

A Study Of Isaiah

The Context Of The Book:

The Kings Of Israel And Judah:

Over The Two Southern Tribes	Over The Ten Northern Tribes
Saul (First dynasty)	Saul (First dynasty)
David (7.5 years) (Second dynasty)	Ishbosheth (2 years)
David (33 years)	David (33 years) (Second dynasty)
Solomon	Solomon
Rehoboam (17 years)	Jeroboam (22 years)
Abijam (3 years)	Nadab (2 years)
Asa (41 years)	Baasha (24 years) (Third dynasty)
Jehoshaphat (25 years)	Elah (2 years)
Jehoram (8 years)	Zimri (4 days)
Ahaziah (1 year)	Tibni (divided ruler with Omri – 4 years)
Athaliah (6 years)	Omri (12 years) (Fourth dynasty)
Joash (40 years)	Ahab (22 years)
Amaziah (29 years)	Ahaziah (2 years)
Uzziah (also named Azariah) (52 years)	Jehoram (a second son of Ahab) (12 years)
Jotham (16 years)	Jehu (Fifth dynasty) (28 years)
Ahaz (16 years)	Jehoahaz (17 years)
Hezekiah (29 years)	Jehoash (16 years)
Manasseh (55 years)	Jeroboam II (41 years)
Amon (2 years)	Zechariah (6 months)
Josiah (31 years)	Shallum (Sixth dynasty) (one month)
Jehoahaz (son #2 of Josiah) (3 months)	Menahem (Seventh dynasty)
Eliakim (also called Jehoiakim) (son #1 of Josiah) (11 years)	Pekahiah (2 years)
Jehoiachin (3 months)	Pekah (20 years) (Eighth dynasty)
Mattaniah (son #3 of Josiah) – changed name to Zedekiah (11 years)	Hoshea (Ninth dynasty)

- Please note that many of the references to length of regency above actually represent co-regencies

Some Thoughts:

- Judah, the southern tribes had some good kings and some bad.
- the influence of those good kings allows Judah to stay free for 100 years longer than the northern tribes.
- Godly leadership matters! Note only one dynasty on the left, but eight on the right. The transmission of our faith matters.
- Isaiah was called to minister to both “good kings” and “bad kings”. God still wants all to hear!

Introduction:

- The name of Isaiah means: God is salvation.
- Isaiah was born into an upper-class family; he had access to the King’s ear (like Daniel).
- His message included many warnings about making political alliances with the ungodly.
- He saw the lack of social care as systemic of a spiritual apathy.

- it is believed that he died a martyr's death under Manasseh, perhaps by being sawn in two.
- At this time politically, the ten northern tribes were about to be taken by Assyria (722BC).
- Ahaz looked to Assyria for protection, despite Isaiah's warnings.
- Hezekiah was godly, but looked to Egypt for help politically.
- Egypt would fall to Sennacherib, but God would spare Judah.
- Remember the code of the prophet: Deut. 18:20-22
- Therefore the prophet would use local, soon to be fulfilled prophecies with far reaching ones.

The Book Itself:

- many today would try to move away from a single authorship, to attempt to explain away the supernatural elements of the book. They see chapters 40 – 66 as written by others.
- The book contains prophecy, poetry and law, but their primary goal is a future telling of events.
- Prophecy often mingled far distant future events with local events.
- 66 chapters, 39 of which are law based and 27 of which are grace based
- There are 66 direct quotes in the NT to the book of Isaiah; 20 of the 27 NT books quote Isaiah.
- During this time, God sent Amos and Hosea to northern Israel, Jonah to Nineveh and Micah to warn both Israel and Judah.

The Basic Divisions

- Chapters 1 – 35
 - deal with the political landscape ... general judgment and warning
- Chapters 36-39
 - Historical interlude
- Chapters 40-66
 - The righteous government of God

Jesus In Isaiah:

Thought	Isaiah Reference	NT Reference
Born of a virgin	7:14	Matthew 1:20-23
Descended from Jesse	11:1	Matthew 1:1-17
A stone of stumbling to Israel	8:14	1Peter 2:8
He will bring light and joy to Israel	9:1-2	Matthew 4:12-16
Govern the world	9:6	Philippians 2:9-11
Reigns on David's throne	9:7	Revelation 19:6
Anointed by the Holy Spirit	11:2, 42:1	Matthew 3:16-17 etc.
Judge in righteousness, justice and faithfulness	11:3-5, 42:1,4	Matthew 12:20-21
Judge the nations	13:10, 34:4	Matthew 24:29
Be announced by a messenger	40:3-5	Mark 1:2-3
Be gentle to the weak	42:3	Matthew 12:20
Make a new covenant with Israel	42:6, 49:8-9	1Corinthians 11:17-32
Be a light to the Gentiles	42:6-7, 49:6	Romans 15:12
Be called before His birth to be a servant of God	49:1	None
Restore the spiritual nature of Israel	49:5-6, 50:20-21	Romans 11:26-27
Restore Israel to the land	49:8	2Corinthians 6:2
Be worshipped by Gentiles	49:7, 52:15	Romans 15:21
Be rejected by the people of Israel	49:7, 53:1-3	John 1:11
Voluntarily suffer	50:6, 53:7-9	Acts 8:32-33, 1Peter 2:22-25

Take upon Himself, the sins of the world	53:4-6, 10-11	Matthew 8:17
Triumph over death	53:10	1Corinthian 15
Be exalted	52:13, 53:12	Luke 22:37
Comfort Israel & bring vengeance to the wicked	61:1-3	Luke 4:18-19

Chapter 1

- This chapter is meant to be an introduction to the entire book.
- Some themes to consider:
 - a) God calls individual people to speak on His behalf.
 - b) God's message is for individual people as well as nations.
 - c) When God speaks, He expects a response.
 - d) Always, the call of judgment is tempered with a hope (when the response is faith).

Verses 1-3

- The vision of Isaiah ... this originated supernaturally from the Lord
- The four kings mentioned span a timeframe of 81 years (starting about 739-740 BC)
- Uzziah was the king whose pride led him to leprosy. He was also a king of incredible military might.
- What happens when people resist God continually?
- Why could they no longer recognize their master? Even animals not known for intelligence do!
- Notice that God calls the entire creation to come to the courts and see!
- Note the word "reared children" ... when God found Israel, they were small and insignificant.

Verses 4-9

- God lays His charge against Israel.
- He uses the allegory of being sick; an attack that has left the nation reeling; the entire nation knows no wholeness. Maybe this should remind us of the Parable Of The Good Samaritan?
- Who these attackers are, is not stated. It may be historical, looking back on various invaders of the past or it may be prophetic and looked towards those who yet will invade.
- The "Daughter of Zion" = "Daughter IN Zion" = Jerusalem (or perhaps the remnant).
- The land that flowed with "milk and honey" is now reduced to a vegetable (cucumber) garden; the city of Jerusalem is reduced to a hut.

Verses 10-16

- What does true worship look like? Is it filled with mindless deeds of the Law that do not reflect the intent and state of the heart? Of course not. To worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth, at least in part has to do with the intent of the heart being in line with what the act of worship is about.
- Pelagianism is the belief that original sin did not taint human nature and that mortal will is still capable of choosing good or evil without special Divine aid. (See verse 16)
- Verse 16-20 requires a transformed heart and mind.

Verses 17-20

- Here is what to do instead. Don't try going to court with the Lord, or you will fail.
- Do what is right; Seek grace!

Verses 21-31

- God charges Israel's leaders and prophesizes that He will restore, once judgment is complete
- Note that the silver does not just contain dross, it has become dross! No part is left untouched!
- Dr. Jim Black lists some signs of cultural decays, from the history of world cultures:

Under Social Symptoms he lists:

- The Crisis of Lawlessness.
- Loss of Economic Discipline.
- Rising Bureaucracy.

Under Cultural Factors he cites:

- The Decline of Education.
- Weakening of Cultural Foundations.
- Loss of Respect for Tradition.
- Increase in Materialism.

Under Moral Decay:

- A Rise in Immorality.
- Decay of Old Religious Beliefs and the Allurement of Alien Religions.
- A Decline in the Value of and Respect for Human Life.

“When Nations Die”, Black, Dr. Jim

- A world view shift is required here. If we simply look into “The Box” to find the solutions to our woes, then we will be doomed to repeat the mistakes of yesteryear. NO culture today is immune from falling to shreds. Instead, we must look “outside of The Box” to find solutions. This is what Israel is being called to. Will they respond? Will we?
- Knowledge of God leads to a knowledge about myself and my culture.
- Are their similarities between the culture of Judah and the culture today in Canada?

Chapter 2

- Chapters 2-5 make one complete prophecy concerning end time events.
- note that 2:1-4 and 4:2-6 make “bookends” ... describing the future kingdom. In between, how the Lord will take us there!
- it appears to be written specifically to the nation of Israel and NOT the church!

Verses 1-4

- This is a Millennial age promise.
- as “chief among the mountains”; the Lord’s kingdom will be above all others.
- Government and faith will be focused with the city of Jerusalem.
- It is interesting that the people flowing to this mountain is a reversal of the Tower Of Babel event.
- Jacob = Israel (this of course the name of the nation).
- The true teaching of the Lord produces a righteous culture whose lives are transformer
- With the reign of Christ established, nations no longer train for war
- Be wary concerning the “cost” of peace that is being proclaimed today.

Verses 5-11

- The people are charged with the sin of mixing their faith with the pagan practices of the people around them.
- Is a good economy always a blessing from the Lord?
- Compare these verses to Deut. 17:14-20 (a picture of a true leader).

- Why should I be careful in building up great possessions?
- Note the use of the word “full”. When something is full, there is no room for anything else!

Verses 12-22

- Notice what God will judge: proud and lofty – revealed by what we place our trust in!
- Pride is linked strongly with the idea of “to what am I trusting in”!
- “mice and bats” ... things are thrown in dark places, where such creatures abide.
- Do you think that God’s judgment is fair?

Chapter 3

Verses 1-15

- The ability of leadership to inspire people is incredible; so is their power to corrupt.
- These verses speak to the corrupt leaders and how God will grant leaders that are incapable of leading.
- Privilege creates responsibility!
- Notice what God removes (verse 1): Supply and support. These are the things that we rely on – our daily sustenance and the stability that our culture provides (in this case, strong government).
- What does it say to us that God even removes the “craftsmen”? The “elders”?
- God states that He will allow the unqualified to govern (*children* ... in verse 4).
- Manasseh was only 12 when he began to reign.

What Is Leadership?

A Godly leader is primarily someone who imitates Christ so that those who follow will become more like Christ. If I had to sum up leadership, that would be it. (1 Corinthians 11:1)

A leader is someone who will choose right, act right, think right, and seek what is right so that others may follow them to what is right. (Luke 6:39)

A leader is someone who will purposefully cultivate Godly character in their own life in order to instill it into the lives of those whom they lead. (Ephesians 4:24)

A leader is someone who understands that most of the world, and even most Christians, are headed in the wrong direction. A leader is someone who is headed in the right direction, towards God, and does their best not only to turn others from the wrong direction, but continue to show them the right path over the long term. (2 Timothy 3:2)

Leadership is having the courage to seek out and obey God and show others how to do the same in a world where very few seek God. (Matthew 7:13)

Leadership is leading people toward what is important in life rather than what is temporal, fleeting, and materialistic. Matthew (6:20)

Quoted from <http://www.brentriggblog.com/2009/08/godly-leadership-introduction-part-1/>

A leader:

- first and foremost is concerned about the things of God
- must be compassionate
- should be more humble than anyone they lead
- imitates Christ so that those who follow them will become more Christ-like.
- must be a servant
- must be uncompromising in truth and generous with liberty
- cultivates discipline in their own life and the lives of those they lead
- must have vision
- must be able to communicate effectively

- j) must be decisive
- k) must not be fearful
- l) must be aware of and understand the power and responsibility of their influence
- m) must cultivate selflessness
- n) should develop discernment for themselves and those who follow
- o) must avoid hypocrisy
- p) must be firm and fair

- Note in verse 6, the criteria for being a leader ... someone who has something the rest do not!
- Yet that leader has no power to produce good results (verse 7).
- Remember here that the desperate conditions of the people are reflected both in the captivity of Nebuchadnezzar (2Kings 24:14) and will reflect life in the Tribulation period. BOTH are pictured here.
- Verse 12 is not meant to be a slam upon woman leaders ... rather a word of comparison ... leaders who were lacking in strength.

3:16-26

- The foolishness of believing that we “dress for success” is discussed here.
- Do we really believe that the clothes make the person? The world does but God does not.
- Verse 17 probably deals with a “STD” related sickness.
- The problem is not primarily *what* is worn ... it is the attitude born along with the clothes.
- See also 1Peter 3:3-4
- One of the results is that the Gates will mourn ... there will be no leaders left to sit there. The city will be left without a single inhabitant.

Chapter 4

4:1

- There will be such a loss of life in this period, that husbands will be scarce.
- Although according to the Law, a man must provide for his wife, here these women are willing to work for their own sustenance.

4:2-6

- A description of the Millennial kingdom is given here.
- Note that the “Branch” is a reference to Christ.

Isa 11:1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

Jer 23:5 "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.

Jer 33:15 "In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land.

- It is interesting that the cloud and the pillar of fire of the Exodus is used as a type of protection in the Millennial kingdom.
- The canopy is used in many Jewish weddings today

Chapter 5

- The Lord gives a parable of the status of Israel.
- Note that the vineyard of verse 1 is explained in verse 7. Remember that the Lord often will use either the vineyard or the fig tree to describe Israel.
- There are MANY stones in the land of Palestine and the work of clearing them is laborious.
- He grants the watchtower of protection and the winepress of joy (foreshadowing an abundant harvest).
- The Lord promises to remove His “hedge of protection” (Verse 5).

Note the woes here (see also Matthew 23)

- 1) Woe to those who accumulate (verses 8-10)
 - Great crop lands do not necessarily produce high yields (here, perhaps 1/10 of what was sown).
 - Be wary of monopolies built to subjugate and control.
 - Remember that the land belonged to the Lord and He had decreed that it was to be shared by all (see Numbers 36:7, Lev. 25:23-28).
- 2) Woe to those who live for entertainment alone (verses 11-17)
 - It appears that these people should have been teachers (verses 13); Will I live for me or for other?
 - Booze never solves problems ... and neither will illicit drugs.
- 3) Woe to those who mock God (verses 18-19)
 - No shame here, no sense of personal responsibility
- 4) Woe to those who confuse evil with good (verse 20)
 - To destroy God's standard of right and wrong; to mock it and ignore it.
- 5) Woe to those who walk in conceit (verse 21)
- 6) Woe to those who are heroes of the useless but failures at the important (verses 22-24)
 - No sense of justice remains upon the people.

- Like a master whistles for his dog, the Lord calls the nations to punish Israel (verse 26). In the Jewish culture, this probably had reference to attracting bees with a shrill whistle.

- If God can call the nations to do His bidding then ... do you think He can call them today?

- Is God's anger and call to judgment just? What would the world look like if God did NOT finally act?

Chapter 6

- Isaiah is commissioned by the Lord (verses 1-9)

- The message will be rejected (10-13)

- Uzziah had been a good king (for 52 years) and now the future of the southern tribes was unknown.

- The city of Rome came to prominence beginning in this era (around 739 BC). Israel would decrease continually.

- It is ironic and good that God calls His servant at a time of mourning.

- Why might a true vision of God be exactly what a culture needs to cope with hardship?

- Seraph means to "burn". It seems to be used in conjunction with the sin offering. It is possible that these angelic beings have some concept of morality. They have wings, appear as humans and speak.

- The cherubim are angelic beings associated with the mercy seat of the Ark. In Ezekiel, they have four wings. They appear here as simple attendants.

- The reaction of Isaiah to this vision is telling; He confesses his sin, he is cleansed and he is commissioned.

- All who come into the presence of God are made such: Moses, Job, John (on Patmos), Saul (Paul), Daniel!

- The coal upon his lip was an external representation of what had happened in his heart.

- the ritzpah was a stone on which the incense was placed and burned.

- Isaiah is not called to make people ignore the Lord ... rather his ministry will be to reveal what is already in their hearts.

- Verse 11 is a challenging one to Isaiah and us ... "How long will they reject" ...? Until the very end.

- However, a remnant will always respond and remain.

- a) God calls us to live a distinctively "Christ Centered" life. It will NEVER fit to the rest of the culture and there will always be tension!
- b) We dare not trivialize the things of Christ!
- c) EVERYONE is called by the Lord for some form of service! Cultures are influenced by individuals.
- d) Isaiah 6 presents a beautiful and holy picture of worship. Does this reflect my worship?

- e) God's wrath is real and should be highly respected.
- f) God allows soft hearts to be drawn to Him, and amplifies hard hearts to reject Him.

Excursus:

Why are there differences in calling between 1Kings 19:19-21 and Luke 9:59-62?

- In the case of Elisha, we can draw the following conclusions:
 - a) Elisha understood the call of Elijah and what it would entail.
 - b) He went home and "burned" his old life style. This was an utter commitment.
 - c) He knew that the call of a prophet (or even a prophet's servant) was for a lifetime.
- Note that the Luke passage places this extended talk in the midst of those rejecting Jesus (see 51-56). Most commentators suggest that these three men were not willing to commit to the call of Christ.
 - a) Disciples of a typical rabbi were required to follow their teacher and submit to him
 - Jesus seems to have a deeper level of dedication than this ... that of the life of a prophet (an itinerant preacher who has no/little home life)
 - b) In the case of the second man, there is a strong possibility that the father was not even dead yet ... rather the man was saying that he would follow after his family ties were broken through death.
 - c) Finally, the suggestion that Jesus makes to the man is that his will to follow Christ will even be swayed by his family connections.
- It seems that what is being contrasted in these two passages, is the level of commitment
- Christ is not advocating leaving all family responsibilities (see 1 Corinth. 7:32-38)

Chapter 7

- This chapter deals with the famous prophecy of the coming of Christ, plus the invasion of the Assyrians.

1-2

- Here we have the description of civil war within Israel
- Aram is another name for Syria
- Ahaz was only 20 when he began to reign (2Kings 16:2) and would reign for 16 years; a poor king!
- He apparently sacrificed one of his sons to a false god (2Kings 16:3-4). It is ironic that God would now mention two other children to his ... Isaiah's son and the Father's son!
- It is interesting that God's path (pictured here as approaching a mountain) OFTEN causes us to face our most deeply held fears.
- This collation was attempting to stand against the growing Assyrian empire. They were successful in attacking some of Judah's lands and taking slaves.

3-12

- Even to this godless king, the Father speaks through Isaiah. What grace is shown to those that do not deserve it!
- It is interesting that the meeting place chosen is where Jerusalem drew its life giving waters!
- The word rendered pool here is *berekah* ... which is the root word for blessing.
- The fullers field is a place people went to wash their clothes. What an apt picture for God's blessings.
- Isaiah's son went on this journey to meet the king. His name was Shear-jashub (a remnant shall return).
- Just because there is an alliance of enemies to the north, the king is commanded not to fear.
- When God asked the king what sign would convince him, the king answered with nothing.
- Miracles alone will not cause a person to believe without a foundation of understanding.

13-25

- This is the Word of the Lord; the prophecy. Note that, like many other prophecies, it has a local and a final component.
- The word translated as virgin here (*almah*) could denote either a true virgin or a young maiden. However, the fulfillment spoken of in Matthew 1:18-23 (*parthenos*), clearly and explicitly denotes ONLY a virgin.
- The child that Isaiah pictures in his local time cannot be determined. Was it Ahaz's child, Isaiah's or an unnamed one? We do not know.
- What is clear is that before the child was very old, the northern threat would be eliminated.
- The eating of "curds of honey" typically denotes a sudden decrease in the population, and those left would eat these things of abundance.
- The amount of time for this would be about 13 years (when a Jewish boy reaches the age of moral understanding).
- The shaving of Israel is a poetic term meaning denigration or shame.

The final fulfillment of these prophecies:

- a) Isaiah's prophecy was made about 734 BC.
- b) The northern tribes were invaded by the Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser and Damascus fell (731 BC).
- c) Samaria would fall under Sargon II in 721 or 722 BC (see 2Kings 17:5-6).
- d) Many Jews were deported at these times. Sixty five years later, Assyrian king Ashurbanipal settled more foreigners in the land (see Ezra 4:10)
- e) Instead of trusting God, Ahaz would try to intervene by siding with the Assyrians (2Kings 16) and asking them to pressure the northern lands to leave him alone. He stole gold from the temple to pay this bribe.

Chapter 8

- The son of the prophet is named even before he is born and the coming Assyrian empire's invasion is predicted.
- The Lord had held off any form of invading armies now for some 500 years ... but the hedges of protection were about to fall.

1-4

- God told Isaiah to call his yet un-conceived son "Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz" (quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil).
- See verse 18 for the explanation of this odd name!
- Note that two additional witnesses were to sign this document. God makes His prophecy clear.
- An "ordinary pen" would have been writing that the average person could perceive and understand.

5-17

- The Assyrians would take the northern tribes and would overflow the southern, but not capture Jerusalem.
- Shiloah is a softly flowing, little spring in Jerusalem, representing God's grace (starts at the spring of Gihon)
- This opposed to the mighty Euphrates (verse 7), representing God's judgment.
- In 732 BC, Tiglath-Pileser III plundered Damascus (Syria) and Samaria (Northern Israel).
- In 701, Sennacherib would invade Judah, with only Jerusalem escaping.
- It is interesting that conspiracy theories breed FEAR.

- The metaphor of the Lord being like a rock has its fulfillment in Christ, many of which would be offended in His ministry (Luke 20:18, Romans 9:33, 1Peter 2:8).

18-22

- There is a strong command here to not turn to the occult ways.
- Today, this could include everything from horoscopes to psychic fairs.

It is interesting that through-out this chapter, we are amazed at God's abilities to keep His promises. It reminds us to:

- Ask God to make us people of utter integrity.
- Not to make promises that we cannot keep.
- Admit our inability to accomplish a task, as opposed to making a promise we cannot hope to keep.
- Refuse "hopeful" answers.
- Seek forgiveness for broken promises.

Chapter 9

1-7

- The sign of the coming Messiah is described here. Again note that we move from a place of God's judgment to His mercy!
- Zebulun and Naphtali are the lands that the Messiah would grow up in (Galilee) and minister (Capernaum) – See Matthew 4:12-16. Note that these were also the first territories to be attacked by King Tiglath-Pileser.
- How do WE trust God today in spite of a chaotic world?
- God reverses their curse (see John 1:46, John 7:41, 52).
- there is likely a break between verses 1-2 (first coming) and verse 3 (second coming).
- What do you think is meant by the metaphor of "light"?
- The day of Midian ... An allusion to the defeat of Midian under Gideon (Judges 7-8).
 - Often times, God calls us to build our faith for the future by looking back to past events
 - What happens when, as a culture, we throw away the past?
- Verse 5 pictures the destruction of the clothes used in war ... it is meant to be a joyous occasion.
- Note that the Messiah would come as one "*born*".
- a) Wonderful Counselor
 - A term implying extraordinary power (Gen 18:14, this word is used as "too hard").
 - He takes counsel from no man ... only the heavenly Father.
 - He dispenses Truth.
- b) Mighty God
 - "El Gibbor" ... in whom all power is given.
 - the word "Gibbor" is best translated today as "hero".
 - Both power and deity are expressed here.
- c) Everlasting Father
 - meaning: The father or possessor of eternity.
 - Christ has always been eternal!
- d) The Prince Of Peace
 - The restorer of shalom.
- Remember that these prophecies were made during the reign of Ahaz, the one bad king during Isaiah's prophetic reign.

8-21

- Here, Samaria is judged
- It is interesting that four times, the phrase “Yet for all this, His anger is not turned away, His hand is still upraised”.
- Verses 9 and 10 speak to our human pride ... we can overcome any obstacle or problem. Can we?
- Aram-Damascus was an Aramaean state around Damascus in Syria, from the late 12th century BCE to 734 BCE. The leader was King Rezin. Pekah, son of Remaliah was the king of Israel.
- Note that verses 11 and 12 denote the enemies of these two.

Chapter 10:

1-4

- God still cares deeply about ensuring that none are oppressed. Truly it appears that the same oppression that we deal out, will be dealt to us by the Lord.

5-11

- The Assyrians must not be proud that God has used them to punish – yet they were.
- How can we view verse 5 ... is it just for God to use the Assyrians to perform His judgment?
- Is this different than using the Anti-Christ to bring the world to the valley of decision?
- Sennacherib would never recognize that he is being used and manipulated by God (vrs. 7-8)
- Remember that just because God gives us opportunities to act, perform, or accomplish, He still holds us VERY responsible for HOW we do these things ... and with what motive.
- Note that the list of Assyrian conquests is listed and follows a geographic course:
 - a) Hittite city of Carchemish (717 BC)
 - b) Calno (738BC)
 - c) Arpad (738 BC)
 - d) Hamath in Syria (738 BC and again in 720 BC)
 - e) Damascus (732 BC)
 - f) Samaria (722 BC)

12-19

- God’s judgment falls on the Assyrian victors.
- We must remember that when we think that we are acting in our strength, it is really HIS strength that sustains and empowers.

20-27

- Here, the remnant is described and encouraged.
- the time between Tiglath-pileser and Sennacherib was about 30 years.

The Fall Of The Assyrians:

Nomadic Raids in Assyria (627 BC): Nomadic tribes such as the Scythians from the north, and the Iranian Medes from the east, began to infiltrate Assyrian borders at will, penetrating as far as Egypt. This is likely due to Assyria being overextended from its overly ambitious expansionism. The Assyrian Empire proceeded to quickly crumble as a result.

Babylon Independence (627 BC): As a result of the crumbling condition of the Assyrian Empire, Babylon was able to assert its independence, taking control over the city and surrounding Mesopotamian regions. Babylonians continued to battle the remnants of the Assyrian army in expanding their sphere of control to the north.

Fall of Assyrian Capital of Nineveh (612 BC): The capital, and heart of the Assyrian Empire, was destroyed by Babylonian and Median armies, effectively ending the Assyrian Empire. A remnant of the Assyrian army survived, continuing the fight to revive the empire.

Battle of Megiddo (605 BC): Egypt sent forces to the north, defeating Judah along the way, in order to join the remaining Assyrian troops. They met at Megiddo, where they encountered the advancing Babylonian army. The Assyrian-Egyptian army was defeated by the Babylonians, extinguishing the final hope for the Assyrian Empire.

End of Assyrian Empire (605 BC): After being completely defeated, the Assyrians remained a distinct "nation" of people in Northern Mesopotamia, but would forever exist under the rule of foreign masters.

28-34

- The Assyrian army approaches Jerusalem (within sight). Nob is on the northern edge of the Mount Of Olives.
- Sennacherib's armies were wiped out by the angel of the Lord (701 BC, Isa. 37:36).

Isaiah 11

- Again, we have a description of the Millennial Kingdom Of God.
- Note that the end of the last chapter left us with the image of Assyria and Northern Israel having been hewed down like giant trees. Now, out of one stump, comes new life. Do not despise small beginnings.

1-3

- Note the seven aspects of the Spirit of God (Rev. 4:5), seven representing completion.
- Interesting that it mentions Jesse and not the line of David. By the time of Christ, David's line had really degenerated to that of a peasant. Thus was Jesse like Joseph!
- the word for branch is *netzen* or *nehtzer*, which is apparently where the word for Nazareth comes from (He will be called a Nazarene).

3b-5

- It is the Spirit of God that can take the insignificant and do significant things with them.
- Christ has the ability to discern the hearts without the need of external understanding
- see Mark 2:8
- the Rod of His mouth makes reference to the righteousness of the Word and the breath of His lips to the Spirit of God.
 - a) Wisdom and understanding are gifts of the mind (insight to render right decisions at the right time, knowledge about the true nature of something).
 - b) Counsel and power (the ability to judge correctly and the power to enforce it).
 - c) Knowledge and fear (understanding truth and how it applies to life and the moral aptitude to apply this to a changed conduct).

6-9

- Again, this seems to be descriptive of the Millennium period
- It has always been my contention that the nature of animals will be reverted to that in the Garden before the fall.
- remember that enmity with the snake was the first break in the relationship between animals and man and here it is restored.

10-16

- There appears to be a final ingathering of the Jews back to their land
- God removes the geographical barriers to travel and creates a highway to allow access to Jerusalem.
- Remember that the drying of the Euphrates was predicated in John's Revelation.
- Note that verse 13 will heal the rift between the north and the south.

Isaiah 12: A Song Of Praise

- the night of “sin” is over and now the people rejoice in the God of their salvation
- This song is similar in nature to the song sang by Miriam when Israel passed through the Red Sea (the Song Of Moses (Exodus 15:1-21). Note that an “Exodus like” experience is described in Isaiah 11!
- Do you think that Christians tend to be grateful people? Why or why not?
- Why in this passage, is there such an emphasis on verbal proclamation (call, proclaim, sing, shout)?

Chapter 13

- Chapters 13 -23 now contain a series of “burdens” against various nations (burdens being something you bear ... judgments).
- The future destruction of Babylon is foretold here, by a nation that will come from afar (Persia).
- Every local judgment is a “down payment” of the final judgment upon this world!
- Remember, at the writing of this prophecy, Babylon was a very minor player.
- It appears as if verses 9 – 13 are an end time passage, where the destruction that comes from the Persians is a foretaste of the destruction that will come from the Lord during the Tribulation period.
- Compare Isa. 10:10 with Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:29, where He sees it as a future event.
- Babylon was captured by Cyrus, king of the Medes and Persians in 539BC.
- Yet, Cyrus spared much of the city, which again leads us to think that these verses have a final fulfillment in the end times.
- Babylon fell into decay after being devastated again in 518BC by the Persian king Darius Hystaspis, who tore down the walls around the city of Babylon.
- Verses 14 – 22 are typical of both the destruction of Babylon and the end times. The final judgment appears more like Revelation 18.

Chapter 14

- Of Babylon and Satan
- Clearly, this passage leans towards the Millennial kingdom, when Israel knows rest from her enemies.
- The local fulfillment is also clear: Israel would be in bondage to Babylon for 70 years, before being allowed to return to their land.
- the passage begins with a promise that one day, the enemies of the Jews would be brought to their land (and not vice versa as we have seen).
- Verses 12-21 seem to represent the fall of Satan. Jerome (347-420AD) and Tertullian (160 – 220AD) see this passage as dealing with Satan himself. Others (Calvin and Luther) reject the view.
- It is perhaps best to view this, as so often in Isaiah, as a mixture of the “here and now” and the “greater reality”. Satan is pictured here, contrasted and compared with the fall of Nebuchadnezzar.
- Clearly, Nebuchadnezzar is a type of “beast” (remember that he was insane for seven years); a political power who embraces a radical form of pride and leads many astray, even attacking God’s chosen.

- We have seen the first lament against Babylon and now we turn our attention again to Assyria (24-27).
- The destruction of Assyria is seen as a “pledge” of the future destruction of Babylon.

- Next, we see the lament against Philistia (verses 28-32).
- Note that there is a command not to rejoice at the falling of one’s enemies. Is this hard for us as Christians?
- A brief history of these five cities:
 - David subdued them. Under Jehoshaphat, they paid tribute. Under Jehoram, they rebelled.
 - They were then subdued by Uzziah. During the reign of Ahaz, they rebelled again.
 - The Assyrians had then subdued them.
- A more agile snake will arise with the same character as the Assyrians and far more deadly.

- Verse 32 speaks of an envoy of from Philistia that came to Hezekiah to join forces to fight Assyria. God said, "No".
- I MUST come to an understanding that my strength cannot lie in my ability to strategize, but in a reliance upon the Lord.

Chapter 15, 16

- This continues the laments ... now against Moab
- The roots of this nation came from the incestuous relation between Lot and his eldest daughter (the curse of booze strikes again Genesis 19:30-38).
- Balak was one of their kings that was a thorn in the side of Israel. Ruth was from here ... and she represents the beautiful story of redemption.
- Note that in verse 5, Isaiah himself was moved over the prophecy of this land. This destruction would come at the hands of the Assyrians. Can Christians weep over the destruction of their enemies??
- the brook of Arabim is on the way to Edom (south of the country) as Moab cannot be inhabited.
- Note that 16:1 offers a solution to the people of Moab ... seek the face of the Lord. God orders His people to protect the Moabites (verse 4). They must throw themselves on the mercy of the people of Judah.
- Verses 5-6 are clearly Messianic.
- What does verse 11 teach us about the heart of both Isaiah and the Lord?
- Note verse 12 – Moab has ignored the warning of the Lord and has instead sought the face of their local gods ... to no avail.
- By the time of the Persian empire, the nation of Moab was no more.
- Verse 14 ... as a hired man would count them ... waiting for them to be over, knowing you are not working for your own but for another – waiting for release.

Chapter 17

- Syria and Ephraim (northern tribes of Israel) are judged in this chapter.
- They are linked together because of their alliance to fight off the Assyrians.
- The cities of Aroer are the surrounding towns around Damascus.
- Both were besieged by Tiglath-pileser (2Kings 15:29) and many were deported under Shalmaneser (2Kings 17:6).
- All that is left in the fields will be "gleanings" ... a few olives here and there. Rephaim was known for its rich, fertile soil.
- Astarte (verse 8) was connected with fertility, sexuality, and war. Her symbols were the lion, the horse, the sphinx, the dove, and a star within a circle indicating the planet Venus. Pictorial representations often show her naked. She has been known as the deified evening star. Astarte (Ishtar) was accepted by the Greeks under the name of Aphrodite or, alternatively, Artemis. The island of Cyprus, one of Astarte's greatest faith centers, supplied the name Cypris as Aphrodite's most common byname.
- Verse 10 is the reminder ... we must not forget our Lord.
- Verse 11 ... Israel is accused of protecting what she has planted by slips ... but the harvest is not what she is expecting.
- Verses 12 and 13 describe the onslaught of the Assyrians.
- The chapter ends with a reminder that although Assyria will come and destroy, it will be held in check by the Lord, who will make them turn and flee at His bidding!

Chapter 18

- This is the burden of Cush (likely Ethiopia)
- Verse 1 mentions either bird or insect (tsetse fly) wings:

Ethiopia offers a unique natural environment for a wide variety of bird species and it is nicknamed as a bird watchers' paradise for its very rich variety of colorful birds. There are about 962 species registered, of which 17 are endemic and another 13 are semi-endemic to the wilderness of the country. Many other bird species are yet to be discovered in the countries less discovered forests specially in the south.

- Isaiah has in mind to show this land as a swarm of people.
- A smooth people are those who shave their hair.
- Help will come ... from the Lord (v.3)!
- It appears that an envoy was sent from Ethiopia to Judah, perhaps to fight along-side of them when the Assyrians attack. Isaiah however, seems to send them away, saying that the Lord watches over them. At some time in the future, all nations will see and acknowledge the hand of the Lord.
- Note the quietness of God stands in contrast to the swarming nature of this people.
- In verse 5, there is a progression ... buds blossom, flower grows, grapes ripen ... it looks like a bountiful harvest ... and then the Lord shears off the fruit. The power of the enemy is deceptive and is quickly cut off.
- A harvest is coming, but it is the Assyrians who will be harvested by the wild animals and birds.
- Where ever Judah looks (Damascus to the north, Philistia to the west, Moab to the east or Cush to the south), she sees nations doomed to destruction. She must look up to the Lord.
- Where do I look when danger is all around?
- Perhaps this passage has a more complete fulfillment in the Ethiopian eunuch!

Chapter 19-20 (September 2013)

- the burden of Egypt
- Verse 1 may be a reference to the deities of Egypt remembering what Jehovah did the last time He confronted them!
- Verses 2-4 **speaks of political anarchy** ... people lose faith in the political system and the country fractures into cities. TRUE unity only comes when we are united in repentance.
- It is not clear who the evil task master is in verse 4. It could be Psammetichus, or the Ethiopian Piankhi or Sargon II. It could also be the Anti-Christ.
- An attack against the Nile was to cut the source of life from the Egyptian culture. **This is purely an economic disaster.** Are these components of today's culture?
- What kind of economic things do we rely on today for peace and security?

- Verses 11-15 tell the story of **intellectual disaster**. Much of modern culture owes a debt of gratitude to Egypt for the technology they advanced over the centuries.
- It is interesting how many times confuses His enemies into fighting "themselves". Does He still do this today?
- Zoan was a city of Egypt in the eastern Nile delta. Numbers 13:22 says that it was built seven years after Hebron was built. Psalm 78:12,43 identifies the "field of Zoan" as where Moses performed miracles before Pharaoh to persuade him to release Israel from his service. The fields of Zoan are thus considered to be another name for the Land of Goshen. Later it would be called Tanis. The references here may be a reminder back to the Exodus, as Moses is thought to have come from this region. This city is considered an ancient capital.
- Memphis is another ancient capital, this time in the south of the country.
- In verse 16, there seems to be a jump to some future event. Six times, we are told "in that day".
 - a) The Egyptians will swear allegiance to Jehovah (v.18)
 - b) An alter will be built to signify who these people worship (19-20).
 - c) Judgment (for sin) and healing both come from the Lord (21-22).
 - d) A highway of worship will be made from Egypt to Assyria (23)! Enemies made joint worshippers!!
 - e) These three nations will be made a world-wide blessing (24-25).
- Interesting, considering how little peace these peoples have known up until now!

- In Israel's "birth", Egypt was a thorn in her side ... in the end, they will be united together. Is this not a beautiful picture of what the Lord desires to do with all things separate from Him?
- There is no reasonable explanation for the number 5 cities. In some places in Scripture, this number is used as a round number (Gen. 45:22, Ex. 22:1, Numbers 7:17, Matthew 25:20) ... half of 10 (a number of completeness). In other places, the number 5 means "only a few" (Lev. 26:8, 1 Corin. 14:19).
- Does the next verse teach that one out of every six cities will be destroyed (v18)? The word translated here as destruction may also be translated as "Sun". Perhaps the passage teaches that Christ will overshadow and replace the pagan worship of the sun.

- Chapter 20:1-6, Israel is called to remove his outer garments and walk about for three years in a way that is deemed shameful, to depict the shame that will be upon those in northern Africa, as they trusted in themselves. Isaiah bore this shame to make the message match the messenger. *Are we called to act in similar ways?*

- *Why would Israel be tempted to turn to the country that oppressed it in slavery for 430 year? Does our culture turn to things that oppress and bind it ... because it looks alluring enough to offer a way of "escape"?*
- In 711BC, Egypt was attacked by the Assyrians; Edom, Moab and Judah were asked to participate. Fortunately, this time Judah apparently said, "No". They had listened to Isaiah. Sargon II reigned at this time.

Chapter 21

- Again, we hear about the fall of Babylon
- the Phrase "Desert by the sea" is a challenge to interpret. It is best to see this as a phrase depicting Babylon devastation that would come over 100 years later ... "by the sea" meaning a well-watered land (because of the Euphrates).
- Immediately, Isaiah likens the storms to come to Babylon like those on the Negev (southern Israel).
- The coming armies are likely the Medes and the Persians (Elam). At different times in history, both of these nations were allies of Babylon. Eventually, they turn away from her.
- This begs the question to us ... *are we loyal people? What does loyalty look like today?*
- It is interesting that Isaiah is physically sickened by what he sees (3-4). What a refreshing way to look at those under the chastising of God. *How different this is to the reaction of Jonah.*
- Verse 5 described the last night of Babylon ... as they had a party (see Daniel 5).
- In 539 BC, Babylon falls to the Medes and the Persians.
- The people of Judah are like grain crushed on the threshing floor.
- Babylon may look like a hope against the Assyrians ... but it is a false hope. *Do we, as a culture put our hopes in false things? What kind of false things?*
- Kingdoms built on deceit and lies ... will always fail. *How tenaciously do I keep my promises?*

Against Edom (verses 11-12)

- The word *Dumah* means silence ... it is an Arabian oasis. The thought is that death has come upon the land and it is very, very still.
- Seir is in the land of Edom ... head city is Petra
- Though morning is coming (a picture of relief) so is the night ... a new empire.
- Verse 12 ... if the people have the wisdom to ask, let them come back to the Lord.
- God does not abandon anyone ... we willingly turn away.

Against Arabia (13-16)

- These people live in the desert between Babylon and Judah.
- Tema is another desert oasis.
- The Assyrians invaded this land twice, in 732 and a second time (under Sargon II) in 725.

- The caravans would have to remain far off the main trade routes to remain undetected ... hidden in the brush (the “forests”).
- the inhabitants of Tema would provide for them
- The picture here is a land so covered with the darkness of war, that people must find their sustenance at the hands of strangers. There is no longer any security.
- Eventually, this land would fail as well. Kedar is another tribe that roamed this land (Gen 25:13 tells us that this tribe descended from Ishmael).
- This land was indeed cast aside as empires rose and fell. By the time of the coming of Jesus, Edom was no more ... remember that Herod The Great was an Idumean (from Edom).

Chapter 22

- We now hear the prophet’s burden against the city of Jerusalem.
- Again we note an odd title ... a valley is not typically where you go to see what is going on. This may be Isaiah’s way of reminding Jerusalem that they too cannot see.
- This first event spoken of here may be:
 - a) The coming of Sennacherib in 701 BC
 - b) The final siege of Jerusalem in 588 BC
 - c) The attack of Sargon on the Philistine city of Ashdod in 711 BC.
 - This was a frightful event to the Jews
 - However, after taking the city of Azekah (another Philistine city), the Assyrians pulled away
- If this third case is correct, then the rejoicing of the Jews was over a short-lived lifting of the threat of invasion. However, the prophet sees the longer, bigger picture – what Babylon would do when they came.
- In verse 4, he weeps bitterly over what he sees will happen in just 125 years. That destruction is what is pictured in verses 5 – 7. It is interesting to note that God’s people have a perspective on life that the rest of the world does not. They understand heart issues and God’s ways unlike the world does.
- In verses 8 – 11, Jerusalem prepares for battle, using all the tools at their disposal, but not crying out to the Lord.
 - a) Weapons in the Palace Of The Forest
 - this place was built by Solomon (1 Kings 7:2-6) and it apparently had become the armory.
 - it was about 150 feet long, 75 feet wide and 40 feet tall. It was built, at the same time as the temple, Solomon’s palace, a house for his wife.
 - Was it a sign that Solomon built some things for his own glory???
 - Ironically, there is NO stated purpose for this building.
 - *What do we build that has no real purpose?*
 - b) The inner city (The City Of David) had holes in its walls.
 - This city described Jerusalem at the time of David. As time moved on, the city grew and “encompassed” the city of David.
 - c) Stored up water in the lower pool
 - In case of siege
 - d) Numbered the houses
 - Find out which ones could be spared so that the others could be torn down for raw materials to build up the walls.

- Note that there is a rejoicing that does NOT please the Lord (v13).
- Verses 15 – 19 describe the city official Shebna, who cares more for how people will view him after death, then he does about what is happening now. This man is investigating how the process of his tomb’s construction is going. He is met by Isaiah. He will never get the chance to use that grave. It is likely that he died as a hostage in Assyria. Isa. 30 and 31 tell us that this man was pro-Egyptian.
- This reminds us of how we are using our power and position. *Is it to accomplish something good?*

- His replacement will be Eliakim. This man will care about the people (be a father to them). He will have authority.
- Note however, that a family's reliance cannot be just on one person. Eventually the responsibility becomes too much to bear and he fails.
- This begs several questions:
 - a) *Do I rely on people too much?*
 - b) *Do I place unrealistic expectations on some people?*
 - c) *Do others have a "right" to fail?*
 - d) *Does the church put too much pressure on the "gifted" few?*
- It is interesting how often the Scriptures pit two characters against each other for comparison: David and Saul, Jesus and Judas, Haman and Mordecai, Eli and Samuel

Chapter 23

- This represents the last "oracle" against the nations. The purpose was to remind Israel to not trust in the nations around them ... those nations would fail. God however, would redeem!
- This city, due to its great sea port, was the commercial centre of the west.
- The mountains run right to the edge of the water here, making land travel difficult but making excellent harbours. The mountains at this time, were also covered with cedar.
- The first few verses detail what might happen as ships return from Tarshish (in Spain). They land on Cyprus heading home, only to discover that the city is destroyed.
- Verses 2 reminds us that Tyre was both a mainland city and an island.

One example of Biblical Prophecy is found in the Book of Ezekiel. Chapter 26 of the Book of Ezekiel claims to have been written in 586 BC, the 11th year of the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah. On nine separate occasions throughout the chapter, the writer claims to have been inspired by God with statements such as "thus says the Lord GOD." The text describes the fall of mainland Tyre to the armies of Nebuchadnezzar the following year. It further describes the events of Alexander the Great's siege against the island fortress of Tyre (a half mile off the coast of mainland Tyre) 253 years later. The chapter describes how the invaders would tear down the ruins of mainland Tyre and throw it into the sea. That they would "scrape her dust from her and leave her as the top of a rock" (v4). That "they will lay your stones, your timber, and your soil in the midst of the water" (v12). "I will make you like the top of a rock; you shall be a place for spreading nets" (v14). Secular history records that Alexander the Great laid siege to the island fortress of Tyre in 332 BC. His army demolished mainland Tyre and threw it into the sea. In their effort to construct a causeway to the island, they scraped even the dust, leaving only bare rock. Historian Phillip Myers in his history textbook, General History for Colleges and High Schools (Boston, Ginn & Co.), writes, "Alexander the Great reduced Tyre to ruins in 332 BC. Tyre recovered in a measure from this blow, but never regained the place she had previously held in the world. The larger part of the site of the once great city is now as bare as the top of a rock -- a place where the fishermen that still frequent the spot spread their nets to dry" (pg.55). The fate of mainland Tyre was accomplished as foretold in the book of Ezekiel.

- It is interesting that this portion of Scripture bears a striking similarity to Revelation 18. Both cities had a passion to revel in their riches and splendor and God brings both to nothing.
- Part of the theme of this chapter is what happens to the child when the parent (city) falls.
- Again, we must ask what part of my happiness and peace rests in the hands of others? How dependent upon the success of others am I? What happens when my hero's fall?

- Nebuchadnezzar attacked Tyre and destroyed its mainland (their siege lasted from 586-573BC).
- Under the Persians (some 70 years later), she regained some of her strength and glory.
- Alexander The Great would attack the island in 322BC.
- The general feeling is that verse 18 must reveal a future understanding of Tyre.

Chapter 24

Chapters 13 – 23 can be seen as the Lord’s reaction to the state of the nations around Israel.

Chapters 24 – 27 now remind us that the Lord does not simply react to us ... He is the Lord of all time and space and everything that happens. All things must eventually return to Him.

- What were local judgments are now enlarged to cover the earth.
- These chapters are marked by much singing. There is a marked contrast between the silenced songs of the ruthless and the joyous songs of the redeemed.

A future destruction upon the earth is described (an eschatological view):

- a) The face of the earth is marred (v1).
- b) People are scattered (v1b).
- c) It affects all aspects of culture (v2). Classes of people disappear.
- d) It is world-wide (v4-5).
- e) All of this is by God ... He is ultimate cause.
- f) It is come due to the choices that we have made (v.5)!!

It is interesting that the language here speaks of laws, statutes and covenants. Yet the scope of the passage is world-wide. It seems that Isaiah agrees with Paul (Romans 1-2) in that there are laws that God write upon all human hearts ... laws that will leave none blameless.

Verses 14-16 represent an interlude of rejoicing in the Lord by those who were oppressed. The next two verses are best understood as Isaiah feeling the pain of living in a culture that had turned from the Lord.

Verses 18-20 carry a quality to them that reminds us of the flood story of Genesis 6. It is interesting that 2Peter agrees with Isaiah about a universal judgment ... like that of Noah’s flood ... will come.

- Note that there is a picture here of the earth “splitting” into pieces. Does this align with the many prophecies stated in the Book Of Revelation describing a mighty earthquake?

Verses 21-23 are best thought of as tribulation/Millennial in nature. Note that the bodies (sun and moon) in the heavens should not be worshipped... they too are subject to the power and will of the Lord. If He ordains it ... they shall not shine their light.

- Verse 22 seems likely to reference the binding of some of the angelic realm during the Millennium and a final judgment at the Great White Throne. (see 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6).
- As a culture, many of us are enamored with the idea that “nature” is somehow god. This is paganism and an affront to the Creator. Yet, it appeals to so many. Why??

Chapter 25

- The first five verses are a song of praise.
- Verse 2 is likely not a reference to any one city ... but cities in general. Human government replaced by a theocracy.
- In verse 10, we read that this mountain that God chose to reside (Jerusalem) looks out to the east to the higher mountains in Moab. These are physically taller, but God makes the claim that the day would come where the mountain of Jerusalem will be taller than any other (Zech 14:10). Other mountains may make the claim today (Mount Olympus in Greece, for example), but not forever.

Chapter 26

- The gates of the city are open to all who choose the path of the Lord (verse 2).
- Verse 3 is a verse that many have committed to memory for its truth regarding God's peace.
- Verse 10 reminds us again that God's mercy is open to all, though many will reject it.
- Verse 17 brings to mind Paul's words in 1Thessalonians 5:3 regarding the destruction that falls as a "woman in travail", as well as the image presented in Rev. 12:2.
- One of the clearest references to resurrection after death in the OT is found here in 26:19.
- Resurrection is the final answer to the problems that haunt humanity. Without a resurrection, the concept of morality has no "teeth". If there is no life beyond the grave, then why does life really matter?
- This chapter can be summarized by remembering five things:
 - 1) Trust God in an active way
 - verse 3
 - the thought here is that our "imagination" must be focused on God
 - What things swing our imagination to focus in other areas? (Phil 4:8)
 - 2) Honor God's name alone (v13)
 - May He receive glory for my achievements
 - May I STRIVE to honor His name.
 - May His character (His NAME) be manifested in what we do
 - 3) Believe God can do what we cannot (v.11)
 - Encourage one another with the evidence of what God is doing!
 - 4) Do NOT let go of the resurrection (v.18)
 - Though God does not always seem to act "now", He WILL act and bring to completion.
 - 5) Focus on the real enemy
 - (see verse 27:1)
 - Remember that all evil is not a result of Satan ... but of sin.
 - Remember also that the sinner is not my enemy and I am not wrestling against my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Chapter 27

- In chapters 24 and 25, there is a declaration of world-wide judgment. The song of chapter 26, people proclaim their trust in the Lord. This chapter is more intimate, celebrating the relationship between the Lord and His people.
- Who is Leviathan?
 - The phrase certainly appears to be eschatological
 - Similar (non-biblical) texts from this era associate this reference with Lotan, is the seven-headed sea serpent or dragon of Ugaritic myths.
 - This would align nicely with our understanding of Revelation.
- Who is the fruitful vineyard?
 - Verse 6 gives us the clue!
- It is interesting that the Lord reminds us that He is NOT angry. He desires to make peace with us!
- Why does God desire briars and thorns? Because He is a God of renovation. In the process of those attacks, His people grow, mature and are transformed. We may be careful to not simply run away from the pain that comes into our lives. Sometimes, God calls us to endure.

- In verse 8, the translation is awkward. The idea seems to be that God will send Judah away into exile, and this will be a light burden in comparison to the heavy blast that He will send elsewhere. The idea seems to be that God has punished Israel with exactly that required to bring her to repentance without destroying her completely. The thought of verse 9 appears to be that the fruit of this event will produce a purification of the people of Israel and bring them back into right relationship with the Lord. That is the whole purpose to the seventy years of captivity coming.

- It is interesting that someone asked me just today, what will it take to bring our culture back to a place of decency. I answered ... only a catastrophic, culture shaking event. Do you think that this is true??

Chalk is a soft, white, porous sedimentary rock, a form of limestone composed of the mineral calcite. Calcite is calcium carbonate or CaCO₃. It forms under reasonably deep marine conditions from the gradual accumulation of minute calcite plates (coccoliths) shed from micro-organisms called coccolithophores. Chalk has greater resistance to weathering and slumping than the clays with which it is usually associated, thus forming tall steep cliffs where chalk ridges meet the sea. Because chalk is porous it can hold a large volume of ground water, providing a natural reservoir that releases water slowly through dry seasons.

- The Lord declares in verse 9 that the false gods are like chalk, crushed to pieces or like a totem pole that is chopped down.

- Verse 11 reminds us that we are responsible for the Light that has been shone towards us by the Lord.

- Verses 12-13 again appear to be "end time" in their nature.

Chapter 28

- The focus move back to Israel and Judah. Chapters 28 and 29 deal with the folly of drunk leaders, 30 and 31 cover the woes of trusting in the foolish plan of seeking Egypt for help and 32 and 33 give the true solution – turn back to the Lord. Ephraim here refers to the northern ten tribes, although much of the material here is presented to Judah, Isaiah's home. These prophecies were probably given between 730 and 705 BC.

- We are now into the reign of Hezekiah. Great reforms were brought into being through him. Some snapshots:

- 1) Hezekiah witnessed the destruction of the northern Kingdom of Israel by Sargon's Assyrians in c. 720 BC.
- 2) He was king of Judah during the invasion and siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib in 701 BC.
- 3) Hezekiah was the son of King Ahaz and Abijah (2 Chronicles 29:1). His mother, Abijah (also called Abi), was a daughter of the high priest Zechariah (2 Kings 18:1-2). Hezekiah was born around c. 741 BCE. He was married to Hephzi-bah. (2 Kings 21:1) He died from natural causes at the age of 54 in c. 687 BCE, and was succeeded by his son Manasseh (2 Kings 20:21).
- 4) According to 2Kings 18-19, He removed high places, smashed sacred stones, broke the bronze snake made by Moses.

- A godly leader changes the tone of a nation, but in the case, not enough to stay the eventual invasion.

- Hezekiah would consider the idea of receiving help from Egypt.

Verses 1-4

- A wreath was a circlet of flowers worn on the heads of champions. Samaria itself was considered a city shaped like a crown on a hill.

- There are two crowns compared – the crown of drunkenness and that of the Lord. Which one fades and which one endures forever?

1Co 9:25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last for ever.

- Verse 4 speaks of the speed at which Samaria will fall.

One must once again face the very real issues surrounding Christianity and the “battle of the bottle”. Has our liberty become license? Does alcohol really serve good purposes in our faith today?

Verses 5 -8

- Verse 6 indicates that God will be a source of strength to the warrior who fights the enemy back to its gates. This is a defensive form of fighting. Fighting the enemy who has attacked. This is not unlike the words used by Christ in Matthew 16:18.

- Note that even the remnant succumb to the power of booze.

- Again, is alcohol the source of my strength?

Why is alcohol so prevalent in our culture?

- a) Alcohol is legal, which means it is available to the majority of adults who wish to purchase it at any number of outlets.
- b) Alcohol is widely advertised and marketed to consumers, and alcohol manufacturers are major sponsors of everything from national sporting, social and cultural events to individuals, local sports clubs and pub competitions.
- c) The consumption of alcohol is embedded within society as a celebratory and social activity. Alcohol is an integral part of sporting functions, birthdays, weddings, funerals and work related functions, and getting drunk is seen as a rite of passage by many young people.
- d) Alcohol, can produce a sense of relaxation, wellbeing and even euphoria in individuals, which enhances their enjoyment of whatever activity they are participating in. This is because alcohol is a central nervous system depressant and directly affects those parts of the brain which regulate emotion, memory, co-ordination and planning. It is rapidly absorbed into the blood stream and affects almost all of the body’s cells and systems. Consequently, for the majority of people who drink alcohol it can act as a disinhibiting agent.

Yet, what a series of problems this causes:

- a) Drinking and driving kill people because we make such poor choices
- b) Damaging to the body
- c) Destroyer of relationships
- d) Financial issues are enlarged
- e) Make such poor decisions

Verses 9-10

- It is interesting to note that the leaders complained that Isaiah was treating them like children because he was giving them simple teachings. Their complaint was that “no one” needed this simple kind of teaching.

- Verse 10 makes it clear that they saw Isaiah’s teachings as unconnected with real life. They did not understand the underlying principles of the Lord. Without the proper world view, the teachings of the Lord appeared foolish.

- Do we go about looking for the latest “titillating” doctrine or new thing?

Verses 11-29

- These verses now mark God’s response to the mockers:

- a) God will speak in a tongue that they do not understand (Babylonian) (v. 11)
 - this may also be a reference to the NT practice of speaking in tongues:

1 Corinthians 14:21 ¶ In the law it is written, By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers will I speak unto this people; and not even thus will they hear me, saith the Lord.
22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to the unbelieving: but prophesying is for a sign, not to the unbelieving, but to them that believe.

- b) God will make the Word unclear to those who reject it (v.13).
 - Not only will they stumble, but they will stumble backwards
- c) They have made a covenant with death such that death would not harm them (14-15)
 - the thought is that through our own strength and wisdom, we will overcome.
- d) The real cornerstone will be Christ (16-17)
 - ONLY in Zion will be found this true stone ... not Egypt
 - He is an unmovable, unchangeable stone (1 Peter 2:6)
 - All is built upon Him and all is measured in comparison to Him.
 - This stone is a stone of testing ... a touchstone

A touchstone is a small tablet of dark stone such as fieldstone, slate, or lydite, used for assaying precious metal alloys. It has a finely grained surface on which soft metals leave a visible trace. Drawing a line with gold on a touchstone will leave a visible trace. Because different alloys of gold have different colours (see gold) the unknown sample can be compared to samples of known purity. This method has been used since ancient times. In modern times, additional tests can be done. The trace will react differently to specific concentrations of nitric acid or aqua regia, thereby identifying the quality of the gold. Thus, 24 carat gold is not affected but 14 carat gold will show chemical activity.

Aside:

Verses 20-12

- The reference here is that the shorted sheet is never enough to cover up the body, no matter what you do. In the same way, Israel could not save herself. The onslaught of the enemy was daily. Mount Perazim is likely a reference to a battle that David had against the Philistines (2Samual 5:20). The second reference was to the battle Joshua had against the five Canaanite kings (Joshua 10:8-14). The Lord ended this battle with hail.

What is Codex Sinaiticus?

Codex Sinaiticus, a manuscript of the Christian Bible written in the middle of the fourth century, contains the earliest complete copy of the Christian New Testament. The hand-written text is in Greek. The New Testament appears in the original vernacular language (koine) and the Old Testament in the version, known as the Septuagint, that was adopted by early Greek-speaking Christians. In the Codex, the text of both the Septuagint and the New Testament has been heavily annotated by a series of early correctors.

The significance of Codex Sinaiticus for the reconstruction of the Christian Bible's original text, the history of the Bible and the history of Western book-making is immense.

The Greek Septuagint in the Codex includes books not found in the Hebrew Bible and regarded in the Protestant tradition as apocryphal, such as 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, 1 & 4 Maccabees, Wisdom and Sirach. Appended to the New Testament are the Epistle of Barnabas and 'The Shepherd' of Hermas.

The name 'Codex Sinaiticus' literally means 'the Sinai Book'. It reflects two important aspects of the manuscript: its form and a very special place in its history.

'Codex' means 'book'. By the time Codex Sinaiticus was written, works of literature were increasingly written on sheets that were folded and bound together in a format that we still use to this day. This book format was steadily replacing the roll format which was more widespread just a century before when texts were written on one side of a series of sheets glued together to make a roll. These rolls were made of animal skin (like most of the Dead Sea Scrolls) or the papyrus plant (commonly used for Greek and Latin literature).

Using the papyrus codex was a distinctive feature of early Christian culture. The pages of Codex Sinaiticus however are of prepared animal skin called parchment. This marks it out as standing at an important transition in book history. Before it we see many examples of Greek and Latin texts on papyrus roll or papyrus codex, but almost no traces of parchment codices. After it, the parchment codex becomes normative.

Codex Sinaiticus is generally dated to the fourth century, and sometimes more precisely to the middle of that century. This is based on study of the handwriting, known as palaeographical analysis. Only one other nearly complete manuscript of the Christian Bible – Codex Vaticanus (kept in the Vatican Library in Rome) – is of a similarly early date. The only manuscripts of Christian scripture that are definitely of an earlier date than Codex Sinaiticus contain small portions of the text of the Bible.

As it survives today, Codex Sinaiticus comprises just over 400 large leaves of prepared animal skin, each of which measures 380mm high by 345mm wide. On these parchment leaves is written around half of the Old Testament and Apocrypha (the Septuagint), the whole of the New Testament, and two early Christian texts not found in modern Bibles. Most of the first part of the manuscript (containing most of the so-called historical books, from Genesis to 1 Chronicles) is now missing and presumed to be lost.

The Septuagint includes books which many Protestant Christian denominations place in the Apocrypha. Those present in the surviving part of the Septuagint in Codex Sinaiticus are 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, 1 & 4 Maccabees, Wisdom and Sirach.

The number of the books in the New Testament in Codex Sinaiticus is the same as that in modern Bibles in the West, but the order is different. The Letter to the Hebrews is placed after Paul's Second Letter to the Thessalonians, and the Acts of the Apostles between the Pastoral and Catholic Epistles.

The two other early Christian texts are an Epistle by an unknown writer claiming to be the Apostle Barnabas, and 'The Shepherd', written by the early second-century Roman writer, Hermas.

The Codex Sinaiticus is named after the Monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai, where it had been preserved until the middle of the nineteenth century.

The Hebrew Old Testament was divided into verses by a Jewish rabbi by the name of Nathan in A.D. 1448. Robert Estienne (Stephanus;) created an alternate numbering in his 1551 edition of the Greek New Testament which was also used in his 1553 publication of the Bible in French. Estienne's system of division was widely adopted, and it is this system which is found in almost all modern bibles.

The first English New Testament to use the verse divisions was a 1557 translation by William Whittingham (c. 1524-1579). The first Bible in English to use both chapters and verses was the Geneva Bible published shortly afterwards in 1560. These verse divisions soon gained acceptance as a standard way to notate verses, and have since been used in nearly all English Bibles and the vast majority of those in other languages.

Last page of the Gospel Of John

- four columns ... keep it neat
- All capitals, no punctuation, no line breaks (Small letters invented in fourth century)
- No chapter markers
- Notations and corrections in the margins
- written on parchment (animal skins)

Codex Sinaiticus

- Codex = book (not a scroll – Christians liked to make books)
- Discovered on Mount Sinai

- 4th Century text
- Earliest complete Greek NT that we have

Codex Vaticanus

- There is some visuals
- Smaller letters and capitals in the titles only (added later)
- Three columns
- Not a complete NT, but same age as Sinaiticus

10th Century (1739)k

- No columns, paragraphs, spaces between words, accents
- notes

P52

- Papyrus 52 (not animal skin)

Chapter 29

- Ariel = altar hearth; a reference perhaps to the false idol worship in Jerusalem.
- Verse 2 seems to suggest that all of Jerusalem would be a kind of offering to the Lord ... a burnt offering.
- In verse 3, God besieges Israel. Where can you hide from God?
- Verses 7-9 depict the enemy nations around Israel longing for her destruction ... yet unsatisfied. Not unlike today! One cannot help but wonder if this is a reference to the Battle Of Armageddon
- it is interesting that Isaiah so often uses the analogy of not being able to see and not being able to hear
- Verse 9: De does not excuse himself on account of its being sealed, but on account of his want of learning – he is too lazy or uninterested to take the time to learn.
- Verses 10-12 speak of the Word of God becoming unintelligible.
- The idea is that God's Word really cannot be comprehended or understood ... even if the people wanted to ... which they do not. This becomes the excuse. Is at any different today, when so many say that "even if the Lord exists, who could really understand His will". This is foolish – If God chooses to reveal His character to us, He finds a way. How sad ... that the uneducated cannot read and the educated will not read.
- Remember that this entire prophecy was given during the "revival" under Hezekiah. The pagan ways were never really forgotten – only buried for a time.
- Verse 14 speaks of the coming Babylon invasion. The strange work of the Lord will leave the people without any wisdom whatsoever.
- Verse 15 reminds us that political intrigues are not hidden from the Lord. The Rob Ford mess that has so many people befuddled today has not escaped Him! Do we ever expect ANYTHING to be hidden from God?
- in the last verses of this chapter, be reminded that the Lord can indeed bring about a radical change to the character of a person and that of a nation. Oh Lord, bring us revival in our hearts and in our land!
- This chapter deals much with pagan worship, in which there is a belief that if we do certain things, that the gods are obliged to respond in a certain way. Do we believe that when we give a very costly gift ... that He owes us? Some people carry a world view called "*continuity*", which holds that the divine and human planes of existence are linked. What happens here is duplicated in the spiritual realm. Therefore, what I do here must be mirrored there. If I do the right things here, then spiritual power is forced to be released. Yet, God is transcendent. He is above all. Acts of worship or tricks of manipulation?

Isaiah 30 - 31

- We see in verse 1 that God really does care about the kind of alliances I make, be it in marriage, business, financial planning, friendships, political. Israel here is looking for a military alliance with Egypt to fend off the Assyrians. On the flip side, will we listen when people of spiritual integrity speak into our lives?
- Zoan should be seen as Tanis (to the north) , Hanes is associated with Heracleopolis Magna (to the south)
- The Negev, as seen in verse 6, is the desert lands of Israel south of Jerusalem. Often these were used as places to herd animals.

- Verse 6 is seen as a very sad image. At one point, God lead Israel through this very land in a pillar of fire and cloud. The people wanted for nothing. Now Israel sends riches, on beasts of burder, back to Egypt to entice them to help. They travel through a land of dangers (lions and snakes).
- In mediaeval Jewish folklore, Rahab (noise, tumult, arrogance) is a mythical sea monster, a dragon of the waters, the "demonic angel of the sea". Rahab represents the primordial abyss, the water-dragon of darkness and chaos, comparable to Leviathan. Rahab later became a particular demon, inhabitant of the sea, especially associated with the Red Sea.

Verses 8 – 11

- Now we have a willful rejection of what is right and good ... what is of the Lord.
 - Because they trust in Egypt, God will allow them to be devastated ... but He will wait for them
 - When they return to God, He will mercifully receive them.
 - Notice here the definition of a false prophet ... he says nice things that we want to hear!
 - At one time, Israel was under the shadow of Egypt as slaves. Now they wish to get under their shadow again, seeing them as deliverers.
- It is interesting that in these last few chapters, we appear to see Israel as they “strike a deal” with others. Do we as Christians, strike deals with God? Jacob did. When he had the dream of God, he did what he had always done ... attempted to strike a deal with God (Gen. 28:20-22). God waits patiently for him - many years. This is good ... because Jacob would run into someone who would out-scheme him (Laban), at least for a time. There will always be someone that can out-scheme us, when we rely on ourselves.

Verses 15 – 18

- Here, we have a beautiful picture of the beginning of the restoration of God’s people.
- To return (a true conversion) and to rest (cease the planning and scheming); remaining quiet and confident; This is what Daniel would put into practice a hundred years later.
- Define a “quiet” spirit. Why is this so important to the Lord?
- Instead, they would be like a mast left on a hill ... the idea here is a loneliness, isolation

Verses 19-33

- The passage is best understood as both local and final in its fulfillment as the language is at least in part apocalyptic.
- There is seen an abundance of food, so that even the animals are given the “rich” food. Water too flows in abundance.
- The destruction will first fall upon Assyria, then Babylon and finally to the Anti-Christ.
- Tophet was located in the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem; Unbelieving Israel offered their children to the god Molech there (2 Kings 16:3). A tophet (a burning) had been prepared.

Chapter 31

- Verse 2 is interesting as the Lord states that He is against those who even help those who do evil

LOS ANGELES (AP) — It looked like a typical Sunday morning at any mega-church. Hundreds packed in for more than an hour of rousing music, an inspirational sermon, a reading and some quiet reflection. The only thing missing was God. Dozens of gatherings dubbed "atheist mega-churches" by supporters and detractors are springing up around the U.S. after finding success in Great Britain earlier this year. The movement fueled by social media and spearheaded by two prominent British comedians is no joke.

On Sunday, the inaugural Sunday Assembly in Los Angeles attracted more than 400 attendees, all bound by their belief in non-belief. Similar gatherings in San Diego, Nashville, New York and other U.S. cities have drawn hundreds of atheists seeking the camaraderie of a congregation without religion or ritual. The founders, British duo Sanderson Jones and Pippa Evans, are currently on a tongue-in-cheek "40 Dates, 40 Nights" tour around the U.S. and Australia to drum up donations and help launch dozens of Sunday Assemblies. They hope to raise more than \$800,000 that will help atheists launch their pop-up congregations around the world.

They don't bash believers but want to find a new way to meet likeminded people, engage in the community and make their presence more visible in a landscape dominated by faith. Jones got the first inkling for the idea while leaving a Christmas carol concert six years ago. "There was so much about it that I loved, but it's a shame because at the heart of it, it's something I don't believe in," Jones said. "If you think about church, there's very little that's bad. It's singing awesome songs, hearing interesting talks, thinking about improving yourself and helping other people — and doing that in a community with wonderful relationships. What part of that is not to like?"

The movement dovetails with new studies showing an increasing number of Americans are drifting from any religious affiliation. The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life released a study last year that found 20 percent of Americans say they have no religious affiliation, an increase from 15 percent in the last five years. Pew researchers stressed, however, that the category also encompassed majorities of people who said they believed in God but had no ties with organized religion and people who consider themselves "spiritual" but not "religious."

Sunday Assembly — whose motto is Live Better, Help Often, Wonder More — taps into that universe of people who left their faith but now miss the community church provided, said Phil Zuckerman, a professor of secular studies at Pitzer College in Claremont. It also plays into a feeling among some atheists that they should make themselves more visible. For example, last December, an atheist in Santa Monica created an uproar — and triggered a lawsuit — when he set up a godless display amid Christian nativity scenes that were part of a beloved, decades-old tradition. "In the U.S., there's a little bit of a feeling that if you're not religious, you're not patriotic. I think a lot of secular people say, 'Hey, wait a minute. We are charitable, we are good people, we're good parents and we are just as good citizens as you and we're going to start a church to prove it,'" said Zuckerman. "It's still a minority, but there's enough of them now."

That impulse, however, has raised the ire of those who have spent years pushing back against the idea that atheism itself is a religion. "The idea that you're building an entire organization based on what you don't believe, to me, sounds like an offense against sensibility," said Michael Luciano, a self-described atheist who was raised Roman Catholic but left when he became disillusioned.

"There's something not OK with appropriating all of this religious language, imagery and ritual for atheism." That sentiment didn't seem to detract from the excitement Sunday at the inaugural meeting in Los Angeles. Hundreds of atheists and atheist-curious packed into a Hollywood auditorium for a boisterous service filled with live music, moments of reflection and an "inspirational talk," and some stand-up comedy by Jones, the movement's co-founder.

During the service, attendees stomped their feet, clapped their hands and cheered as Jones and Evans led the group through rousing renditions of "Lean on Me," "Here Comes the Sun" and other hits that took the place of gospel songs. Congregants dissolved into laughter at a get-to-know-you game that involved clapping and slapping the hands of the person next to them and applauded as members of the audience spoke about community service projects they had started in LA.

At the end, volunteers passed cardboard boxes for donations as attendees mingled over coffee and pastries and children played on the floor. For atheist Elijah Senn, the morning was perfect.

"I think the image that we have put forward in a lot of ways has been a scary, mean, we want to tear down the walls, we want to do destructive things kind of image is what a lot of people have of us," he said. "I'm really excited to be able to come together and show that it's not about destruction. It's about making things and making things better."

- note that in verse 3, both the helper and the helped person fall when the trust is misplaced.
- Verse 5 is a clear reminder back to the Passover.
- What weapons do we trust in today? Back then, it was the horse and chariot.
 - there was often a driver, an archer and a spearman in horse drawn chariots.

Chapter 32

Verses 1-8

- Having been previously delivered, Israel now knows a renewal of all things (Millennium)
- This passage deals with the quality of government available under the leadership of the Messiah.

Verses 9-13

- Here, those who are carefree and trusting in their surroundings are chastened. They give no thought to their spiritual condition nor to what is going on around them.
- The year of time here refers to the coming of Sennacherib. Although Jerusalem would be spared, the towns around would not.
- Isaiah calls these women to act in the opposite way ... to humbly remember what scorn they would feel when the enemy approaches.

Verses 14-20

- Again, God reminds that a restitution of all things will come.

- Perhaps these verses give a better way to interpret the climatic changes happening today. Everyone is looking for someone to blame. I would suggest that the Lord uses events such as these to remind us of a few things:

- a) We humans are not the centre of the universe. We really do not control everything.
- b) Humility for the good things we have is always a good response
- c) An ache in our hearts over a world turned against the heart of God should be our response

Chapter 33

- It appears that these first sixteen verses deal with the woe against Assyria, the destroyer not yet destroyed.
 - The betrayal in verse 2 may have a local fulfillment when Sennacherib accepts Hezekiah's money to break off their attack and then reneges on the agreement (See 2Kings 18:13-16). Just because you are the only power standing at the moment, does not make it right to break agreements. God would hold them to account. Does God hold us to account for our agreements?
 - Verse 3 does seem to be a picture of the quickness Sennacherib leaves Jerusalem with.
 - Verse 8 indicates that fear of the enemy was so high, that no one could travel.
 - No one is respected ... It is fully expected that nations will act according to their nature ... in sinful ways that no one can respect.
 - Verse 9: Lebanon was known for its lush vegetation and now it withers. Sharon laid along the coast of the Mediterranean and was also known for its lushness. The Arabah was the deep valley that extended from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea and beyond to the Gulf Of Aqaba. The Jordan flowed through it. Carmel was known for its lush vegetation and Bashan was known for its oaks.
 - In verse 11, Isaiah addresses the Assyrians. Their plans will fail. Notice that their breath is spoken of as fire. This is not unlike what we read of the two Witnesses in the book of Revelation, where they too will speak with "fire".
- "Burned to lime": When limestone is crushed and burned, it leaves behind calcium oxide (CaO) – "quicklime," "burnt lime" or "unslaked lime." Then, when combined with water – hydrated or "slaked" -- the quicklime became calcium hydroxide or Ca(OH)₂, and could be put to many uses, including mortar/cement.

- As a side note, it is interesting to see that God speaks poorly of our tendency to build “world empires”. We first see this at the Tower Of Babel and then through the Time Of The Gentiles, where each successive world empire comes, starts with a tendency towards goodness, but then falls into corruption. Is it possible that God never intended for us to live in a human organized “one world government” because of the surety that it would fall into corruption and oppression. Government cannot exist unless righteousness rules supreme.
- Verses 14-16 describe again the quality of righteousness – in other words, people made righteous by God will exhibit these qualities:
 - a) Walks (lives out) the righteousness of the Lord
 - b) Who speaks in honesty
 - c) Refuses gain that comes from ungodly sources ... even despises the thought of ill-gotten gain.
 - d) Will not accept any form of bribe
 - e) Refuses to listen to wickedness
 - f) Refuses to watch the wickedness
- I think that the reference here is to Israel. She has just been compared to a tent (verse 20), then secure. But now, she is like ship whose rigging is loose and is in danger of floundering. However, the Lord will sustain her.

Chapter 34: Armageddon

- These next two chapters offer a fitting end to the last 33 chapters of the book.
- Note that the character of these verses indicate events on a world scale.
- Is verse 1 an invitation to Armageddon?
- In verse 4, stars may very well reference political and/or angelic beings.
- The language of verse 4 is certainly repeated in the Book of Revelation
- In verses 6-7, the people of the world have rejected God’s sacrifice and so have become a sacrifice of themselves for their sins.
- Edom here is singled out as a representation of all the nations of the earth. Why?
 - a) Edom opposed God’s plan at their entry into the promised land (Numbers 20:14-21)
 - b) Psalm 60:9, Edom is used as a representation
 - c) Edom would assist Babylon in Judah’s capture (Ps. 137:7, Obad. 10-14)
 - d) Decedents are from Esau, seen again as the one who rejected the promises of God.
 - e) In verses 9-10, there is imagery used of Sodom and Gomorrah, also located in Edom.
- Verse 8 is interesting in that it makes no distinction between a day and a year
- May these verses remind us to never trust in the creature ... rather the Creator!
- The words “chaos” and “desolation” in verse 11 are found in Genesis 1:2
- Verse 16 calls us to read the words of the prophecy to see if it comes to pass.
- “None of these will be missing” ... is a phrase that simply means that all the animals just mentioned will be there. There will truly exist the desolation that was predicted.

Chapter 35

- Life in the Kingdom to come. This chapter is the mirror image of that last – the blessing of God’s kingdom.
- Verses 3-4 are again to remind us of the purpose of prophecy ... to ultimately encourage God’s people.
- Again remember that in the last chapter we had deserts ... here God turns deserts to gardens! Note the reference AGAIN to Carmel, Sharon and Lebanon.
- Verses 5-7 speak of restoration of that which was lost.
- The highway called The Way Of Holiness
 - Easy to travel, unlike travel in Judah then (think of an American Interstate highway).
 - Clear access to God’s presence that never can be blocked.

Chapter 36: The Conclusion Of The Assyrians Empire

- We have now reached a section of Isaiah that is narrative in nature.
- One of the major questions asked in the book of Isaiah is this: Should we put our trust in nations or in God? Many years before, Ahaz had been asked this question and he failed the test (Isa. 7-12). Chapters 13 – 35 describe WHY this is wrong. All nations will fail and fall. God will not. Now Sennacherib has attacked (28-35) and the time is now 701 BC. The same is question will be asked again!
- Verses 1-3 show us the same spot that Ahaz had stood 34-35 years before when Aram had attacked (see Isaiah 7). There he was asked to trust that Aram's armies would fail. He did not and turned to Assyria for help. Assyria came and would devastate much of Israel before stopping at the gates of Jerusalem. Now it is Hezekiah's turn. In the same place, he is asked to trust God.
- Isaiah's prophecy that Assyria would flood the land right up to its neck (Isa. 8:7-8) was now coming true
- The field commander was the third highest ranking office within the armies of the Assyrians.
- Note that verse 1 tells us that all the walled cities of Israel had fallen except Lachish and Jerusalem.
- Now the commander hammers every possible argument on which Israel can trust
 - A) Verse 4 says that the enemy has the Great King
 - B) Verse 5 says that they have no military might
 - C) Verse 6 claims that Egypt offers no support
 - D) Verse 7 states that God has abandoned them
 - The world will never understand God
 - E) Verse 10 makes that claim that Sennacherib is under compulsion from the Lord
 - F) Verse 12 makes it clear what a siege will lead to
 - G) Verse 14 reminds the Jews that Hezekiah cannot be trusted
 - H) Verse 18 claims that no god could stand against him
- The commander is rude, not even addressing the king in an official capacity.
- Note the language of intimidation. Hezekiah refuses to even allow them to speak (verse 21)
- Note the lies and the mocking.
- Note that the Field Commander (Rabshakeh) bypasses the three envoys of Israel and speak directly to the king.
- The offer to take horses may have appeared tempting (Isa. 30:16) as they felt that they could escape that way.
- In verse 14, the people are told that Sennacherib was the King, the Lord of Hosts. However, Isaiah had already written about who the true Lord of Hosts was. Now the people would also have to choose.
- Note the promise in verse 16 ... that holds only until verse 17! What awful promises the enemy has!
- Sargon had occupied the Syrian city of Hamath in 720 and Tiglath-pileser had occupied Arpad in 740BC.

Chapter 37

- Hezekiah's response has not been perfect:

2Kings 18: 14 So Hezekiah king of Judah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: "I have done wrong. Withdraw from me, and I will pay whatever you demand of me." The king of Assyria exacted from Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.

15 So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the temple of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace.

16 At this time Hezekiah king of Judah stripped off the gold with which he had covered the doors and doorposts of the temple of the LORD, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

- Now, Hezekiah immediately goes into the temple to worship and inquire of the Lord. There is no waiting period. Perhaps there is a lesson there for all of us. When issues strike, will I go immediately to the Lord?
- He furthers goes to the Word Of God for direction through the mediation of the prophet.
- the metaphor given is that of a baby in a breached position; the mother is in anguish but the baby cannot be born.

- Though it may appear that Hezekiah is powerless against the Assyrian King, the truth is that the Assyrian King is powerless against God. The enemy of our souls would have us to believe otherwise.
- In verse 8, Lachish has now fallen.
- Libnah was a city of refuge.
- The Assyrians do not want to be in the position of the Egyptians in front of them and the Jews behind.
- In verses 10-13, Sennacherib now addresses Hezekiah. His purpose is different. He does not want to destroy the people's confidence in Hezekiah, rather Hezekiah's confidence in God.
- It is interesting to note that in Hezekiah's prayer, he asks God to both "see" and "hear" the afflictions of Israel. This is the same charge that the Lord lays upon the people who neither see nor hear Him!
- Verse 21 is interesting in that answers BECAUSE Hezekiah has prayed!

Chapter 38 and 39: Hezekiah's Sickness

Chapter 38 seems to be pulled out of the historical flow of time and occurs before the siege with Sennacherib (see 38:6). It was done so that these last two chapters form a transition from the Assyrian war to the coming Babylonian war.

- It may also be a reminder to us that, although some thought so, Hezekiah was NOT the predicted coming One who was a great leader and who deliver the people from their enemies. He was not the coming Messiah. Chapters 40 through 66 would describe THAT one.

Hezekiah was about 39 when he received this word from Isaiah that he would die. Interestingly, he does not ask to be healed, but it is clear that as he prays to the Lord, he is reminding Him that he has fulfilled the conditions of long life (see Psalm 34:11-14).

- At this time, Hezekiah apparently had no heir and the David line of kings would be broken. We know this because at Hezekiah's death, Manasseh was only 12 years old.

- Like his father Ahaz before him, Hezekiah is offered a sign. God apparently moves the sun backwards.

- Verse 22 explains the "sign". As the shadow goes up and down the stairs, Hezekiah would one day go up and down the stairs to the temple.

- Note that there was no sin in Hezekiah's life that led to this illness.

- Another thought here ... note that the Jews did not have a well-established theology of life after death!

- This would not be fleshed out until the New Testament as Christ revealed it.

- Finally, this chapter gives us a difficult question to answer ... does God change His mind?

- There is something very dangerous about Hezekiah and his receiving of these Babylonians. Babylon leaders were trying to instigate a rebellion against Assyria. Hezekiah takes this time to make himself look good and therefore minimizes what the Lord has done. 2Chro. 32:31 suggests that this was a testing from the Lord.

- Hezekiah's response (39:8) is very shortsighted. His son Manasseh was extremely pagan. His grandson Josiah leads the land in great revival. After his death, his great grandson Jehoiakim again reverts to paganism.

ISAIAH PART II: The Messiah And Messianic Reign

Chapter 40

- For 39 chapters, we have seen darkness, and how misplaced politics and religion can cripple a nation.

- Our focus will now be on God' perfect ideal ... what it should be and what it will be!

- Verse 2 indicates that the time of the suffering of the Jews is at an end. This must be the end of the Time Of The Gentiles.

- Sin has been paid for through Christ.

- Verses 3-5 can be linked to Mal. 3:1, which speaks of a messenger and also Matt 3:3, which makes it clear that this reference is to John the baptizer. What was his way of preparedness? Repentance. In other words, seeing ourselves as God sees us and understanding that we are broken and in need of a Savior. To those who understood John's message, the receiving of Jesus was an easy accomplishment.
- verse 4 again speaks of all impediments to coming to the Lord are removed. It was a picture of foot soldiers who would go before a king to repair bridges and ensure that nothing would hinder the king's travel.
- Verses 6-8: Humans fail and fade away but God's promise endures. There is virtually nothing of permanence in what human beings accomplish .. except that done in and for the Body.
- In verses 1-11, Isaiah deals with the issue of whether or not God has the desire to set His people free from their sin. Now Isaiah will deal with the question of whether He is powerful enough to accomplish this.
- Do we ever feel that God is powerless to help us when we fall into persecution or travail? So would the Jews when Babylon came. There really is little evidence in human history of a people returning to their home land after such a captivity.
- It is interesting that the creation worldview is of prime importance here. Isaiah builds his argument on the omnipotence of God on His ability to create *ex nihilo*. God originated the world but He is not part of it.
- without Divine Creation:
 - a) If matter precedes spirit, then our nature is accidental and without significance
 - b) If all things happened by chance, then life is without meaning and purpose.
 - there is nothing beyond death
 - c) There is no thing as good and evil, and no overriding ethic.
 - d) Our lives are nothing more than deterministic evolution
 - we are at the mercy of our culture, upbringing, genes
- Verse 19 reminds us that though an idol may be beautiful, it is powerless. Remember that God should not be equated with beauty! Remember John's reaction to his vision of the harlot in Revelation 17:6.
- To "wait on God" is not simply to wait for Him passively, but to live in such a way as to expect and believe that He will do what He has promised to do.
- Transcendence: God is seen to be outside of and beyond creation ... and yet ...
- Immanence: God seeks to intersect His presence into the lives of His people
- Can the God of the infinitely good enter into the world of evil?
- He must have both the power to be above our circumstances (i.e. not powerless) and the desire to intervene (i.e. love). The Bible insists both positions are true (unlike Process Theology).

*A Quick Primer On Process Theology (quote from Roger Olsen,
<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rogereolson/2013/12/why-i-am-not-a-process-theologian/>)*

First, process theology assumes that to be is to be in relation. It is a relational, organic worldview.

Second, process theology avers that God is not an exception to basic ontological rules but is their chief exemplification.

Third, process theology asserts that omnipotence is a theological mistake; God is not and cannot be omnipotent. God's only power is the power of influence (persuasion).

Fourth, process theology is a form of theistic naturalism; it does not have room for the supernatural or for divine interventions (miracles).

Fifth, process theology denies creatio ex nihilo, creation out of nothing, and affirms classical panentheism—God and the world are mutually interdependent. There is a sense in which God is dependent on the world (beyond self-limitation).

Sixth, process theology refers to God as “dipolar”—having two “poles” or “natures”—one primordial and one consequent. God’s primordial pole is potential only and consists of ideals. God’s consequent pole is actual and consists of God’s experience. The world contributes experience to God. God has no primordial experience. (Theologian Austin Farrer referred to this as process theology’s lack of “prior actuality in God.”)

Seventh, process theology regards God as radically temporal; God learns as history unfolds and how history unfolds is ultimately up to creatures (actual occasions). (“God proposes but man disposes.”)

Eighth, process theology reduces God’s creative activity to bringing about order and harmony insofar as possible. God is not the actual creator of the world or any actual occasion (the basic building blocks of reality). God can only create, however, with creaturely cooperation.

Ninth, process theology views Jesus Christ as different in degree but not in kind from other creatures. His “divinity” consists of his embodying the self-expressive activity of God (“Logos”) which is “creative transformation.” He is not God incarnate in any absolutely unique sense that no other creature could be.

Tenth, process theology denies any guaranteed ultimate victory of God or good over evil. The future is “more of the same” so far as we know. Ultimately, that is up to us, not God. God always does God’s best, but he cannot guarantee anything.

- God still changes circumstance!

Chapter 41

- Verses 1-5 use a form of writing in which a “trial” is perceived ... this time between the Lord and the nations. They are called to judge who is the real God. The reference to the east here in verse 2 is a reasonably clear reference to Cyrus the Great of Persia (559-530BC)

Cyrus The Great (Emperor for 29 years)

- At its height, the Persian empire was the largest known to humanity
- He also proclaimed what has been identified by scholars and archaeologists to be the oldest known declaration of human rights, which was transcribed onto the Cyrus Cylinder sometime between 539 and 530 BC.

- Cyrus built his empire by conquering first the Median Empire, then the Lydian Empire and eventually the Neo-Babylonian Empire.

Cyrus the Great respected the customs and religions of the lands he conquered.

- He died in battle and was succeeded by his son, Cambyses II.

- Remember that any goodness we have within ... comes from the Lord.

- Note that the Lord has made claim here that Cyrus was drawn by Him!

- Remember ... Babylon was the residing empire when this was written!!

- Verses 6-7 ... How to build a god! Is this the best that the nations of the world can come up with when faced with such a question from the Lord??

Verses 8-13: Israel is the Lord’s servant!

- This is a reminder (which they would need in the days to come) that the Father had not abandoned them!

- It is a beautiful picture that God grants here – to provide words of comfort to the people before they need them!

- Verses 14-16, Israel the threshing sledge
- During the captivity, Israel would describe themselves as “worms” but that is not how the Lord sees them.
- Here is the first mention of the word “redeemer” in Isaiah but it will occur many more times in the latter portions of this book.
- In verses 17-20, we have the flowering of the desert
- The people, as they returned from the Babylonian captivity, would find no water, much destruction and little hope. Isaiah here reminds them that God can and will make the desert bloom again.
- The list of trees given do not provide fruit ... they provide shade.
- Fear is the “activity killer”!
- In verses 21-29, we are again reminded to not trust in the false god – they are nothing.
- This is the second trial speech (as at the beginning of the chapter).
- God challenges the idols directly to speak of the past (should be easy) or speak of the future (more difficult).
- Verse 23 challenges them to do something either good or bad ... just do *something*.
- Verse 24 implies their silence.
- God makes the claim that one from the east would come (in this case, Cyrus). He would also be strong to the north of Babylon (as he defeats the Medes).
- Understand this ... those that would choose to remove the miraculous from the Scriptures (i.e, Thomas Jefferson), remove the hope that defeats fear within us – The hope that there is more to life than what can be measured and understood.
- Verse 25 is a challenge. At no time to Cyrus claim to be a follower of Yahweh. However, in Ezra 1:2, he uses the name of Yahweh as part of a declaration and invitation for the Jews to return to their homeland. This is likely the reference. It may be equally interpreted as to “call by means of God’s name”.

Chapter 42

- Here begins a Messianic passage describing the work of Christ – See Matthew 12:15-21
- He is marked by the presence of the Spirit of God. This was the sign that John the Baptizer was told to look for. (John 1:32-34)
- He will be a man with an unassuming ministry (so far), but would stand for justice. Not just for the Jews but for all. Remember that in Luke 4, Jesus’ own people attacked Him not because He made the claim to be the Messiah, but because He brought healing to the WORLD!
- Perhaps there is a model for us to consider here. Yes, we are called always to testify to who God is, but it is so often in the quiet, one on one times that we are most profoundly used. All God’s work is not in the big and glamorous.
- According to verse 3, His mission was NOT to destroy.
- Note that in verse 6, Christ will be a covenant (He Himself ... a new covenant!)
- Verse 7 is the fruit of sin. Jesus would quote these verses in Acts 26:17-18.
- God will not share His glory with any (v.8). There is no place for idolatry in the worship of our God.
- In verse 9, the “former things” are those prophetic statements that the Lord has already made that have come to pass.
- From 42:10-17, we have a picture of God’s future deliverance of Israel from Babylon through Cyrus
- This song of praise is typified in the return of Israel from captivity but it is worldwide and likely pictures the establishment of God’s future kingdom.

Kedar, anciently, referred to the nomadic peoples who dwelt in the regions of the Negev desert and the Arabian peninsula. And, the inhabitants of Sela—Sela means “rock”—it’s also a place, anciently—implies that there are people who are coming, who are responding to

the Servant's call to repent and return to the covenant with God, even from those places where one would not necessarily expect because they were also non-Israelite peoples. But those names, Kedar and Sela, could equally be code names for a modern re-enactment of an ancient even. They could be talking of people in outlying places, who were not pure Israelites who also qualify for the Lord's redemption. "And cry out from the tops of the mountains"--So, from both the desert and the mountains they are being saved.

- In verse 14, the Lord states that He has held back and not acted. This is not a sign of indifference or impotency, but rather control. He waits while His plans are enacted and then He moves. Do we ever misunderstand God's patience and call it indifference?
- Verses 14 and 15 indicate an upheaval of nature. Waters dry up and mountains and hills laid waste, along with vegetation being stripped away. This is not unlike what we read about in Revelation.
- The purpose of this seems two fold ... God draws back to Himself the "blind" and becomes their God, and separates out those who follow idols.
- Verse 18 is an ironic statement. Israel was to call God's servant (Christ) blind and deaf when in reality, it was her that was blind and deaf to the Lord.
- From 20 through 22, God pictures Israel as having been taken captive spiritually as well as physically.

Chapter 43

- So often, God creates out of nothing. He has called into existence the universe, out of nothing He created the nation of Israel, out of nothing He created the church and out of "nothing" will He create the kingdom to come.
- Fear is a killer of all good things in Christ.

In C S Lewis' 'Narnia Chronicle' The Silver Chair, Jill Pole is whisked away from her boarding school in England by magic. She is very thirsty, and begins to search for water. Hearing a stream, she starts to approach: but sees an enormous lion blocking her path, directly between herself and the stream:

It lay with its head raised and its two fore-paws out in front of it. She knew at once that it had seen her, for its eyes looked straight into hers for a moment and then turned away -- as if it knew her quite well and didn't think much of her. "If I run away, it'll be after me in a moment," thought Jill. "And if I go on, I shall run straight into its mouth." Anyway, she couldn't have moved if she had tried, and she couldn't take her eyes off it. How long this lasted, she could not be sure; it seemed like hours. And the thirst became so bad that she almost felt she would not mind being eaten by the lion if only she could be sure of getting a mouthful of water first.

"If you are thirsty, you may drink." . . . For a second she stared here and there, wondering who had spoken. Then the voice said again, "If you are thirsty, come and drink," and . . . [she] realised that it was the lion speaking. Anyway, she had seen its lips move this time, and the voice was not like a man's. It was deeper, wilder, and stronger; a sort of heavy, golden voice. It did not make her any less frightened than she had been before, but it made her frightened in rather a different way.

"Are you not thirsty?" said the Lion.

"I'm dying of thirst," said Jill.

"Then drink," said the Lion.

"May I -- could I -- would you mind going away while I do?" said Jill.

The Lion answered this only by a look and a very low growl. And as Jill gazed at its motionless bulk, she realised that she might as well have asked the whole mountain to move aside for her convenience. The delicious rippling noise of the stream was driving her nearly frantic.

"Will you promise not to -- do anything to me, if I do come?" said Jill.

"I make no promise," said the Lion.

Jill was so thirsty now that, without noticing it, she had come a step closer.

"Do you eat girls?" she said.

"I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms," said the Lion. It didn't say it as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it.

"I daren't come and drink," said Jill. "Then you will die of thirst," said the Lion.

"Oh dear!" said Jill, coming another step nearer. "I suppose I must go and look for another stream then."

"There is no other stream," said the Lion.

It never occurred to Jill to disbelieve the Lion -- no one who had seen his stern face could do that -- and her mind suddenly made itself up. It was the worst thing she had ever had to do, but she went forward to the stream, knelt down, and began scooping up water in her hand. It was the coldest, most refreshing water she had ever tasted...

- Why does fear bind us so badly??
- It is possible that the various references in verse 2 are to remind us of Israel's victories?
 - a) Passing through the waters The Red Sea or the Flood
 - b) Passing through rivers Crossing the Jordan to claim the Promised land
 - c) Through the fire General fires of judgment
- He has protected before and He will continue to do so.
- Many have viewed verse 3 as an allowance of the Lord that because Persia allows Israel to return, that they would be allowed to conquer Egypt, Ethiopia and Arabia. God has often used the picture of substitution to describe His work.
- In verse 6, we are told that God gathers His people from the ends of the earth. We see this:
 - a) When He gathers them from Egypt (Exodus)
 - b) When He gathers them from Persia
 - c) When He gathered them in 1948
 - d) When He gathers them in Matthew 25
- Verses 22-24: God charges that His ways are not burdensome for His people
 - Note that these animals are, not in themselves, what God desires. He desires the faith of the people to believe in the efficacious work God performs on behalf of their faith. The people display their trust and faith in God through their actions.

Chapter 44

- Verse 2 ... Jeshurun ... literally "Upright One", typically a term of endearment.
- Verse 3, a promise for Pentecost. The work of the Spirit is to enable us to do what we cannot do alone.
- Note that verse 6 is a description of Jehovah God mirrored by Christ in Revelation 1:17
- Verse 8 ... again a reference to the Lord as a Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4, Romans 9:33, Daniel 2:45)
- Why is this such a power metaphor describing the characteristics of the Lord?
- Followers and builders of idols:
 - a) Treasure the worthless (verse 9)
 - for where your treasure is, so will your heart be also
 - \$180.00 ripped "boyfriend" jeans (recent article in the Star Phoenix re: fashion)
 - b) Blind to truth, though they speak up for them (verse 9). Why defend the indefensible?
 - c) Profit nothing (v.10)
 - d) Follow that made in their own image (v12-13)
 - e) Must work very hard to "create" their own god, when the Lord is so very easy to find.
 - f) Forged in ignorance (v19)
- In Acts 19:23-40, a prime example of this occurs:
 - a) Demetrius was a silver smith, creating copies of Diana
 - b) Ephesus was a huge city whose economy was based on this temple worship
 - c) A huge banking centre, because of the security of Diana
- Remember, that Jesus is not just another god to be added to the pantheon of others. When we preach and live Jesus, there are implications to truth and they may be financial.

- Verse 1 - why are the gods shaped in the image of humanity.
- Verse 14 – He cuts trees ... God creates trees
- Verse 20 – May the Lord grant us discernment to understand truth and lies.
- Verse 21 again reminds us the God did not form us out of material already made He made us from nothing.
- By the way ... as a secondary point ... just because a person believes something passionately, does not make it good or right ... or beneficial.
- As a tertiary point, it is clear that there is a strong current today among the young to throw away anything that smack of “old fashioned” or “out of touch”. This is one of the strongest lies of the enemy. We cannot learn from the future. It has nothing to say. We can, however, learn tremendously from the past. Do not be hasty to buy into the cultural norm to discard the past as useless or a failed experiment. For indeed, it is the status of the future that is always experimental ... not the past.

Chapter 45

- Note that although Cyrus is called God’s anointed, He was still a pagan. To be used of God doesn’t require us to be close to Him. It is interesting that God tries to woo this powerful leader to Himself through revelation. One wonders if God still does this today?
- Verse 3 speaks of “treasures of darkness” to simply mean that Cyrus would operate as if secretly or quickly, unencumbered and would find treasures otherwise hidden.
- Verse 4 is clear that Cyrus did not acknowledge God.
- Why do you think that the Lord repeats the statement “I am the Lord” four times so quickly (44:24, 45:3, 5, 6)? Remember that this is literally God’s name being proclaimed here and could be rendered as: “I Am Yahweh” or “I cause everything to be” i.e. the origin, the basis for all thing.
- In verses 9- 13, God answers the hypothetical challenge that some might charge Him with that it would be not right to use a pagan as a vessel to do His will. God answers that it is perfectly within His right. Consider Romans 14:1-10 for a New Testament treatment of this same subject. Is it really up to us to judge how God chooses to use a fellow Christian?
- The harshness of these words can sometimes take us aback, like the words shared by Christ towards the Pharisees. It may very well be that those that have the potential for greatness in God, also have the greatest capacity to fall away (become lazy, singularly academic, harsh). To these, God speaks loudly to get their attention. It is interesting to note that Jesus says almost nothing to the Sadducees.
- The Sabean’s in verse 14 were those that lived in the Arabian Peninsula
- Why might God “hide Himself”? (John 20:29) Is sight always the best builder of trust? (Luke 16:29-31). Remember that a “Lazarus” that rose from the grave was no proof to the Jews who chose not to believe.

Chapter 46

- Gods of Babylon: Bel and Nebo
- Nebo was a god of wisdom and writing; Bel was the title used for Marduk (associated with water, vegetation, judgment, and magic). These gods are pictured as stooping down.
- It is ironic that the idols are burdens for the carrier and not “a light burden, as Jesus mentions (Math. 11:28).
- Here, the idols are seen as being defeated by Jehovah God ... in a figurative sense, being “carried away” in a most humiliating fashion.
- This will be God’s final appeal to those that make and trust in idols. Who will the people turn to now?
- Verse 4 contrasts verse 1 ... who will carry who? Do you remember times that God carried you??

Chapter 47

- Verse 2: Babylon, the city would be like a queen who was de-throned and now sat in the dust with two mill stones in her hands, grinding wheat. This was a job of the slave, normally.

- Verse 6: Just because the Lord grants us a victory, we are not to lord it over others. He expected the Babylonians to show mercy in victory.
- Verse 7 is interesting. Every culture believes that what IS now, will endure forever (2Peter 3:1-5).
- How might we as Christian behave differently, if we believed that nothing of the kingdoms of this world endures forever?
- Life is NOT just a series of cycles; grow up, grow old and pass away. God chooses to intervene ... He causes events that transcends our existence.
- Verse 8 is a play on the name of God ... the great I AM.
- Verse 9; though we no longer trust in conjuring, do we place too much faith in science and medicine and technology? Science cannot answer the “why” questions. Yes, we have greater technology, but it is arguable that our lives are always better because of it.
- (Verse 10) How might wisdom and knowledge mislead us? What if our wisdom is not founded in truth? Can distortion influence knowledge? Remember that it is a core tenant of Christianity that human beings are tainted in their heart and unable to discern reality properly.
- Verse 13 reminds me of the plethora of expert reports we receive today. Everyone has a different outcome to their “studies”. Must we “follow the money”?

Chapter 48

- Are they from the house of Jacob ... or of Israel? From Judah ... those whose mouths should praise!
- Verse 10: ... not as silver. In other words, if silver were refined, then its purity would result. Although God would refine the people, they would not be completely pure.
- Cyrus is the man mentioned in verse 14 and 15.
- There truly is no peace for those who choose to set their hearts on wicked desires.

Chapter 49

- I would suggest that this chapter is very messianic in nature. The speaker here is not Isaiah but the Lord Jesus Christ. You will note that Cyrus and Babylon are now conspicuous by their absence. We are talking now of a different form of bondage ... a bondage to sin. What is the Lord’s answer? THE Redeemer. My REAL problem is not just my circumstances ... it is my salvation, redemption and transformation.
- Verse 3 refers to this redeemer as Israel. Why? This seems to be a figure of speech used to describe either the “ideal” Israel or One who would come FROM Israel. This is clear by verse 5 as this individual will be used to bring Israel back to God. Israel cannot bring Israel to God!
- Islands and nations are representative of the whole of the earth.
 - Verse 1: Pre-incarnate
 - Verse 2: Proclaimer of Truth (Isa. 1:20, Hebrews 4:12, Revelation 19:15)
He is hidden (as an arrow) until ready to be revealed!
 - Verse 3: A servant

Mr 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Mr 9:35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."

- See Exodus 21:1-11 for a picture of true servanthood
- Did the Lord Jesus ever struggle (verse 4) with His own effectiveness? (John 6:67)
- Did Paul (2Corintians 1:3-9)?
- Dealing with disappointment (verse 4-6)
 - a) What is due to me comes from the Lord ... not my circumstances
 - b) God often has larger plans in mind – though the Jews would reject, the Gentile would not
 - c) His time table is different than mine ... He WILL redeem the Jews as well.
- Why does God not shelter us from all disappointments??

- Being a servant to the Lord does limit our autonomy ... but that autonomy was an illusion anyway. What do we gain in return? Deliverance, protection and a place of honor.
- The Father, in essence, reminds the Son that His role is not just to restore Israel but the whole of creation (vs. 6-7).
- The people respond that God has abandoned them, but the Lord reminds them that they are His children and it is more likely for a mother to forget her child than the Lord would forget His people (15-18).
- The language of the return here is clearly out of proportion to the return of the people from Babylon. It seems more in line with the final fulfillment of prophecy at the end of the age.
- There is much in this chapter that reminds us of the spiritual discipline of “waiting on the Lord”. Is this a lost art today? Are we so enamored with the way that the world operates that we have to have all things, “Now”? Have children lost the idea that they will not start life at the same economic state that their parents ended it? Have cell phones conditioned us to expect instant answers to all our questions???
- Can we learn anything from Anna and Simeon (Luke 2:25-38)?
- Galatians 4:4:
 - Pax Romana (Relative peace, the law)
 - The roads (travel was extensive)
 - The language (many spoke Greek)
 - The technology (to transmit documents)
- Waiting relinquishes control. When the Spirit controls, the right things happen in unexpected ways.
- Verses 19 – 21 carry with them the idea of a population that feels rejected but has not seen the hand of God working around them. As they flow back into the land, the land is too small to support them all (they have grown). Now their eyes are opened to the blessings of God and they see and discern what He has been doing. Note how she has “forgotten her children”.
- How often does the Lord do things around us that we do not immediately understand (Hebrews 13:2)?

Chapter 50

- Did God divorce Israel? Did He sell her to a creditor to pay her debt? There is no certificate. God’s arm is powerful to rescue even from sin.
- The Servant (the Messiah) is again introduced. The defeat of sin will happen at the obedience of the Servant.
- Note again that it is what the Messiah will say that convict and draw persecution.
- The physical suffering here (6-9) immediately draws our attention to the crucifixion of our Lord.
- The oriental world thought of the beard as a sign of freedom and respect. To pluck it out was a heinous offence.
- Like Lazarus, the Father helps Christ (verse 9) not through deliverance here, but through the impartation of divine character (Remember Hebrews 5:8).
- Note that the Fear Of The Lord is synonymous with obeying the Lord (verse 10)
- Now we are called to pick a “light” to follow ... this is a world view question.

Chapter 51

- Verse 3 is significant. Not only is God creating the universe, He is creating a place of beauty and order – His order. It is not that the created order is bad. There is nothing intrinsically bad about creation such that it must be destroyed and re-created. Rather, God is redeeming and removing the tainting effects of sin. May this guide us in the use of our earth.
- Remember what was significant about Eden
 - The right relationships between:
 - a) Humans and God
 - b) Men and women
 - c) Humans and animals

d) Humans and creation

- Verses 4-6 remind us that God is not just for sons of Abraham but of Adam!
- Note the number of times the word My, Mine and Me are used. The focus is on the Lord
- How might we be encouraged to focus on God daily??
- Remember Luke 21:33 ... Heaven and earth will pass away ... but ...
- Verses 6-8 remind us that to live for God is to invite persecution. They hated Christ and they will, at times, hate us.
- The servant speaks and He is abused. We live for God and so are we. Able, Joseph, Joshua/Caleb all stood for God but were persecuted. The truest security comes in a heart that no longer fears what human beings can do to them. (Luke 12:4-5)
- In verse 9, the people call the Lord to awake. In verse 17, God calls them to awake
- the balancing of doubt and hope is found in the Jewish lament
- the lament shows us that doubt and faith are not mutually exclusive (Mark 9:24)
- to ensure that I am not overcome with grief and doubt, I must remember on what (Whom) to place my focus. The double I in verse 51:12 reminds us that the focus should be on the Lord!
- The root of fear is the belief that I will "lose" something. Yet hear, God reminds us that:
 - a) Most of my fear revolves around other people
 - b) Other people are every bit under the control of God as I am
 - c) God's power can and does manifest in all circumstances
- The many references to the "Cup Of Wrath" (v17):
Ps 78:8, Jer. 25:15, 17, 28, Lam. 4:21, Ezek. 23:32-33, Hab. 2:16, Zech. 12:2, Matt: 26:42, Rev. 14:10, 16:19, 17:4, 18:6

- Other thoughts regarding the "cup" ... see Psalm 75:8
 - o A measured portion ... typically meaning the correct, FULL amount
 - It may make reference to God meting out judgment in the exact, proper amount
 - It is deliberate and just, nothing arbitrary
 - o The imagery of foaming carries the thought of fury, wrath and anger
 - o The mixture seems to lead us to the idea that the potency of the drink has been enhanced
 - its force has been intensified by various ingredients cast into it.
 - o The dregs lie at the bottom, out of sight, but are the most bitter
 - o To whom it is prescribed, they will drink without option

Chapter 52

- Verses 1-3 remind Israel to let go of the past bondages and rise up and sit as free people
- Do we bring "bondages" into our Christian walk when we get saved?
 - Is God calling us to remove the old ways and rise up in a new freedom.
 - Some truths:
 - a) If the Bible (especially the NT) says it about me, then it is true
 - b) If the New Testament says I can do it, then I can
 - c) There are lies that the enemy wants us to believe. The mind is his territory to attack in.

It is interesting that God continues to supply for His people under persecution:

Spain expels all Jews (1492 AD)

- 800,000 Jews were forced to leave the country

... an Edict of Expulsion was issued against the Jews of Spain by Ferdinand and Isabella (March 31, 1492). It ordered all Jews of whatever age to leave the kingdom by the last day of July (one day before [Tisha B'Av](#))

- from this point forward, the power of Spain began to decrease
- It was also on August 3, 1492 that Christopher Columbus began his historic trip to discover a new world

- Verse 7 is a more difficult transition. Verse 6 ends reminding us that it is "I", the Lord who tells these things. Clearly we switch now to the Lord's anointed messengers who bring good news. This is fulfilled in Christ and Paul mentions that it carries on in us (Roman 10:15). Note the character of the message:

- a) Peace (restoration ... as in the Garden)
- b) Good (originate with God and is marked by blessings)
- c) Salvation

- Verse 9 seems to imply the watchmen waiting on the walls of the city for news of an impending battle. They wait with anticipation for good news. When they receive it, they shout for joy.

- Verse 11 may have reference to those who will depart from Babylon (Persia) to remain pure as they transport back the tools used in the worship of the Lord (in the temple). There is a larger picture here, and that is for all of us to consider soberly how we shall remain in a holy state before the Lord. Paul would use this language in 2Corinthians 6:14-17.

- The One who will ultimately bring about this deliverance is none other than Christ, who is re-introduced in verse 13. BEHOLD is a command to see!

- a) He will act wisely
- b) He will be raised from His position of brokenness (Phil 2: 9-11, Acts 2:33)
- c) Many will be appalled at Him (some at what happens to Him and others by what He SAYS)
- d) He will be disfigured brutally
- e) He will sprinkle the nations (a picture of sanctification, as items were sprinkled with blood in the Temple, or sometimes oil or water) – See Lev. 8:11, 14:7
- f) Eventually, He will be exalted among them all.

- How the Father would mourn for His son on that day. A reminder of the torn veil on the day of crucifixion.

Isaiah 53

- We can clearly understand that this passage makes reference to Christ because Philip would use this exact passage to lead the Ethiopian Eunuch to Christ (Acts 8:26-39).

Themes of this passage:

- a) The message will not be believed (v.1-3)
Why?
 - 1) He comes in an unassuming way (verse 2)
 - 2) He comes in an un-charismatic way (verse 3)
 - 3) He was associated with suffering
 - a. We want to ignore it (hide their faces)
 - b. We refuse to talk about it (we esteemed Him not)
- b) The Servant carries our sin (v. 4-6)
 - a. There is certainly here a picture of the Lamb being offered as a substitute for us
- c) The results of carrying our sin (v. 7-9)
 - a. Note that several times, we are told He remained silent (Luke 23:9, Matthew 26:53, 27:14)
 - b. Again note that the only metaphor here continues to be the sheep
 - c. He was deprived justice and descendants
- d) Why? (v. 10-12)
 - a. These are not accidental ... they are intended
 - b. Life comes forth from this death ... like a seed planted (Jesus would use this analogy)

- Do you ever feel “taken for granted” as you sacrificially serve others? What is the remedy for this problem?

Isaiah 54

- Though Israel appears to be barren at the moment, she will have much fruit through her existence.
- Both to be barren and to be a widow were considered to be places of shame, where the ability to “make a difference” was curtailed. Have you ever felt that your ability to make a difference was somehow stunted or ineffective? Was this a lie?
- In verse 6, God calls “her” back to Himself. Note the divorced woman was in even a worse predicament. At least if she was a widow, the abandonment was involuntary. Not so with one who divorces you.
- In verse 9, God links the flood promise with a promise of future redemption.
- In verse 11, the imagery changes from a difficult relationship to a devastated city.

Isaiah 55

- In Luke 14:16-23, we learn a few important lessons:
 - o What truly builds community? Never pride.
 - o To miss opportunities in the Kingdom of God is truly tragic.
 - o What we value and what God values can sometimes be very, very different.
- Isaiah uses much the same imagery here by asking people to come to the Lord’s banquet that does not require money to get into.
- Do we spend money on that which does not satisfy (verse 2)?
- We want the power to judge for ourselves what is of value and what is not.
- Water, wine and milk = refreshment, enjoyment and nutrition
- Does our world lie to us regarding the definition of contentment?

“Good friends, good books, and a sleepy conscience: this is the ideal life.”

— Mark Twain

“Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough”

— Oprah Winfrey

“A quiet secluded life in the country, with the possibility of being useful to people to whom it is easy to do good, and who are not accustomed to have it done to them; then work which one hopes may be of some use; then rest, nature, books, music, love for one's neighbor — such is my idea of happiness.”

— Leo Tolstoy, Family Happiness

Irvin D. Yalom, M.D., a noted psychiatrist interested in the interplay between spirituality and psychology, has done extensive work with cancer patients and their families. He found that the monumental shock of such a diagnosis results in far-reaching changes in the patient's life, including:

- A rearrangement of life's priorities: what is trivial emerges as such, and can be ignored.
- A sense of liberation: being able to choose not to do those things you do not wish to do.
- An enhanced sense of living in the immediate present, rather than postponing life until some point in the future.
- A vivid appreciation of the elemental facts of life: the changing seasons, the wind, falling leaves, the last Christmas, and so forth.
- Deeper communication with loved ones than before the crisis.
- Fewer interpersonal fears, less concern about rejection, greater willingness to take risks than before the crisis.

Philippians 4:10-13

- We live in a discontented age. Why? Identify the lies
- Several ways to deal with discontentment.
 - Shuffle around lives to keep minds off it.
 - Let someone else take control of your life as cults might do
 - Take the Stoic approach - very popular.

The "I don't care" approach (this material adapted from David Holwick)

Popular religious philosophy in ancient Greece.

- Main goal was contentment.
- They believed this came from total self-sufficiency.
- Any strength they possessed had to come from within themselves.
 - a) They relied on no one else.
 - b) Secret is not possessing a lot, but wanting little.
 - "If you want to make a man happy, don't add to his possessions, but take away from his desires."
- Much wisdom in this.
- However, Stoics took it to the extreme where nothing, and no one, were essential to them.
- They just cut themselves off from life.
- They tried to eliminate all emotion.
- Their aim was to be so unfeeling, they didn't care what happened to themselves or anyone else.
- They trained themselves to be unemotional.
 - One of their philosophers said you have to start with little things.
 - If you drop a plate and it breaks, say, "I don't care."
 - After you get good at that, move up to an animal.
 - Maybe your pet dog has something happen to it. Say, "I don't care."
 - Then learn that: If you yourself are hurt or injured in any way, shrug it off as if nothing has happened.
- Their aim was to abolish every feeling in the human heart.
 - Love was rooted out of life, and caring for people was forbidden.
- They believed everything in life is predetermined.
 - 1) Fate controlled all your circumstances.
 - 2) Circumstances cannot be changed, only accepted.
- Is this us?
 - Just be thick skinned?
 - Shut people out?

Paul:

- He shared their emphasis on "contentment," with a twist.
- Paul uses Stoic language of "SELF-sufficiency," but radically transforms it into CHRIST-sufficiency.
- The Stoic's "sufficiency/contentment" comes from their own inner strength.
 - Paul's comes from outside, from his being "a man in Christ," on whom he is totally "dependent" and thus not "independent" at all in the Stoic sense.

Two ways to handle pressure: Bathysphere and deep-sea fish.

- We can have God's power within to equal the pressure outside.
- Godly contentment is based on the belief that God loves us, and that he is in control of our lives.

- It's not a passive acceptance of fate, but a positive assurance.
- I am confident and capable to cope with the circumstances of life because I draw on Christ's power.
- How well do you handle change? Do you get frightened? Moody? Angry? Uptight?
- Paul says that one of the secrets of learning to be content is the ability to adjust to all kinds of circumstances.
- No matter what people do to me they are not going to control my life.
- No matter what hurt, experience or difficulty I go through and I have every reason to have bad memories, I will not let it victimize me.

Note the chiasmic structure:

55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.
"As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts."

- Verse 10 depicts one of the cycles of life. See also Ecclesiastes 1:1-9
- These cycles of life can be viewed as either boring and valueless (as Solomon did) or a fulfillment of the promises of God to supply our needs. What happens when weather patterns are disrupted? What might God trying to communicate to us?

Chapter 56

- There is again a marked difference in the material that we have seen since chapter 40 onwards (trito Isaiah!!). Not only is the promise God assured to the Jewish people, but from here to the end of the book, we focus on the extension of the Kingdom of God to all people ... and see how that will play out in the future Kingdom.
- Again, see the strong Chiasm in the first seven verses. Verse 4a seems to be the centre of the structure (and note that this line starts chapter 56:1). What God says is terribly important! (see also verse 8)
- Why is seeking the Lord (verse 1) linked with keeping His commands?
 - Why the emphasis on the Sabbath?
- Gentiles ARE absolutely included in the promises of the Lord
 - o We can liken this to Acts chapter 10 (verses 14-16)
 - o The foreigner is included
 - o The eunuch is included: He is one who cannot produce seed (off spring)
- The Court of The Gentiles is where Jesus whipped those who interfered
- Verses 9-12 deal with the "professional" preachers who do not believe their own message
- How much has satisfaction become our chief goal?
 - we know that consumerism is a lie. Why do we believe it?
 - can God really grant satisfaction? How?

Isaiah 57

- The first two verses should be combined with the passage above ... the Lord continues His word against false leaders.
- This chapter begins with a very enigmatic concept. It appears that the Lord is saying that some people die to be spared the torment of living. Thoughts?
 - The righteous often die unobserved
 - Often it is easy to lay blame – to believe that living is the reward of an appeased God
 - There was a Twilight Zone episode about an evil man who died

- He found himself conscience and in a place where his every whim was granted instantly
- He was sure he had found heaven ... only later realizing that this was NOT where he had ended up
- Verse 2 is a verse of comfort for all who walk with the Lord ... death = peace
- Verses 3 and 4 describe a mocking culture. We seem to be there again today.
- Verses 4-5 describe the practices of idolatry. Children were sacrificed to false gods
- See Jeremiah 32:35
 - The Valley that belonged to Ben Hinnom and his sons. It appears be to just outside of Jerusalem, at the foot of Mount Zion.
 - Later, in Jesus' time, the place would be referred to as Gehenna or hell.
- The smooth stones are probably a reference to the wadi's in the valley. The wadi was a channel cut by running waters that raced down the mountains when it rained. When it was dry, they made natural roadways. There was danger however, as flash floods could catch a traveler unaware. Is it possible that Jesus is drawing from here when He speaks of the foolish man who built his house upon the sand?
- Verse 7 speaks of the fact that they did these acts in the wide open, where all could see (your bed ...)
- Verse 8 would be in direct opposition to the commands of Deut. 6:9
- In verses 9 and 10, we have a picture of people going to extraordinary effort to satisfy the false gods. They found their invigoration in something not true. What do we find that may seem to give us strength, but often fails?
- Comment upon verse 11. What about the silence of God? Why is He silent today?
- Read verse 12 this way ... I will expose THAT kind of righteousness (the kind that is ungodly).
- In verse 13, God reminds us that the many false structures we build for security can easily come down.

Chapter 58

- When doe our faith make us a curse to people around us?
- The Crusades
 - o Historians consider that between 1096 and 1291 there were seven major Crusades and numerous minor one
- Is it possible that some of what I do "religiously" is in reality an attempt to manipulate God's favour?
- Note that the end of the chapter (verses 6 and following) indicate again that God WANTS to bless.
- Is it possible to charge God with indifference to what we do for Him?
- If the fast spoken of here is on the Day of Atonement, how could these people exploit their workers? Was not everyone called to fast on this one day?

Some general thoughts on fasting:

Scripture does not command Christians to fast

The Bible presents fasting as something that is good, profitable, and beneficial

Acts records believers fasting before they made important decisions (Acts 13:2; 14:23)

Fasting and prayer are often linked together (Luke 2:37; 5:33)

The purpose of fasting should be to take your eyes off the things of this world to focus completely on God

Although fasting in Scripture is almost always a fasting from food, there are other ways to fast

Fasting is not intended to punish the flesh, but to redirect attention to God

Fasting should not be considered a "dieting method"

Fasting is not a way to get God to do what we want

Fasting is not a way to appear more spiritual than others

Fasting is to be done in a spirit of humility and a joyful attitude

Fasting may allow resources to be directed towards the poor

- Verse 6 would indicate that part of a heart that truly fasts, does not treat their employees (slaves) poorly but fairly.
- Verse 7 seems to reference my extended family (flesh and blood) although many argue that this is a general term for all of humanity.

Chapter 59

- This passage is one of the most poignant passages in the entire Bible on the sinfulness of humanity
- Interesting: The passage starts in complaints against others (2nd person plural in verses 2-3). It then moves to third person plural (4-8) and ends with a personal indictment (first person plural, 9-15).
- Is God powerless to act ... or is He inattentive (verse 1)?
- Note the signs of a broken culture: Violence and injustice (3-4).

What is the concept of Justice in the Old Testament?

Torah's inheritance system served as a means for common people to control their own resources. Israel confessed that Yahweh owned the land. The land served the good of everyone, not only the profit of a few. A decentralized legal system—the court in the gates of the villages—joined with the inheritance system to insure full participation in community life for everyone; we could call this full participation “justice.” The court system helped the weaker members of the society who otherwise had no power and influence. Without the justice of the court they would not be able to maintain themselves in the social order.

Poverty and distress plagued the people at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. Control of the land had shifted to a few centralized owners who exploited the people for their own gain. This process cut to the heart of the covenant-community concept.

In chapters one and two, Amos prophesies against Israel's neighboring nations. This sets his listeners up for the challenge that begins in 2:6. In speaking against the nations, Amos gains the sympathy of his listeners—who agree that, of course, those nations are terrible and unjust. Amos then charges Israel with major crimes. He focuses on transgressions against harmonious ordering of Israelite communal life: (1) the sale into debt slavery of the innocent and needy; (2) the oppression of the poor; (3) the abuse of poor women; and (4) the exploitation of debtors.

More particularly, justice seeks life for everyone in the community. Because life is for everyone, justice pays particular attention to the people denied life. Justice provides for access by all to the communal “good life.” None can justly prosper at the expense of others, or even in the light of the poverty and need of others.

Amos sees justice as something to be done: relationships established, needs met, wrongs corrected. Justice, in Amos, has nothing to do with a meaningless cult. Justice links with specific acts and people. It is not abstract nor ahistorical

Ted Grimsrud

- There is an interesting challenge in verse 4 ... as a people, do we revel in people who can develop strong arguments to win injustice?
- It is interesting to note that in verse 7, God condemns the idea of the strong preying on the weak. This is diametrically opposed to the ideas of evolution, specifically the “survival of the fittest”.
- Is the problems of culture really related to:
 - o A) Economics (according to Karl Marx)
 - o B) Ignorance (according to John Dewey)
- God does not desire to leave people in this terrible state described in the chapter. He constantly looks for those who are willing to be vessels through-which He can bring revival.

Verses 16-21 change the entire feel of the chapter from one of darkness to one of salvation.

- God will do for the people what they are unable to do for themselves. “His own arm” of verse 16 harkens back to the first verse of this chapter.
- Note that verse 16 again says what we already know ... it is God's power alone that sustains us.
- Verse 17 should remind us of the Armor of God spoken of in the book of Ephesians, chapter 6
- This verse likely pictures both the first advent of Christ and His second.
- Verse 19 pictures the Lord as a deliverer when enemies rise up against us

- Note that God will place His Spirit on the Israelite nation to speak His word. We should remember that the Spirit does the same for us. We too speak divine words, empowered by the Spirit and these words have power.

Isaiah 60

- Likely, we have now a description of the Millennial Kingdom to come. Verse 3, for example, certainly cannot be fulfilled literally as of yet.
- The talk of light in this chapter is contrasted with the utter darkness of the last chapter.
- The reason that Israel may now shine is that her Messiah has made it possible ... He has come! Our shining is not from our own light ... but as reflectors of His.
- Verse 6 may have a partial fulfillment in the first advent.
- It is interesting to examine the characteristics of this new landscape:
 - a) Light (the glory of the Lord is visible); indicating His character and His wisdom
 - b) Families are restored (v. 4); community is strong
 - c) Prosperity
 - d) Offering brought to the Lord (v. 7)
 - e) Again, there is a strong sense of community (v. 10)
 - f) Safety is found within the community (v. 11)
- Verse 13 ... remember that the two pillars at the entrance of the temple were considered the “feet of God”.
- Verse 19 seems to be linked to Rev. 21:23
- This chapter reminds us that the Lord has a future kingdom in store for all of His people. This Kingdom to come has components that remind us of this earthly realm but also of something supernatural. (Hebrews 11:10)

Isaiah 61

- How will God bring about this great Kingdom? Through His Messiah.
- Compare these first three verses with Luke 4:16-30
- Matthew 11:1-6: Jesus encourages John by pointing to these signs.
- Why do you think that Paul, John and Isaiah all use the wedding garment motif?
- Explain again the connection between faith and works? This is important. As a Christian, my character should be more and more aligned with that of Jesus and there should be a desire to act in righteous deeds.

Year Of Jubilee:

*Lev 25: 8 ¶ "Count off seven sabbaths of years—seven times seven years—so that the seven sabbaths of years amount to a period of forty-nine years.
 9 Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land.
 10 Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan.
 11 The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines.
 12 For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields.
 13 "In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to his own property.*

- Verse 10 should probably be seen as the response to anyone, in any Kingdom who has received this experience of knowing the Lord. Specifically, it is likely the response of Isaiah to this revealed truth.

Isaiah 62

- This seems to be a chapter of “Names” as often God is granting new names for His people.
- Remember the significance of names in the Bible ... as names often reveal character.
- It is likely that God speaks in verse 1 and 6 and the intervening verses are probably prophetic amplifications

- What does it say to you that God does not rest as He seeks His people.
- In verse 2, we have a reminder of the scene at Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:13-20) when Peter's name is changed, or Jacob's name change (Gen. 32:28-29), or Rev. 2:17 where the overcomers of Pergamum are promised a new name.
- This chapter reminds me of the young lady that made such an impact on me in the Math building one crazy Friday afternoon so long ago. One who did not reject me but made me feel human.
- What could I do differently today to make someone feel that they are really a part of a community that values them?
- Think about this: Within Trinitarian doctrine, the three members of the trinity exist in mutually dependent relationship with each other and the identity of each is dependent on the others. There is no Father without Son and no Son without Father. The Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son.
- Hephzibah = "My delight is in her"
- Beulah = "married"
- Verses 6 (preachers or prophets) and 7 remind us of the power of continual prayer. Remember Luke 18:1-8.
- In redemption, God rejoices over us (see verses 4 and 5). Does this conflict with the standard image we have of the Lord who is angry with us?
- Verse 11 again reminds us that a Savior is coming.
- According to verse 5, which is a bit of awkward language, the men will possess the land of Israel like a virgin marries. The picture is that they will produce the fruit of marriage ... children.

Chapter 63

- See verses 1-6
- This imagery is that of a returning (second advent) Messiah and is further pictured in Revelation 19:15 & 14:20
- It is fascinating to remember that at the first advent, Jesus agonizes in the Garden Of Gethsemane (An olive press) and his second advent is associated with a wine press.
- Contrast verse 4 ("Day Of Vengeance") with the last chapter's "Year Of Jubilee".
- Note that this language reminds us that the coming Messiah is both filled with Salvation and a divine warrior. We understand this wrapped in two advents.
- The land of Edom was settled by the children of Esau. As Jesus would point out ... brother shall be against brother ... even when it comes to nations. It is likely that Edom is mentioned here as a representative of all who would stand opposed to the furtherance of the Kingdom Of God. Interesting that the word Edom means "red" and the word Bozrah (the capital city) is similar to that for a grape harvester.
- I wonder if verses 4 and 5 describe the Battle of Armageddon ... where the nations gather against Israel and no one stands to help her.
- See verses 7-14
- Does it seem odd that Isaiah could see kindness in God's acts of judgment?
- Is an end to sin to be considered kind? To what does a culture descend to when sin runs rampant?
- Verse 9 ... "The Angel Of His Presence" ... likely a theophany. Note that God both bears our burdens and is touched by them. It is interesting to wonder if God ever did this before humanity came into existence?
- From 7 to v. 10, the people are spoken of as being abandoned. Perhaps pictured here is the oncoming rise of Babylon.
- From 11 through 14, the people think back to see the glorious hand of the Lord during the exodus. They wonder where THAT God is. The answer is simple ... It is the same God. People were rebellious during the Exodus as well as now. People have not changed. The exodus represents both the undeserved grace of God and the rebellious hearts of the recipients of grace.
- Note the reference to the horses that do not stumble

- See verses 15-20
- This is the complaint of the people. Where is God?
- We CANNOT have God's blessing without God's presence.
- The thought of verse 16 seems to be that neither Abraham nor Israel (Jacob) could HELP the modern Israelite. They truly needed God's help.
- Does God "Make me do it"? Should we blame God for our failings? Verse 17 may be a call to God to bring back the northern tribes of Israel from the Assyrians or perhaps looks forward to Babylon destroying the temple. Perhaps it also sees into the future when Rome destroys Israel or even a future Antichrist who decimates the city.
- God must continually intervene in order to break this awful sin cycle in our lives.
- Verse 19 reminds God that He has alone ruled over Israel but not yet any other nation.

Chapter 64

- The complaint of the last chapter moves into a petition in this one ... Lord come!
- Isaiah discusses several reasons why he wants the Lord to come
 - To make your Name known (verse 2)
 - To help those who do right (verse 5)
- Verse 6 mentions the menstrual rag. Why is this a picture of something bad? Perhaps because this is a time of shedding something "dead".
- Isaiah presents a dilemma here. While it is entirely possible for the Lord to come and visit His people, NO one is crying out to God to make this happen. What to do? Verses 8 and 9 hold the answer. May God change us from the inside to first desire His presence. May God forgive our past sins. God must break the cycle.
- Isaiah sees the current structure of the temple as destroyed in purpose (10-11) and these verses prophetically picture what Babylon would do 100 years into the future.
- Do I believe in divine fate? That God has simply made me this way and nothing will ever change? Are we looking for a divine zapping from God to make us better? How do we respond to a verse like Paul's:

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last for ever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. 1 Corinth. 9:25-27

Consider the four women of Christmas:

- Why does Matthew include four women in the genealogy where Luke does not include any? These would be terribly offensive to many!

*Matthew 1: 3 ,5, 6: Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was **Tamar**, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was **Rahab**, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was **Ruth**, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, **whose mother had been Uriah's wife**,*

Who	Where	Details
Tamar	Gen. 38	Judah ... refuses Kinsman Redeemer; She is gentile, strong, one who is forced to get her justice in a poor way. Scarlet thread around her baby. Judah realizes his sin and spares her life (like Joseph would). Tragic marriage situation.
Rahab	Joshua 2	Gentile. Strong willed. Has found God's grace and understanding. Her family is spared the slaughter by a scarlet rope. Tragic marriage situation.
Ruth	Ruth	Tragic marriage situation. A gentile, strong. Willing to glean. Willing to serve God despite bad circumstances. Is lead to Boaz. A blessed marriage results. The Kinsman Redeemer made real.

Bathsheba	2 Samuel 11	Tragic marriage situation. Note she is not even named in this genealogy, and is identified by her gentile husband. Strong woman, who would later stand with her son as he becomes king.
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Why these woman? Like Mary, they required strong actions that would run counter to the culture. Both Jew and Gentile. Perhaps also, to teach Joseph what He would need to become. Note that these characters were never endowed with special power. They were EMPOWERED to do what was right.

- My point is simple ... God has a way of honoring people who choose to act in honorable ways, even when not all aspects of their lives are in compliance with the will of the Lord.

Chapter 65

- Now it is God's turn to speak (verses 1-16). Some have argued that Isaiah has set up a "straw man" style of argument. The people of Israel have argued that God has not done His part and now the Lord speaks to destroy this argument.
- Does God continue to reveal Himself today? (v.1) What makes it easier or more difficult to see Him and hear Him?
- In what ways do those in our culture "refuse" to see God?
- Verse 4 seems to point to those who seek wisdom from consulting with the dead.
- In verse 5, these pagan people make the claim that their practices make them set apart from God ... they are too holy for Him.
- Verse 8 reminds us that a remnant always exists in the world ... a smaller group that stays firm to the things of the Lord.
- God blesses those who seek Him. What is seeking?

Deut. 4:29 But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.

- Why might the wise men be a good illustration of seeking the Lord?
- We seek to please Him, seek His presence ... not just for what we get out of this
- We cannot gain control of our destiny by religious manipulations, as they tried here in our passage.
- Is it true that we see the greatest good in humanity as our own personal freedom to define right and wrong? The problem here is that we view God in this light:
 - o Lord, you have something I want (Blessing) and I have something You want (prayer, abstinence, praise). Let's trade. I give you what You want and I expect to receive back what I want.
- The problem here is that God needs NOTHING. Further, I am not equal with Him. What I NEED is His presence in my life.
- In verse 10, two areas are mentioned: Sharon (in the west) and Achor in the east. Achor was the land that Achan was stoned in for his sin at Jericho. They probably become representations for all the land of Israel ... from the east to the west.
- In verses 17-25, we have an idea of the character of the Kingdom to come. This is likely a picture of Millennial life, as it appears to be what life would have been like in the Garden of Eden had sin not entered the world.

1. It is new (v. 17)

a. Is this an event that happens at the beginning or the end of the period?

1. Former things are not remembered.
2. Joy will be the character that will mark this Kingdom (v. 18-19)
3. Age is greatly extended again (as it was in the Garden).

4. Some still die (they are unglorified).
5. Sin still seems to reign (v. 20).
6. People build and enjoy the fruit of their own labour (v. 21-22).
7. Children are born and there is every expectation of a wonderful future (v.23)
9. Prayer is answered without delay (v.24)
10. The nature of animals is restored as it was in the Garden (v.25)

Chapter 66

- Creation ... as explained in Col 1:15-17
- Reading verses 1-4, this appears to be Isaiah's last stab at the idea of ritualistic religion
- God is not against the temple or the sacrifices ... but we make them what we want them to be ... empty ritual does not cover sin. I cannot come to the Lord MY way. Human effort alone does not impress the Lord.
- Many have attempted to align this with a rebuilt temple (post-exilic) but it could just as easily be the nature of worship before Nebuchadnezzar.
- Which of my "Buildings" count for the Lord? What things do I count as important to build for Christ?
- The temple was built for US not for God!
- Verse 3 is not a condemnation of the sacrificial system, but the doing so without the right heart of faith.
- Note that according to verse 4, no one was listening for God. They missed His voice. Note that God both "calls" and "speaks".

In verse 5-6, we have the righteous being mocked by the godless.

- From here through the rest of the chapter, God speaks to those remaining faithful to give them strength through difficult times.
- Apostate people cannot stand to be with the godly. They mock the pain that the faithful feel and say, in essence, "Be happy in your suffering".
- Do not mistake "waiting on the Lord" with being ignored by the Lord.

Verse 7-9 ... child birth without labour.

- What may be pictured here is a snapshot of the first advent, but most certainly it is clear that this portrays more closely the second advent ... the return of Jesus. At this return, the fortunes of Israel will be changed forever.
- God has promised this and He will fulfill.
- What truly is the source of abundance? How different are the attitudes of Christians and non-Christians on this issue? Perhaps abundance doesn't mean ... all that I could ever want but rather the heart to appreciate and enjoy what I have. To grab is to lose and to let go is to receive.

Verses 10-11 remind us that God is still the source of all sustenance.

Verses 14-16 detail the return of the Lord

- Judgment and grace are again revealed in this portion, as has been throughout this book.

Verses 17-24 deal with end time events.

- It is interesting to note that the kingdom to come has more at its core than just getting our reward. There is still worship, wonder and community.
- The last verse in this book does again press home the idea of two opposing Kingdoms. We do have a choice to make and it does matter.