lives in their own ways, ignoring God, will be seized with terror and anguish (8).

2. Babylon will be overthrown (14-22)

Babylon's pride and glory would be overthrown by God, and she would be turned into a wilderness. The instrument of his judgment was the Medes (17). This prophecy was fulfilled. God keeps his promises.

Prayer: Lord, humble my pride and the pride of my people, so that we may not be destroyed on the day of judgment.

One Word: God will humble the proud

GOD'S PEOPLE WILL POSSESS THE NATIONS

Isaiah 14:1-23

Key Verse: 14:2b

1. They will take their captors captive (1-11)

Victory is not for the strong and mighty. God gives victory and peace and the stewardship of the

world to his own people. Think about the spiritual meaning of the promise in verse 2, relating it to Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations. How can we claim this promise in verse 2 in our time?

2. How you have fallen, O Morning Star! (12-23)

This is a prophecy against proud Babylon, the mighty world power which treated God's people so cruelly. But it also reflects God's defeat of Satan and his angels before time began. See verses 11-15. Babylon and all nations who challenge the sovereignty of God Almighty belong to Satan's camp.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for sending missionaries to all lands to proclaim your gospel and call people to the obedience that comes from faith. Use your servants to make even proud and oppressive people captives of the gospel. And defeat the enemy Satan by your word and Spirit.

One Word: God's people will possess the nations

THE LORD HAS A PLAN

Isaiah 14:24-32

Key Verse: 14:24

1. A plan for the whole world (24-27)

The most powerful enemy of God's people during Isaiah's lifetime was Assyria. Assyria planned to conquer the whole known world. But God had his own plan for the world. He wanted to remove the yoke of oppression from his people, and someday to remove the burden of sin from all mankind.

2. The Lord has established Zion (28-32)

The Philistines were the first to rejoice at the news of the coming destruction of the Assyrian Empire, for they had felt the rod of Assyria. But the Philistines were also enemies of God's people, and under the wrath of God. The good news for all the world is: "The Lord has established Zion." This means that in the ebb and flow of human history, God's own people, a people who can obey him and testify to his redemptive work, will be established.

Prayer: Lord, I believe you are the Sovereign Lord of all the earth and ruler of my life. Use me as a part of your redemptive plan.

One Word: God has a plan for the world

A THRONE ESTABLISHED IN LOVE

Isaiah 15:1-16:14

Key Verse: 16:5

1. Fluttering birds pushed from the nest (15:1-16:2)

These two chapters are a prophecy about the coming destruction of Moab. The black cloud of Assyrian world conquest would soon become a tornado whirling through the whole land. The survivors of Moab would be like birds pushed from their nests, fluttering helplessly on the ground. (16:2) The Moabites, once known for their overweening pride and conceit, were now objects of pity.

2. A faithful man in David's house (16:3-14)

The hope of the Moabites and of all the world is God's Messiah (4b,5). His throne is established in love, not in hate and destruction. He is faithful; he seeks justice and righteousness. Only Jesus who poured out his love on the cross can fulfill this promise. Because he is merciful, we must be merciful, even in times of terror, when love and mercy seem to be dead (3b-4a).

Prayer: Lord, let your love and hope in your kingdom rule my heart. Hasten the day when Jesus will come to establish justice and righteousness on earth.

One Word: A throne established in love

THEN MEN WILL LOOK TO THEIR MAKER

Isaiah 17:1-14

Key Verse: 17:7

1. The gleanings that remain (1-8)

Damascus was the capital of Aram. Aram had joined hands with Northern Israel to make war on Judah. Ahaz king of Judah feared them. But it was needless fear. They would be caught up in the flood of the Assyrian invasion. This was God's hand of judgment on idolatrous people (8). The remnant which remained would turn their eyes to God. God's judgment is redemptive. It is meant to lead men and nations to acknowledge God as Creator and Lord. This restores spiritual order. Someday God will establish his kingdom of love and peace.

2. You have forgotten your Savior (9-14)

When any nation forgets God, its best schemes and plans become useless and meaningless (10-11). Aram (Syria) and (Northern) Israel ignored God and plundered God's people. God's punishment on them would be swift, sudden terror (14).

Prayer: Lord, I look to you, my Maker, and I remember you, my Savior. Call our nation to

repentance before your hand of judgment falls.

One Word: Turn your eyes to the Holy One

ALL THE WORLD WILL BRING GIFTS TO ZION

Isaiah 18:1-7

Key Verse: 18:7

1. A message to all people of the world (1-6)

Cush is ancient Ethiopia. The tall, smooth-skinned people represent the powerful, aggressive nations of any age. This nation of powerful people strikes anxiety in the hearts of people of weaker, smaller countries. But God is not moved. He sits in silence on his throne, looking down on the feverish anxiety of men (3,4). He is waiting on his own right time. He will reap a harvest of destruction.

2. Gifts from the powerful nations (7)

The nation feared by all will become a servant and vassal of the Sovereign God. May this happen in America. All nations will acknowledge God as Sovereign and Lord. His dwelling place on earth—once Mount Zion—is now in the midst of his own people. Someday spiritual order will be restored. This is God's vision and this is our hope.

Prayer: Lord, I believe that surely the day will come when all the nations of the world acknowledge your Lordship and come bringing gifts to you.

One Word: All people! Hear and repent

THE LORD WHO STRIKES AND HEALS

Isaiah 19:1-25

Key Verse: 19:22

1. The Lord comes to Egypt (1-16)

Egypt was Israel's enemy. But God wants all people to worship him; so his people must be missionaries even to their enemies. When the Lord comes to Egypt, he comes to judge. He stirs up brother against brother, and the Egyptians lose heart. When they consult idols and spiritists, he uses another powerful country as his rod of judgment. Natural disasters bring economic distress. When there are no shepherds to lead the people, they become weak and fearful.

2. The Lord's altar in Egypt (17-25)

God's punishment is redemptive. He punishes Egypt so that they may repent and cry out to him. He is ready to hear and heal their land. God looks forward to the day when former enemies—Assyria, Egypt and Israel—all worship the Lord and become a blessing on the earth (24,25). God longs to call all people, "My people." This is God's vision.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for wanting to save all people--and for striking in order to heal.

One Word: God strikes and God heals

A LIVING PARABLE

Isaiah 20:1-6

Key Verse: 20:5

1. The Assyrian invasion (1)

When the Assyrian army struck Ashdod, a strong Philistine city, the people of Judah were joyful that it had not happened to them. They were not so afraid, because they believed that the mighty Egyptian army to their south was strong enough to defeat the Assyrians. They trusted politics and alliances and people rather than God.

2. A sign against Egypt (2-6)

Sometimes God asks his servants to do very strange things in order to teach his word. He told Isaiah to strip off his clothes and walk around naked and barefoot for three years to show Judah that the people they had trusted would be led away as helpless captives. God's people must trust in God, not depend on other people. Those who depend on weak human beings will collapse in fear in the day of trouble. It's not easy to be God's servant, and not easy to teach his word!

Prayer: Lord, teach my heart to trust you wholly. Forgive me for leaning on people.

One Word: Trust God and teach his word.

BABYLON HAS FALLEN

Isaiah 21:1-17

Key Verse: 21:9

1. Babylon has fallen (1-10)

Isaiah speaks to a time in the future when God's people would be exiles in Babylon for 70 years. The Babylonian Empire would fall at the hands of the Medes and Persians [Elam] (2,9), and the captives would be sent home. Isaiah was staggered by his vision. His body was racked with pain. It was so painful for him to speak the truth of God's word. The fall of Babylon was both joyful

and terrifying. Many of God's people would be crushed on the threshing floor. The fall of Babylon meant the defeat of godless idolatry and freedom for God's people. Freedom is always costly.

2. Prophecies against Israel's cousins (11-17)

The hand of God's judgement was coming closer and closer to Israel. Assyria, Babylon, then Persia were his instruments of judgment. It would fall on Kedar, Dumah, and Tema, sons of Ishmael, and on Dedan, a descendant of Keturah (Ge 25).

Prayer: Lord, help me to teach your word truthfully, even though the truth hurts.

One Word: God's painful word

REPENT BEFORE THE HOLY ONE

Isaiah 22:1-14

Key Verse: 22:11,12

1. Look to the Holy One (1-11)

In a time of crisis God's people should repent and turn to God. But the people of Jerusalem did not. They acted just like worldly people. When a foreign army laid siege to Jerusalem, many so-called leaders fled in fear (1-4). Others, humanly more courageous, worked feverishly to build up the city's defense. But this was not a way of salvation. The Holy One who made Israel and established Jerusalem, who created all people, is the only One who can protect the city and its people. God calls his people to turn to him in times of crisis.

2. Repent! (12-14)

When God's people are punished for sin, they must think about God and humble themselves before him and repent. These people, however, became fatalistic and decided to eat and drink and party--then die. This sin of fatalistic pride is offensive to God.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to seek you in time of trouble. Help me to repent and turn to the Holy One.

One Word: Look to the One who made you

TWO POOR STEWARDS

Isaiah 22:15-25

Key Verse: 22:22

1. Shebna's bad influence (15-19)

In the time of the Assyrian crisis (Isa 36), Shebna was the steward in charge of the palace. He was very close to the king. He used his high position to enjoy personal glory and an easy life. When the city was threatened, he abandoned his mission and only worked hard to prepare an elaborate tomb for himself. He planted despair and fear of death in the hearts of his people. His selfishness angered God.

2. Eliakim, a servant honored by God (20-25)

Eliakim was put in charge in Shebna's place. God wanted him to be a true shepherd and father to the people of Jerusalem. He was given great authority. But he could not bear God's blessings to the end. He became too involved with his own family. God does not want his servants to become involved in "civilian affairs" (2Ti 2:4).

Prayer: Lord, teach me to seek your glory, and help me to be a faithful shepherd to the end.

One Word: For the glory of God and the highest good of his people

GOD DEALS WITH THE PROUD

Isaiah 23:1-18

Key Verse: 23:18

1. To bring low the pride of all glory (1-14)

This prophecy about Tyre reveals the sovereign ways of God who rules the nations of the world, and who does not forget his own people. Tyre was a great seaport, the marketplace of nations. She became rich from the labors of other nations. Egypt, Spain, and Cyprus were some of the distant countries which sent trading ships to Tyre. Isaiah compared Tyre to a prostitute. She enjoyed the wealth of others, but did not make any contribution to build up others. She would be inundated in the flood of Assyrian world conquest. This was the plan of the Sovereign God.

2. After 70 years (15-18)

After 70 years of foreign domination, Tyre would be restored. She would again ply her trade and grow wealthy. But God would give her wealth to his own people, to those who live before the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, help me to live before you and seek your blessing. I believe that you are the sovereign ruler of all men and nations.

One Word: Be one who lives before the Lord

THE LORD'S DEVASTATION OF THE EARTH

(Judgment and Blessing in the Last Days--24-27)

Isaiah 24:1-23

Key Verse: 24:23

1. God's judgment is impartial (1-3;17-23)

When the day of judgment comes, no one can claim any human privilege--priest, people, master, servant, the king on the earth below and the powers in the heavens above (21) will all be devastated. The Lord Almighty will reign over all creation (23).

2. The earth is defiled by people (4-5)

God's judgment falls on the earth because the people have defiled the earth by their disobedience to God's word. God's people broke their covenant with God, so we can make no excuse. The earth reels like a drunkard because of the guilt of its rebellion (20). Terror and the pit await the treacherous betrayers.

3. A remnant will be spared (6-16)

God, in his mercy, will spare a remnant of his people (13). This remnant will come from east and west, and will joyfully shout his praise. God's remnant will proclaim his majesty (14-16a).

Prayer: Lord, by your mercy & grace grant that I may stand with your people on the day of your judgment.

One Word: God will reign over all

GOD'S PERFECT FAITHFULNESS

Isaiah 25:1-12

Key Verse: 25:1,9

1. God does what he says he will do (1-5)

God kept his promises in the past. Here is a hymn of praise to God for his faithfulness to do what he said he would do. He destroyed wicked and ruthless nations. He provided refuge for all who confessed their need for him and sought him in time of distress. We can trust God to continue to keep his promises.

2. On the mountain of the Lord (6-12)

The shroud of death is destroyed by Jesus' death and resurrection. But the great promise of the prophecy in this passage will be fulfilled in the new Jerusalem--the heavenly city in which the

Lord will wipe away all tears and destroy death, the shroud that enfolds all people. On that day, all God's people will gather to eat together. And they will say, "We trusted in him and he saved us." At the same time, his hand will bring down all proud people.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be faithful to you to the end, and to trust you and rejoice in your salvation.

One Word: Rejoice in his salvation

GOD WILL KEEP HIM IN PERFECT PEACE

Isaiah 26:1-21

Key Verse: 26:3

1. My soul yearns for you in the night (1-11)

When we put our trust in people or in material things, our minds become very busy, for we calculate this and that. Most worldly people cannot learn righteousness from grace and mercy; they must feel the rod of God's judgment (9-10). But if we trust in God, and wait on him, making the glory of his name the desire of our hearts, he will give us perfect peace.

2. Your dead will live (12-21)

God establishes peace. What we have accomplished, God has done for us (12). Rulers oppress others; God alone is worthy of honor. When God's people cry to him in distress, he disciplines, and then saves them (16). God wants the suffering of his people to bring salvation to the earth (18). God the Almighty Creator is the giver of life. The Lord will raise the dead--the wicked to judgment and the righteous to life. No one else can bring salvation to the earth (12,18).

Prayer: Lord, help me to fix my mind and heart on you. Keep me in your perfect peace.

One Word: A mind steadfastly fixed on God

A SONG ABOUT A FRUITFUL VINEYARD

Isaiah 27:1-13

Key Verse: 27:6

1. The world will be filled with his fruit (1-6)

The Leviathan represents the enemy of God and his people--the devil. The vineyard of chapter 5 is unfruitful, so God removed from it his protecting hand. Here, he plants a new vineyard. He promises to water it and protect it day and night. Jesus inherited this promise, for his people are

God's vineyard. He has filled the world with the fruit of his gospel.

2. The Lord who strikes his people (7-13)

God punished his people, for they did not show any understanding of the mind of their Maker. He punished them by bringing war and exile to them, so that they might repent. He will gather them one by one from the places where they are languishing as captives. He will bring them to his holy mountain to worship him.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for using your sovereign power to save, protect and discipline your people, as well as for destroying your enemies. Let me be planted and firmly rooted in your fruitful vineyard.

One Word: His fruit will fill the world

THE PRECIOUS CORNERSTONE

Isaiah 28:1-29

Key Verse: 28:16

In chapters 28-39 Isaiah focuses on the time of Hezekiah king of Judah. This was the time that the Assyrians invaded Northern Israel, razed Samaria and scattered the people of the ten tribes. Judah and Jerusalem were also in grave danger.

1. A fading flower and a glorious crown (1-10)

The wreath and fading flower (1,3,4) are references to Samaria. Samaria will be devoured by Assyria like the first fig that ripens and is quickly eaten. But God himself is the crown of Judah. He will save a remnant and turn back the enemy from the gates of Jerusalem (5,6).

2. God will speak to his people (11-29)

The drunkards of Samaria mock God's word, but they cannot ignore a foreign invasion, and no one can make a deal with death (14,18). The good news is God's promise of salvation through the cornerstone. This is a promise of the Messiah.

Prayer: Lord, your word is truth. Let your word be in my heart so that I may build my life on the cornerstone.

One Word: Jesus is the cornerstone

THE HUMBLE WILL REJOICE IN THE LORD

Isaiah 29:1-24

Key Verse: 29:19

1. Words in a sealed scroll (1-16)

The Lord warns Jerusalem (i.e., Ariel [altar hearth]) that she will be besieged. Spiritists cannot save them; they can make no deal with death. But God will rescue them. God gives this preview in a vision, but spiritually blind people can't understand it. Unrepentant people are blind to God's word. They think they can hide their plans from God. We cannot hide from him and live double lives. He knows all men (11-13). (See Mt 15:7-9 for Jesus' comment.)

2. The humble will rejoice (17-24)

When God's people turn their hearts to him in humble repentance, he blesses the land. When we whose eyes were blinded by pride and self-righteousness repent and humbly acknowledge our need for God, he restores our spiritual sight. Only humble people can rejoice in the Lord. When God's people again read and obey God's word, justice and mercy will be restored. When God's name is honored, and his people rejoice, the people of the world will come to God.

Prayer: Lord, give me a humble and repentant heart so that I may rejoice in you.

One Word: The humble will rejoice

SALVATION THROUGH REPENTANCE AND REST

Isaiah 30:1-33

Key Verse: 30:15b

1. Rahab the Do-Nothing (1-11)

As the Assyrian threat grew, people became fearful. Some people advocated asking Egypt (Rahab) for help. But this was a human plan, not God's. Isaiah saw the folly of this. He called Egypt, "Do-Nothing." But people did not want to hear the truth. They told God's servants to stop teaching the Bible.

2. In repentance and rest is salvation (12-18)

God's way is the way of repentance and trust in God. He longs to be gracious to us. But if we choose man's way instead of God's we cannot be saved.

3. This is the way; walk in it (19-33)

Despair does not arise from suffering; it comes from having no direction. People make idols because they do not know God. Sometimes God must discipline us with the bread of affliction to teach us to turn to him. When we call on him, he heals us and teaches us his way (21).

Prayer: Lord, teach me to put my trust in you--not in the Rahabs of the world.

One Word: God's way: repent and trust him

LOOK TO THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL

Isaiah 31:1-9

Key Verse: 31:1

1. Woe to those who rely on Egypt (1-3)

Israel was small and weak. When the Assyrian Empire threatened to swallow her, she sought help. The Egyptian chariots and horses and well-trained army looked like the best place to get it. But Isaiah knew that Egypt could not save them; the Egyptians were men, not God; their horses were flesh, not spirit. We must seek God's help--not the help of people like ourselves. When the Lord stretches out his hand, both the helper and the helped will fall.

2. Return to the Lord (4-9)

People must repent of their sins and come to God. The Lord is like a great lion. A whole band of shepherds is helpless before him. He will come down and fight for his people when they call on him. The Lord is like birds hovering overhead. He always has air superiority. He watches over and protects his people who trust him. God himself would deal with the Assyrians.

Prayer: Lord, help me to repent and depend on you and not seek people's help.

One Word: Look to the Lord, not to men

A KING WHO REIGNS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

Isaiah 32:1-20

Key Verse: 32:17

1. Each man will be a great rock (1-8)

When one has King Jesus ruling in his heart, he becomes a shelter from the storm, like streams of water in the desert, like a great rock in a thirsty land. Jesus heals our spiritual blindness and enables us to make noble plans and do noble deeds.

2. False and true security (9-14)

Those who feel secure because they have a house or a bank account are as foolish as were the women of Jerusalem just before the Babylonian invasion.

3. The fruit of righteousness (15-20)

After punishment and repentance, God restores and blesses. When his Spirit is poured out, dry ground becomes fertile and fruitful. His Spirit rules in righteousness and the fruit of righteousness is peace.

Prayer: Lord, may your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. Help me to grow to be a great rock in a thirsty land. Raise up men and women who can be shelters in the storm.

One Word: When the righteous King rules

THE KEY TO THIS TREASURE

Isaiah 33:1-24

Key Verse: 33:6

1. Lord, be our strength every morning (1-6)

Invaders plundered and destroyed the land. Opportunists betrayed their people and profited; crops were destroyed in the fields, and the highways were unsafe for travel. Isaiah longed for God. He came to him in prayer (2), and he found the key. God himself is our sure foundation. He has a rich store of salvation and wisdom. The key to this storehouse of treasure is the fear of the Lord. To fear God means to love him and respect him and decide to do his will.

2. Behold the king in his beauty (7-24)

When, in our hopeless situation, we cry out to God, he arises. Then sinners tremble, but those who walk righteously and speak what is right will dwell on the heights and behold the king in his beauty. Isaiah shares his vision of the heavenly kingdom. God alone brings peace to the heart. Ultimately, it is the vision of the heavenly kingdom, the new Jerusalem, that sustains our hearts.

Prayer: Lord, grant that I may behold the king in his beauty. Teach me to seek you daily, and to love and fear you. Give me a vision of your kingdom.

One Word: Fear God, behold the King

JUDGMENT AND BLESSING

Isaiah 34:1-35:10

Key Verse: 35:10

1. The Lord's judgment on all nations (34:1-17)

When the day of judgment comes, the universe as we know it will cease to be. The stars will

dissolve; they will fall from the sky like withered leaves. The Edomites represent those who harass God's people (Ps137:7). All such people will become like a sacrifice on the altar, slaughtered and burned (5-7). Their land will become formless and empty, like the earth before God spoke in Genesis 1:2 (11).

2. The joy of the redeemed (35:1-10)

"Your God will come" (4). Jesus' coming is good news for the ransomed of the Lord, for he comes to restore his own people and all creation (Ro 8:23). The people of the world suffer because they have no way, no truth--no direction and no destination in life. But Jesus is the Way of Holiness for those who put their trust in him. He is the way to the heavenly kingdom. God promises the kingdom of heaven to his redeemed people. This is our destination.

Prayer: Lord, help me to walk with you on the pilgrim way, and be among those who welcome you on that final great day.

One Word: The Lord's day will surely come

SENNACHERIB THREATENS JERUSALEM

Isaiah 36:1-22

Key Verse: 36:21

1. On whom are you depending? (1-10)

Hezekiah was king of Judah. The dark cloud of the Assyrian threat suddenly broke loose in a storm as Sennacherib placed the city under siege. The Assyrian commander demanded that Hezekiah surrender or face terrible consequences. He blasphemed God and planted fear in the hearts of the people. He touched all the weaknesses of the nation, and much of what he said was true. Egypt was indeed a broken reed; and even if Judah had 2,000 horses there were no soldiers to ride them. Hezekiah had indeed removed the idols. Satan's most dangerous lies are those which contain half-truths.

2. The people remained silent (11-22)

When Hezekiah's men asked the Assyrian commander not to speak in Hebrew, he spoke even more loudly, promising peace and prosperity, and warning the people not to trust Hezekiah or God. The people obeyed the king and remained silent. They waited on God.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to remain silent and wait on you when Satan attacks.

One Word: God is able to save his people

HEZEKIAH SEEKS GOD'S HELP

Isaiah 37:1-38

Key verse: 37:14

1. The Assyrian threat (1-13)

The Assyrian army laid siege to the city and demanded that Hezekiah surrender. Hezekiah tore his clothes, put on sackcloth--the garments of repentance--and went to the temple to pray. He asked God's servant Isaiah to pray, too. Sennacherib suddenly had to leave, so he sent a letter to Hezekiah which pointed out Jerusalem's desperate situation and demanded immediate surrender.

2. Hezekiah's prayer (14-20)

Hezekiah received the letter, took it to the temple and spread it before the Lord. He saw that God had been insulted by the arrogant Assyrian commander. He prayed that God might deliver his people to vindicate his holy name.

3. Sennacherib's fall (21-38)

God heard Hezekiah's prayer and saved Jerusalem (21,35-38). Isaiah's prophecy proved true.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to pray and not give up when things look impossible.

One Word: Because you prayed...(21)

HEZEKIAH'S ILLNESS

Isaiah 38:1-22

Key Verse: 38:5,6

1. Hezekiah prays and weeps (1-8)

Hezekiah was very sick (maybe he had a carbuncle--verse 21), but he could not accept the news of his impending death. He wept and asked the Lord to remember his faithful life. God heard his prayer and promised to protect Jerusalem and give him 15 more years of life. God gave him an amazing sign: The sun's shadow moved 10 steps backward on a stairway that functioned as a sundial. Only the Creator of life and Ruler of nature can do these things.

2. Hezekiah's recovery (9-22)

After he recovered, King Hezekiah wrote a hymn of praise. He wrote about his sorrow at dying in the prime of life, and how he had called on the Lord (9-14). He accepted his suffering as God's love, and he praised God for healing him and forgiving his sins (15-17). He concludes by resolving to teach his children God's faithfulness.

Prayer: Lord, you protect me and spare my life so that I may praise your name and tell of your faithfulness.

One Word: Call on the name of Almighty God

ENVOYS FROM BABYLON

Isaiah 39:1-8 (Key Verse: 39:5)

1. Hezekiah shows off (1-2)

The prince of Babylon sent Hezekiah a letter and gift after he recovered from his illness. He was flattered to receive such attention from a growing world power. It was too far away ever to pose a threat to him (he thought!). He proudly showed the Babylon envoys everything. Human pride should not motivate our actions.

2. Hear the word of the Lord (3-8)

When Isaiah asked Hezekiah about the guests, he told him that he had shown them all his treasures. Then Isaiah rebuked him with God's word. In the future, Babylon would invade and take his treasures and carry his people into exile. But Hezekiah didn't care much. It would happen after his lifetime. He had no sense of history. This prophecy was fulfilled in 605-586 BC. It connects this section of the book with the next, which is addressed to the exiles.

Prayer: Lord, help me to have a sense of history. Don't let me show off to Satan's envoys.

One Word: Hear the word of the Lord

SEE, THE SOVEREIGN LORD COMES

Isaiah 40:1-11

Key Verse: 40:10

1. Prepare the Lord's way (1-5)

Isaiah speaks to the people who are enduring the long night of Babylonian captivity (Isa 39:6). His prophecy was partly fulfilled when the people came back to their homeland after 70 years of exile. But the real fulfillment came when John the Baptist prepared the way, and Jesus the Messiah came to deliver people from their bondage to sin. John called on all people to repent: to turn from despair and self-condemnation and raise up the valleys; to level their proud minds and straighten their crooked and rebellious hearts so that their spiritual eyes might be opened to see the glory of the Lord (Mk 1:1-4).

2. He is like a shepherd (6-11)

Man's plans and glory fade like flowers in the heat of the noonday sun. But God's word is eternal (1 Pe 1:24-25). It is good news that the mighty God has come. He uses his power to heal and restore, for he is our Shepherd.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for my Good Shepherd Jesus and his sure promises. Thank you for the good news that my sins have been atoned for.

One Word: Proclaim the good news

THOSE WHO HOPE IN THE LORD

Isaiah 40:12-31

Key Verse: 40:31

1. The Creator of the ends of the earth (12-28)

The Lord is the Creator of all things. He is all-powerful and all-wise. Before him all nations are like a drop in a bucket. Those who make idols or put their hope in men are fools. God sits enthroned above the circle of the earth and looks down on its grasshopper-like people. He rules over all things. No one taught him, for he is the source of all knowledge. No king or prince or president can hold power unless he is established by the Creator God. He keeps the sun and moon and stars on course by his almighty power. He knows everything--including all about me--and he is the Sovereign God.

2. He gives strength to the weary (29-31)

God never gets tired. When we put our hope in him, he gives strength for every task he gives us to do. Human strength, no matter how powerful it may seem, always runs out; but those who put their hope in the Lord will soar on wings like eagles.

Prayer: Lord, my hope is in you. I do not ask for easy tasks, but strength sufficient for the day.

One Word: Hope in the Lord

DO NOT FEAR; I AM WITH YOU

Isaiah 41:1-29 (Key Verse: 41:10)

1. God controls history--from first to last (1-7)

The nations of the earth seem strong, and God's people seem weak, but God controls history. He used Cyrus of Persia to conquer Babylon and bring his people home from exile. The idol-worshipping people of the world foolishly try to encourage each other (5-7), but no one can stand before God. He is working to accomplish his own purpose in the world.

2. You I have chosen (8-16)

God chose the descendants of Abraham his friend. Those who believe in Jesus are Abraham's true descendants. He chose us to be his servants, and he gives us his work to do (8,9). He promises to be with us. The Holy One of Israel is our Redeemer. He wants to use his chosen people to bring the nations of the world to repentance (15,16).

3. God alone can do something (17-29)

God gives water to the poor and needy and to the parched land. God alone holds the future. Idols are false. They can do nothing.

Prayer: Lord, take my right hand and lead me. Take away my fear. Use me to do your work.

One Word: Do not fear; I am with you

THE SERVANT OF THE LORD

Isaiah 42:1-25 (Key Verse: 42:6)

1. A bruised reed he will not break (1-7)

Israel was called to be God's servant people. These verses look forward to the Servant Jesus. They describe his character and mission. This should be the character and mission of God's servants in any age. God's servant uses his power and authority to help and encourage the weak, not to oppress and exploit them. The Lord takes his servant's hand and makes a covenant with him. He promises to walk with him to make him a light for the Gentiles. Through his servant, God will open the eyes of the blind and set the captives free.

2. A song of praise to the Lord (8-25)

The Lord will not give his glory to idols. He will lead and bless those who praise and worship him (16); he disciplines those who ignore his law (21-26); he will train his blind people until they can see his mighty works and praise him (18-25).

Prayer: Lord, thank you for Jesus, who heals me and sets me free. Teach me his compassionate heart and help me to share his gospel with the world.

One Word: The gospel is for the whole world

NO OTHER SAVIOR

Isaiah 43:1-28

Key Verses: 43:2-3a

1. Our Creator and Redeemer (1-13)

We belong to God, for he created us for his own glory and he redeemed us. We do not need to fear any person. Sometimes God's people must pass through the deep waters of sorrow or walk through the fires of violence. But these things are not the real problem. Our biggest enemy is fear. The Lord says: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you...you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you." There is no Savior but God our Creator and Redeemer (11-13).

2. God makes a way (14-28)

People lose their way because of sin. Israel sinned and was taken into captivity in Babylon. God promised to make a way through the desert, leading them back to their homeland--just as he had made a way through the Red Sea (16,19). God wants his redeemed people to thank and praise him, and live lives that please him.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for Jesus, the only way. Help me not to lose my way because of sin, but to walk with you by faith, in the way you have made.

One Word: Only one Way

THE LORD ALONE IS GOD

Isaiah 44:1-28 (Key Verse: 44:6)

1. The Lord pours out his Spirit (1-5)

God our Creator is the source of life. He pours out his Spirit on his people. This is his best blessing, for his life in us quenches our thirst.

2. The Lord, not idols (6-20)

There is no God but God. He alone is the rock on which we may build our lives. The man who makes an idol is foolish. He fashions it with his own hands, then prays to it. Can such a god hear or answer?

3. Our Creator is our Redeemer (21-28)

The Lord will not forget his people whom he has made. He alone can sweep away our sins like morning mist and give us a song of joy. We must return to him, for he alone rules nature and history. He frustrates the words of false prophets and fulfills all his promises. He even used Cyrus the Persian to restore Jerusalem.

Prayer: Lord, take all the idols from my heart. Sweep away my sins like morning mist. Pour out your Spirit on me.

One Word: The Lord alone is God

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND WORLD MISSION

Isaiah 45:1-25

Key Verse: 45:22

1. Cyrus the Lord's anointed (1-17)

Cyrus was the king of Persia. He had no knowledge of God, but God raised him up to destroy the power of Babylon and bring Israel home from captivity. There is only one God. He is the Creator. He is the Redeemer. He is the God of Israel, the God of the Bible. He hides himself (15). He is the Ruler of nature and history. He is the Potter and we are the clay. He made us for a purpose.

2. Turn to me, all you ends of the earth (18-25)

God saves his people with an everlasting salvation. Gods of wood cannot save. He saves his people so that the world might know that the Lord is God and there is no other. He calls all people to repent and turn to him. He has promised that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord. Then all creation will dwell in peace and righteousness.

Prayer: Lord, cleanse me of sin and use me according to your sovereign will in your world mission purpose in my time.

One Word: God calls all men to turn to him

I WILL CARRY YOU

Isaiah 46:1-13

Key Verse: 46:4

1. Idols that become a burden (1-7)

Bel and Nebo were Babylonian gods. In hard times, idols and their worshipers go into captivity together. Idols weigh a lot. When we are weighed down by sin, we need a God who can unburden us--not gods who add to the burden. Though one cries out to an idol of gold, it does not answer and cannot save. Those who put their trust in a car or house or in money or insurance find that these good things can also become burdens. Only God our Creator can unburden us, for he carries us. He promises to carry us even down to old age and gray hairs.

2. God alone can save (8-13)

The living God is our Creator and Sustainer. He makes plans and carries them out. He changed the course of history to bring his people out of Babylonian captivity; he brings his righteousness

and salvation near to stubborn-hearted rebels who live in slavery to sin. When we are clothed in his righteousness, we are free.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for sending your one and only Son to take away my burden of sin. Thank you for carrying me when I am too weak to walk.

One Word: God alone sustains and rescues

UNREPENTANT SINNERS

Isaiah 47:1-15

Key Verse: 47:4

1. Our Redeemer--the Lord Almighty (1-6)

Babylon represents all those proud nations down through the ages who have ignored God and despised his people. The Holy One of Israel was angry with his people and let them fall into the hands of the Babylonians for a time. The Babylonians showed them no mercy. But God redeems repentant sinners, and Israel repented--Babylon did not!

2. Neither magic arts nor money can save (7-15)

The Babylonians lived in the dream that their empire would endure forever. They were confident in their wealth and easygoing comfort. They said, "It can never happen to us." They boldly practiced sorcery and trusted in their wickedness, saying, "No one sees me." They could not conjure away the disaster that would come upon them. Their star-gazing could not save them. God punishes proud and unrepentant people.

Prayer: Lord, save us from the easygoing complacency that comes from pride. Grant our nation a spirit of repentance.

One Word: God punishes proud sinners

PEACE LIKE A RIVER

Isaiah 48:1-22

Key Verses: 48:17-18

1. For my own name's sake (1-11)

When the people of Israel fell into the idolatrous practices of the Canaanite culture around them, they became objects of God's wrath. But God withheld his hand of judgment so that they might repent. They were stubborn--with necks of iron that would not bend, and heads made of bronze. He did not destroy them, but he disciplined them. They were his own people who bore his name.

He would not yield his glory to an idol. He sent them into Babylonian captivity for seventy years.

2. God's way is best (12-22)

God redeemed his people from exile in Babylon using the hand of another nation. The Lord our Redeemer teaches us what is best for us. When we pay attention to his commands and obey him, peace like a river floods our souls. There is, however, no peace for the wicked (22).

Prayer: Lord, help me to accept your discipline as your love, and repent. Help me to listen to your word and be taught by you so that your peace may fill my heart.

One Word: Peace like a river

A POLISHED ARROW FOR WORLD MISSION

Isaiah 49:1-26

Key Verses: 49:2,6

1. The Servant of the Lord (1-7)

This passage looks forward to the Messiah (Rev 1:16). The Lord's servant teaches God's word. God's word is a sharp sword (Heb 4:12; Eph 6:17). The servant of the Lord must be like a polished arrow, well-trained and ready for the Lord's use. The Lord calls his servant to restore and bless his own people--and to be a light for the Gentiles. God wants all the people of the earth to be saved. His servants must be missionaries.

2. A covenant for the people (8-26)

God's servant is the Messiah. He is the embodiment of God's covenant with his people (8b). He represents God's unfailing faithfulness to keep his promises. No matter how broken and desolate his people become, God does not forget them. They are engraved on the palms of his hands. He fulfilled his promises when he sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world. All mankind will know that God is the Savior.

Prayer: Lord, train me until I am useful to you; use me as a servant of your word.

One Word: My mouth, a sharpened sword

A SINFUL NATION AND AN OBEDIENT SERVANT

Isaiah 50:1-11

Key Verse: 50:4,5

1. Was my arm too short? (1-3)

Do people suffer because God is too weak to help them? No. The Almighty Creator of heaven and earth is able to save anyone. People suffer because of their sins. God sent his servant to suffering mankind because he loves us and wants to deliver us from bondage. God is in mourning because of his sorrow at mankind's sin and rebellion (3).

2. God's servant (4-9)

God's servant came with an instructed tongue. He came to teach the word of God. The word of God sustains and gives life to those who are weary and burdened by sin. God's servant came with a listening ear and a humble, obedient heart. He was rejected and mocked and beaten, but he came to suffer and die for sinful mankind. He is Jesus.

3. Walk in your own light (10-11)

Those who ignore the Lord's servant and the way he opens and walk in the light of their own fires will lie down in torment.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your servant Jesus who taught your word and died to rescue us from our sins.

One Word: He wakens my ear to listen

LOOK TO THE ROCK FROM WHICH YOU WERE CUT

Isaiah 51:1-23

Key Verse: 51:1

1. Look to Abraham (1-8)

We pursue truth and righteousness and seek the Lord through prayerful, obedient Bible study. Our spiritual ancestor Abraham believed God's promises and obeyed God's word. God blessed him. God calls people so that he may bless them and make them a blessing. When God's people obey his word and teach it to the nations, his righteousness and justice become a light to the nations. The earth will wear out like a garment, but the salvation of the Lord will last forever. His righteousness will never fail.

2. The ransomed of the Lord will return (9-23)

God's people do not need to fear mortal men. Once, he redeemed them from Egypt (Rahab); he would bring them back from exile. God's punishment leads to repentance. Jerusalem had drunk the cup of the Lord's wrath. Now, he would pour out his wrath on her enemies, and the ransomed exiles would return home. The Creator of heaven and earth says, "You are my people." We must

remember our Maker.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your word which brings me to you, puts truth in my heart and sets me free.

Word: Pursue righteousness; seek the Lord

BEAUTIFUL FEET!

Isaiah 52:1-12 (Key Verse: 52:7)

1. Sold and redeemed (1-5)

God's people were in chains. From a human point of view, their situation looked hopeless. They had sinned and were suffering for their sins. The nations of the world mocked God and mocked his people. God's heart is heavy when his people sin, for he does not like to punish those he loves. He wants to redeem them.

2. God reigns! (6-12)

The feet of one who brings good news are beautiful. The good news is, "God reigns." It is a message of peace and salvation and hope. All nations will see the salvation of God's people and know that God reigns. The good news of salvation is the message God wants spread to the ends of the earth. He wants people of all nations to acknowledge his sovereignty and come to him with repentant hearts. When there is peace in the hearts of men, there will be peace in the world.

Prayer: Lord, make my feet beautiful to bear the message of salvation to the ends of the earth.

One Word: Our God reigns! Our God saves!

THE SUFFERING SERVANT

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (Key Verse: 53:5)

1. A man of sorrows (52:13-53:3)

This passage is the Old Testament portrait of Jesus. The Lord's servant was ugly to worldly eyes, like a twisted and gnarled root out of dry ground. He was despised and rejected by men. He had no wealth or fine clothes, and he did not live in a beautiful house. He lived a simple, humble life. No one is too low or too sinful to come to him, for he is a friend of sinners and AIDS patients, lepers and prostitutes. He came to be my friend.

2. He was pierced for our transgressions (53:4-12)

He came and suffered so that he might bear our infirmities and carry our sorrows. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him. God's will

prospered in his hands (10). He will see the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

Prayer: Lord, you laid aside heavenly glory and power and became like a root out of dry ground, despised for my sake. I come to you with my burdens and sins, and with my grateful heart.

One Word: He was pierced for my sins

ENLARGE THE PLACE OF YOUR TENT

Isaiah 54:1-17

Key Verse: 54:2

1. Sing, O barren woman (1-4)

Isaiah speaks to those who have been ravaged by sin. A barren woman is the symbol of fruitlessness and hopelessness. Israel had become a people without hope. But God had hope for them. He has hope for forgiven sinners. He told this fatalistic people, "Enlarge the place of your tent...your descendants will possess the nations." God makes barren women fruitful and forgiven sinners useful. God's people must not give in to adverse circumstances; we must obey his command to go into all the world with his gospel of love and hope. When we widen our vision, God gives fruit and blessing.

2. Your Maker is your husband (5-17)

We have hope because our Creator God is our Redeemer and true Husband. He is the guardian of our hearts; he is the one who forgives us, who loves and protects us and who makes our lives fruitful and blessed. He promises peace and victory and his kingdom as our inheritance.

Prayer: Lord, help us to enlarge the place of our tents and possess the nations.

One Word: Enlarge the place of your tent

COME, ALL YOU WHO ARE THIRSTY

Isaiah 55:1-13

Key Verse: 55:1

1. Seek the Lord while he may be found (1-7)

People work very hard seeking things that do not satisfy (Jn 6:27). A car or a computer or even human love cannot satisfy the thirsty soul. God sent his servant, the Messiah. He invites people of all nations to come to him and have their thirst quenched. If we hear him, our souls will live. But we must seek him while he may be found. We have sinned in thought, word and deed; we must

forsake our sins and come to him. He promises to pardon us freely.

2. My word will not return empty (8-13)

We don't have to understand God or his ways in order to come to him. We must simply receive his word in our hearts. His word will accomplish his purpose as surely as rain waters the ground and makes it produce an abundant harvest. When we hold to his word and seek him with all our hearts, we will go out in joy and be led forth in peace, and all nature will rejoice (Ro 8:19-21).

Prayer: Lord, I come to you with my thirsty soul and my sins. Forgive me and fill me with your word and Spirit and make me a fruitful Bible teacher.

One Word: Seek the Lord while he may be found

A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL NATIONS

Isaiah 56:1-12

Key Verse: 56:7

1. My salvation is close at hand (1-8)

God's saving hand is extended to anyone who grasps it in faith. Those whose human conditions seem to make salvation impossible are the very ones God is seeking. The Jews regarded all foreigners as objects made for destruction; and eunuchs were like dry trees, without fruit or hope in the world. But if any man binds himself to the Lord, he will not be excluded from God's love and blessing. God wants all people everywhere to love and obey and worship him. God's people must be a kingdom of priests for the world. They seek the lost and bring them to God's house, so that the Lord's house may be a house of prayer for all nations.

2. Shepherds who lack understanding (9-12)

Even if men are called "God's people" and "Israel's watchmen," if they don't care about God and ignore God's desire to bring all people to himself, they are not really God's people.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for making even dry trees fruitful. Help me to obey you and bring others to you.

One Word: A house of prayer for all people

PONDER IN YOUR HEART THE WAYS OF GOD

Isaiah 57:1-21

Key Verse: 57:15

1. People who don't think (1-12)

God has a purpose for what he does. When we fear him and meditate on his ways, he leads us in the way of peace. But some people don't think. When people live according to their sinful natures, they become captives of lust and greed; they become dull and lose their ability to think; so they fall into senseless idolatry and blatant immorality. Wicked men don't fear God because they don't think about God. There is no peace for the wicked.

2. Those who make God their refuge (13-21)

God dwells in a high and holy place, but he also comes to live with those who are humble and repentant, with those who seek refuge in him. Although there are many questions about life and death which we cannot answer, when we ponder in our hearts the ways of God and come to him with contrite hearts, he will revive our spirits, heal us and give us his peace.

Prayer: Lord, I ponder your ways and come to you with a contrite heart. You alone are my refuge.

One Word: God dwells with the contrite in heart

TO PLEASE GOD OR PLEASE YOURSELF?

Isaiah 58:1-14 (Key Verses: 58:10,11)

1. Religion that does not please God (1-5)

God does not like insincere religious activity. Those who seem to seek him and pretend to want to know his ways but do not do what is right can never know him or please him. Those who spend the day fasting, who bow their heads like reeds, grovel in sackcloth, then exploit their workers and quarrel with others cannot please God.

2. The kind of fasting God chooses (6-12)

God wants his people to loose the chains of injustice and set the oppressed free. He wants us to share our food with the hungry, give shelter to the poor wanderer, and clothe the naked. Then we will find healing, and the glory of the Lord will be our rear guard. He will answer when we call for help.

3. Honor God on the Sabbath (13-14)

The Sabbath is not a day for doing as we please; it is a day for pleasing and honoring God. Then we will find joy in the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, help me to seek you and serve you in your way, not my own.

One Word: Self-seeking or seeking after God?

THE REDEEMER WILL COME FROM ZION

Isaiah 59:1-21

Key Verse: 59:20

1. Sin separates us from God (1-8)

We cannot be happy or even fully human without God. But sin broke our relationship with God. When our hearts are full of evil, our mouths speak lies; we never seek justice. Our hands and feet are busy doing evil. But God's arm is not too short to save.

2. The consequence of separation from God (9-15a)

The prophet confesses his people's sins of fomenting oppression and revolt, speaking lies and suppressing truth. They are in darkness and have become blind and directionless. Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey.

3. Judgment and redemption (15b-21)

The Lord found no one to stand on the side of justice. So he himself comes to execute judgment, wearing the breastplate of righteousness. He is the Redeemer of those who repent, and he puts his word and his Spirit in their mouths. This is his covenant promise to us (20,21).

Prayer: Lord, cleanse me of the sin that separates me from you. Thank you for the Redeemer who shed his blood for my sins (1Pe 1:18; 1Jn 1:7; 1Pe 2:24).

One Word: The Redeemer has come

ARISE, SHINE, FOR YOUR LIGHT HAS COME

Isaiah 60:1-22

Key Verse: 60:1

1. Nations will come to your light (1-9)

The Babylonians burned Jerusalem (586 BC) and took the people into captivity. Thick darkness covered the land. The darkness of sin became the thick darkness of despair. The prophet looked at the world; then he looked beyond, to God. "The Lord rises upon you; his glory appears...." His light would draw all nations to its brightness. All who look to him become radiant. Isaiah was looking forward to Jesus, the light of the world (Jn 1:4,9; 8:12). God shines his light on people so they can be lights in a dark world.

2. The Lord will be your light (10-22)

God himself prepares a city for his people who have been humiliated by oppressors--and by sin's consequences. The walls of that city are named "Salvation" and the gates are named "Praise." Its gates are always open (11). Abraham looked forward to that city--a city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Heb 11:10). John spoke about it (Rev 21:23; 22:5).

Prayer: Lord, teach us to walk with you daily so that we may be radiant. Make us a light to the nations.

One Word: Nations will come to your light

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS ON ME

Isaiah 61:1-11 (Key Verse: 61:10)

1. Good news to the poor (1-3)

Jesus introduced his ministry with these words (Lk 4:18,19). The poor are those who recognize their spiritual poverty. Jesus is the good news, for he binds up the brokenhearted and gives freedom to captives of sin. He brings God's blessing to those who receive him; God's judgment comes to those who reject God's love. He gives a crown of beauty in exchange for the ashes of our failure. He exchanges our ugly, dirty garments of despair for glorious garments of praise. He plants us to grow in righteousness like beautiful and strong oak trees for his glory.

2. You will be called priests of God (4-11)

God blesses his people by giving them his mission: to be a kingdom of priests among the nations (6). God's priests bring the world to God and God's grace to the world. When the Sovereign God rules, there is justice and righteousness and joy. When God clothes us with garments of salvation, we delight in him as a bride delights in her bridegroom. We rejoice in him because he makes us fruitful.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the good news. Help me to serve you among the nations.

One Word: Delight greatly in the Lord

SEE, YOUR SAVIOR COMES!

Isaiah 62:1-12

Key Verse: 62:11

1. Hephzibah--Zion's new name (1-7)

Israel was unfaithful to God and followed the idols of the Canaanites. This was spiritual adultery, and God was heartbroken. He punished Israel by sending her into exile in Babylon. But he longed to restore his love relationship with her. He wanted to forgive her and make her righteous. He

promised to give his people a new name (see NIV footnote) and make them his royal diadem. They would no longer be called Deserted and Desolate. He would forgive sinful people and restore his love relationship with them; they would be his bride. When God rejoices, his people also rejoice.

2. See, your Savior comes (8-12)

When our Savior comes to us, he brings his reward with him. He promises to protect and provide for his people, but knowing him is the greatest blessing. God blesses his people so that all the nations of the world may know that he is Lord.

Prayer: Lord, you loved me and saved me in spite of my unfaithfulness. Help me to be faithful to you, and to be your witness.

One Word: A restored relationship with God

TELL OF THE KINDNESS OF THE LORD

Isaiah 63:1-19

Key Verse: 63:7

1. The Lord is mighty to save (1-6)

When Jesus comes again, he will come in power to save his own. He will come as Judge and Redeemer. He is pictured here as a man treading grapes in the winepress. We don't know when that day will be, but we can be sure that it will be a day of salvation for those who belong to Jesus. The enemies of God will be trampled under the feet of the Son of Man.

2. The Lord's deeds of kindness (7-19)

Praise the Lord for the many good things he has done for his people. He made Israel his own people; he was distressed when they were distressed. He gave them a shepherd, Moses, and brought them through the Red Sea. His Holy Spirit led them and gave them rest. His Spirit was grieved when they rebelled. We who trust Jesus are God's people. If we sin, we must repent. We must remember the basic grace of God who saved us, ask his mercy, and make his glory our greatest concern.

Prayer: Lord, send us your Holy Spirit. Forgive our sins and dwell with us. Help me to do what pleases you and glorifies your name.

One Word: I will tell of the kindness of the Lord

GOD ACTS ON BEHALF OF THOSE WHO WAIT

Isaiah 64:1-12

Key Verse: 64:4

1. Lord, rend the heavens and come down (1-5)

Because of the people's sin, God's holy city was ravaged, the temple burned, and his people taken into captivity. The prophet prays, asking God to come and show his might against the enemies of his people. Indeed, God acts on behalf of those who wait for him and helps those who do right. But when people continue to sin, how can he help them?

2. All our righteous acts are like filthy rags (6-7)

We must acknowledge our sin and the sin of our people. When people are separated from God by unconfessed sins and unrepentant hearts, even the good things they do are like filthy rags. We must be clothed in God's righteousness. We must put on Jesus.

3. Lord, you are our Father (8-12)

The prophet comes asking mercy, as a child comes to his father. He reminds God that God is the Potter; we are clay. We are his creation. God helps those who ask mercy and wait patiently on him.

Prayer: Lord, we are sinners, but you are merciful. Come and cleanse and help us.

One Word: God helps those who wait for him

A PEOPLE BLESSED BY THE LORD

Isaiah 65:1-25

Key Verse: 65:23

1. Only a remnant will be spared (1-16)

God wants to bless and use his people. But when his people ignore his outstretched hand, despise his word, and seek help from demons, he will punish them and raise up a people whom he can use. Even though the human race seems totally corrupt, there is good juice left in the cluster of grapes--a remnant who seek God (8). Those who only serve themselves will be hungry, thirsty, shamed and destroyed. God's servants--those who obey him and do his work--will eat, rejoice and sing joyful songs. They will be blessed and will be his blessing.

2. New heavens and a new earth (17-25)

God plants hope in the hearts of his people. He will create a new Jerusalem, a place of joy forever. There will be no more weeping, no more poverty, no more vain toil, no more children born to

misfortune. God's people and their descendants will be blessed. There will be peace (Rev 21:1-4).

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your promise of the kingdom of heaven. Help me hold your vision in my heart and do your work by faith.

One Word: Seek God and hope in him

HE WHO TREMBLES AT MY WORD

Isaiah 66:1-16

Key Verse: 66:2b

1. This is the one I esteem (1-6)

The Creator God is the Lord of heaven and earth. He hates superficial worship, and he does not want us to serve him in our own ways. He has told us in his word how to worship and serve him. He wants us to love him; he wants us to have humble and contrite hearts, and he wants us to tremble at his word. This means that we must take the Bible seriously and obey it. There are always those who ridicule us for taking God's word seriously. God will deal with them.

2. Peace like a river (7-16)

God patiently trains and disciplines his people. It takes time for people to grow, and sometimes it is painful. But God gives his people peace like a river; he wants them to flourish like the grass. The enemies of God will not be able to stand in the day of judgment, but the people of God will be comforted as a mother comforts her child.

Prayer: Lord, help me to study your word prayerfully, with a humble, contrite heart, so that I can be one whom you esteem.

One Word: Tremble at God's word

ALL NATIONS WILL SEE MY GLORY

Isaiah 66:17-24

Key Verse: 66:19b

1. They will see my glory (17-19)

God does not want us to compromise with godless people. He is a God of mercy and a God of judgment. When men and women do abominable things, God will come with fire to execute judgment (16). He will come and gather people from every nation and race and tongue. He will reveal his glory to all mankind by his acts of judgment and by his saving grace and unfailing love.

2. Proclaim my glory among the nations (20-24)

The remnant of God's people who see his glory and taste his forgiveness will be sent out to the ends of the earth to proclaim God's glory among the nations. The Risen Jesus sent his disciples to the ends of the earth to be witnesses to his gospel. In Isaiah 66 God promised that his people would bring the Gentile world to God as an offering. Paul saw his ministry as a fulfillment of this prophecy (Ro 15:16).

Prayer: Lord, help me to hold your great vision for world redemption in my heart and live as one of your holy people.

One Word: Proclaim his glory among the nations