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Lesson 23: Review

1. Conditions Among the Northern Nation of Israel

Political: Jeroboam II was a competent leader who restored peace and prosperity to Israel (cf. 2 Kgs 14:23-29). Unfortunately, this period was merely an “Indian summer” (cf. *ISBE*, Vol. 2, p. 997-998), the calm before the coming storm of God’s judgment

Socio-Economic: The book of Amos gives further insight into the conditions of the day in Israel. Yes, the people were prosperous, but this was accompanied by extravagance, treachery and evil motives. Some representative passages from Amos:

- 1) Am 3:15 – *“I will destroy the winter house along with the summer house; the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end ...”*. This is due to their greed and selfishness.
- 2) Am 5:11-12 – *“Because you tread down the poor and take grain taxes from him, though you have built houses of hewn stone, yet you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine from them ... you afflict the just and take bribes; you divert the poor from justice at the gate ...”*.
- 3) Am 6:4-6 – *“Who lie on beds of ivory, stretch out on your couches, eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall ... who drink wine from bowls, and anoint yourselves with the best ointments, but are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph.”* The picture is one of profligacy, indulgence and carnality.

Moral-Religious: The worship of Jehovah has lost all meaning to Israel. For about 150 years Israel has been dominated by calf-worship and a substitute priesthood established by Jeroboam I. This, coupled with the influence of Ahab and Jezebel to worship Baal and other false gods, has spiritually corrupted Israel. Again, Amos speaks to this condition:

- 1) Am 2:12 – *“But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets saying, ‘Do not prophesy!’”* Amos delivers scathing rebuke for rejecting the prophetic warnings sent by God (cf. Amaziah’s attack upon Amos, Am 7:10-17).
- 2) Am 8:4-7 – *“Here this, you who swallow up the needy and make the poor of the land fall, saying: ‘When will the New Moon be past, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may trade our wheat? Making the ephah small and the shekel large, falsifying the balances by deceit ...’”*. The Israelites saw worship as a drudgery and a burden; they merely endured the religious observances which were designed by God to instill spiritual maturity and create occasions of joyful worship.
- 3) Am 3:10 – *“For they do not know to do right,” says the Lord, ‘Who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.’”* Israel is blind to its true condition. They pay just enough attention to worship to convince themselves that they are truly faithful, but God is warning them of coming destruction (cf. Am 8:9-14).

After Jeroboam II, Israel sinks into chaos with Zechariah and Shallum being assassinated (2 Kgs 15: 8-16), Menahem paying heavy tribute to Tiglath-Pileser III (2 Kgs 15:17-22), Pekahiah and Pekah being assassinated (2 Kgs 15:23-31) and Hoshea’s subjugation and imprisonment by the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser (2 Kgs 17:1-4).

2. Conditions Among the Southern Nation of Judah

Political: Uzziah, like Jeroboam II, brought great prosperity to Judah (cf. 2 Chr 26). This was a period of time when the enemies of Israel and Judah were weak and attending to their own internal affairs. Thus, the prosperity was deceptive, for it did not represent the favor of God. Rather, it was a time for God, through the natural course of events, to prepare the heathen nations as instruments of His wrath upon Israel. Jotham was characterized as a righteous leader, like his father Uzziah (cf. 2 Chr 27). Ahaz, on the other hand, borrowed a chapter or two from the Israelite kings and instituted Baal-worship and the sacrifice of children (cf. 2 Chr 28). Hezekiah saved the nation (at least temporarily) by his courageous reforms (cf. 2 Chr 29-32). Judah is not as corrupt as Israel, but Isaiah will issue dire warnings about their spiritual and moral state. As Israel falls, Judah will barely escape a similar fate at the hands of the Assyrians.

Moral/Religious: Judah had not been as completely corrupted by idol worship as had Israel. Still, in spite of the reforms of Hezekiah, and later those of Josiah, Judah continued its plunge into ungodliness. Some representative passages from Micah which define conditions in Judah:

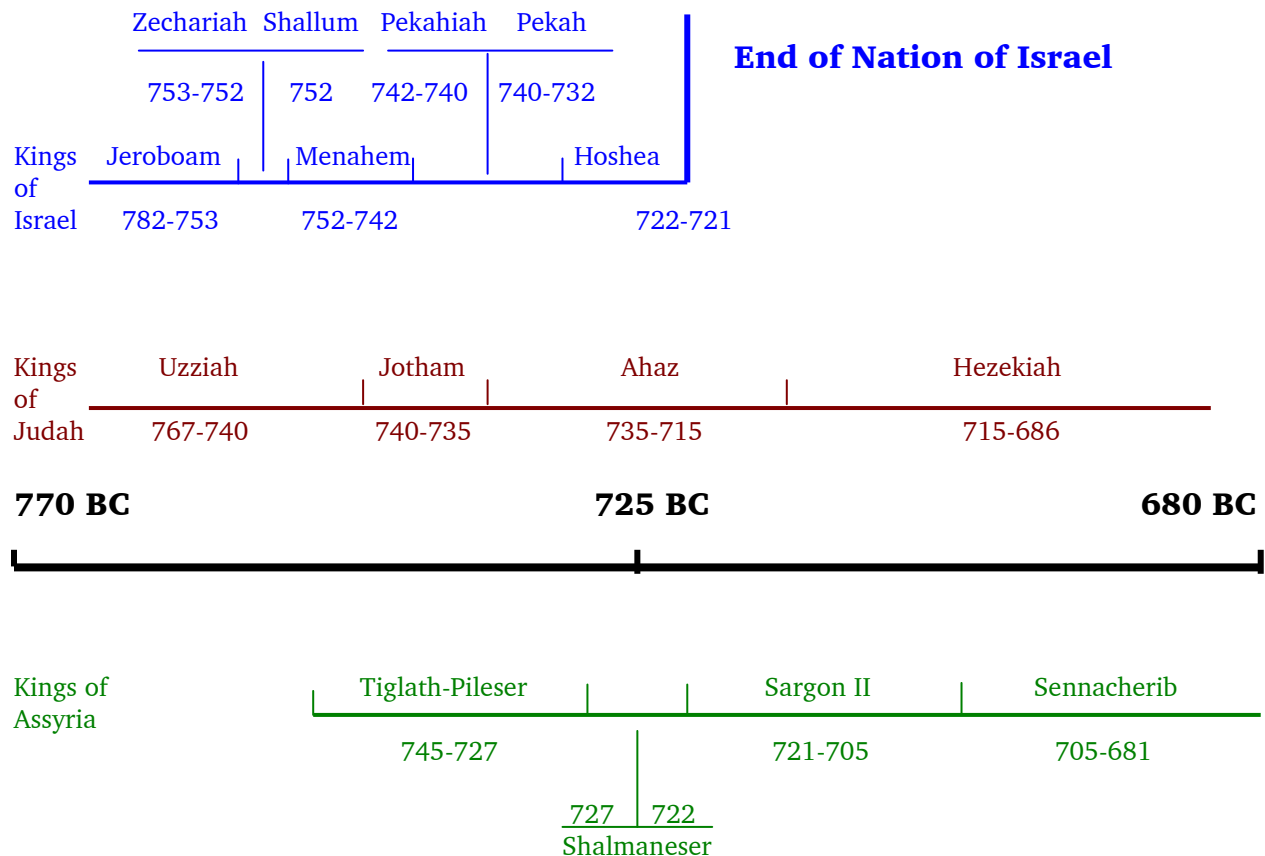
- 1) Mic 2:1-2 – *“Woe to those who devise iniquity, and work out evil on their beds! At morning they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand. They covet fields and take them by violence, also houses, and seize them. So they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance.”* The stealing of property was especially egregious because of the ancestral tribal ties to the land of Canaan.
- 2) Mic 3 – Note the particular emphasis upon the leaders of Israel and Judah who are using their power and influence for personal gain (Mic 3:1, 5, 6-7, 9, 11).
- 3) Mic 7:2-4 – *“The faithful man has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among men. They all lie in wait for blood; every man hunts his brother with a net ... the best of them is like a brier; the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge ...”.*

The picture is bleak, indeed, but Judah will outlast Israel by about 120 years or so. Assyria will be the implement of God’s judgment against Israel, but it will be the Babylonians who will eventually decimate Judah and destroy Jerusalem.

Questions:

1. What curse does Amos pronounce upon Amaziah for his rebellion to prophecy (Am 7:17)?
2. How did God feel about Israel’s worship (cf. Am 5:21-23)?
3. What kind of famine will God bring upon the land (Am 8:11)?
4. What did Hoshea do that brought Shalmaneser’s wrath against him (2 Kgs 17:4)?
5. How does Ahaz respond to the encroachment of his enemies (2 Chr 28:23-25)?
6. What did the judges, priests and prophets tell themselves to justify their evil (Mic 3:11)?
7. What happens in Judah during Assyria’s assault upon Israel (2 Kgs 18:13; 19:4)?

Kings of Assyria, Israel and Judah along with prophets relative to time of Isaiah's prophecies. All dates are approximate.



Prophets of God

Isaiah (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah)

Hosea (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah)

Micah (Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah)

● **Amos** (Uzziah and Jeroboam)

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 2: Background (2); Overview of Isaiah

1. The Rise of the Assyrian Threat

As Israel continued along its apostate path and both Israel and Judah emulated and even surpassed the wickedness of the Canaanites before them, God was preparing a heathen nation as an instrument of judgment against them. This was what Jonah feared would be the outcome of his preaching to Nineveh, and thus was his reason for attempting to flee to Tarshish (cf. Jonah's prophetic work relative to the reign of Jeroboam II, 2 Kgs 14:25).

In the earlier history of the Assyrian kings, movement was made toward conquest. Through terrible brutality Assyria invaded and subjugated regions to the far north and east of Israel. This represented a shift in world order. As Edward J. Young notes:

As never before in the history of the world the idea of conquest gained ground, and one nation sought to subdue other nations and tried to make them a part of itself. Thus, the Assyrian king appeared upon the horizon, and his appearance signalized the striving for a new order of things. A reaching for universalism such as the world had never before known now began to appear, and a reaction against the old order took place. Again, the spirit of Babel was present, and again man began to exalt himself as he had tried to do at Babel. There would be no tower to reach into the heavens, but there would be a world empire. Mankind would not be concentrated in one spot; he would cover the earth but would belong to one kingdom, the kingdom of man. Man was to rule and extend his sway, and man's kingdom was to cover the world so that man alone would be exalted through such universalism (*The Book of Isaiah*, Vol. 1, p. 5).

While the Assyrians were motivated by their own selfish purposes, God demonstrates His sovereign control over the people of the earth by using kings and kingdoms for His own ends. A horrible outcome awaits Israel, and the same will befall Judah if they continue on the same course.

2. The Assyrian Kings

Tiglath-Pileser III (aka Pul) – 745-727 BC. Tiglath-Pileser led Assyria out of a period of weakness during which time Jeroboam II had strengthened Israel and Jonah had preached in Nineveh. In ca. 743 BC Menahem, king of Israel, paid tribute to Tiglath-Pileser (2 Kgs 15:19-20). King Ahaz of Judah later appealed and paid tribute to Tiglath-Pileser for assistance against Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Syria. On another occasion Tiglath-Pileser refused assistance to Ahaz against the Philistines and Edomites and distressed him (cf. 2 Chr 28:16, 20-21). In ca. 732 BC, Tiglath-Pileser took several Israelite cities captive (2 Kgs 15:29). In his annals he claims to have replaced Pekah with Hoshea (cf. 2 Kgs 15:30).

Shalmaneser V – 727-722 BC. After the vassal Hoshea withheld tribute and sought alliance with Egypt, Shalmaneser besieged Samaria for three years (2 Kgs 17:1-6). After Samaria's fall, the greater portion of the population was carried away to the upper Euphrates.

Sargon II – 721-705 BC. In his annals Sargon claims credit for the fall of Samaria. Perhaps he was a general in the besieging army and took over the Assyrian throne during the operations. There is no record that he entered Judah though he did fight against Egypt and Philistia.

Sennacherib – 705-681 BC. Sennacherib besieged Lachish and took all the fortified cities of Judah during the reign of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:13). Hezekiah paid tribute (2 Kgs 18:14-16) but was still threatened by the Assyrian army until God struck 185,000 of them dead. Reference to this action against Hezekiah is found on the Taylor prism in the British Museum. Sennacherib withdrew to Nineveh and was later assassinated by his own sons (2 Kgs 19:36-37).

3. Overview of Isaiah

A dual message runs through the book of Isaiah: God is going to judge His people along with the rest of the nations for unfaithfulness, and a day of spiritual restoration would come through the Messiah. Broad, sweeping prophecies are made concerning the political powers of the day; cities and nations such as Philistia, Moab, Syria, Egypt, Edom, Babylon, Tyre as well as Samaria (Israel) and Jerusalem (Judah) would meet their ruin at the hand of God. But even in the midst of doom and gloom shines a message of hope: God will eventually raise up a holy and righteous King, and He will rule over a remnant of faithful people (cf. Is 9:6-7; 10:20-23).

The book naturally divides into two sections: chs. 1-39 and chs. 40-66. While liberal scholars have postulated that different authors wrote these sections, this notion is refuted by inspired authors who attribute both sections to Isaiah (cf. Mt 13:14-15/Is 6:9-10; Ac 8:30, 32-33/Is 53:7-8). In the second section, Isaiah instills hope among Israel that, in spite of God's punishment, a day of salvation lies ahead. This salvation will come through the Servant of God, specially appointed to unite Jew and Gentile into one body and provide atonement for the sins of all. Homer Hailey notes: "Both Jews and Gentiles would be part of one great spiritual kingdom, universal in its scope, ruled by a King of righteousness. Why the Jews could not see and accept this great purpose of Jehovah as set forth by Isaiah and fulfilled in the Christ who came has long been a mystery" (*A Commentary on Isaiah*, p. 29).

Each lesson in our study of Isaiah will include an overview of the passages under consideration followed by special emphasis upon noteworthy concepts. This format will hopefully do justice to the book in the time allotted to its study.

Questions:

1. Who in the NT attributes Is 40:3-5 to Isaiah?
2. Who in the NT attributes Is 9:1-2 to Isaiah?
3. How might we understand Jonah's anger as expressed in Jonah 4:2?
4. Why was the tribute paid by Menahem in 2 Kgs 15:19-20 wrong?
5. How is Ahaz's sin summarized (2 Chr 28:19)?
6. What did Ahaz give to Tiglath-Pileser in exchange for his help (2 Chr 28:21)?
7. What did Ahaz learn about such alliances?

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 3: God's Deep Disappointment (chs 1-3)

1. Overview

- A. Ch 1 – The nation is condemned for its sin, warned about coming destruction, and encouraged to repent.
 - 1. 1:1-9 – Isaiah begins his collection of prophecies with a dismal picture. The people are insensitive toward God and have provoked His anger. The land has been attacked and pillaged, and *“unless the Lord of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah”* (1:9).
 - 2. 1:10-20 – God expresses His disgust at the hypocritical worship offered by the people. He calls the people to reason with Him about their sins and their need to repent before the sword completely devours them.
 - 3. 1:21-31 – Yet in the midst of gloom and despair, Isaiah sees a day after purification when Jerusalem *“shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city”* (1:26). Judgment and salvation are both coming, and only the penitent will survive (1:27).
- B. Ch 2 – Isaiah sees a glorious image of Mt. Zion as the focal point of the nations. This is followed by further warnings against Israel for their idolatry and materialism.
 - 1. 2:1-4 – In imagery repeated by Micah (Mic 4:1-3), Isaiah tells of a mountain/kingdom to which men of all nations will come. Unlike Assyria, this nation will be founded upon peace rather than warfare. Zion/Jerusalem will be the focal point of the law and word of God.
 - 2. 2:5-9 – Israel has become corrupt by the influence of idols. This is the fulfillment of what Moses warned against as the people were on the threshold of Canaan (cf. Dt 28:15-68). So thoroughly steeped in idolatry were they that Isaiah says, *“Therefore do not forgive them”* (2:9).
 - 3. 2:10-22 – Isaiah warns of a terrifying judgment to come: *“For the day of the Lord of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty ...”* (2:12). When God explodes upon them in wrath and fury, the people will vainly cast aside their idols in which they had trusted (2:20-21).
- C. Ch 3 – Two main pictures are presented: a nation thrown into social and political chaos, and the refined and sensual women, representative of the indulgence and frivolity of the people, being humbled and brought to ruin.
 - 1. 3:1-12 – Isaiah foresees incompetent leadership, rebellion against authority, scarce necessities and a variety of other social ills that will come upon Judah. Some of these are the natural consequences of wicked living, and God will use them to punish the people for their evil.
 - 2. 3:13-26 – Prosperity had come largely at the expense of the poor. The demand of women for luxury and ease would be punished, and their lascivious enticements would be replaced with baldness, fetters, sackcloth and branding.

2. Special Emphasis – Is 2:1-4

A. 2:2 – In the latter days, the mountain of the Lord’s house will be established.

1. On “latter days,” see Dn 2:28; Joel 2:28; Ac 2:17; 3:24; Heb 1:2. From Isaiah’s perspective, the latter days were on the distant horizon. Some 200 years later, Daniel is told to seal up his prophecy because the days are yet far in the future (Dn 12:4, 9). The Holy Spirit indicates that the days of the new covenant and Messianic rule fulfill the meaning of “latter days.”
2. The mountain of the Lord’s house – cf. Zech 8:3; Jer 51:25; Heb 12:18-23. The term “mountain” indicates government, dominant rule. It is the rule of the Messiah in the spiritual kingdom which is to be established in the latter days.
3. On top of the mountains – cf. Ps 2:1-2; Ac 4:25; 1 Cor 2:8; Dn 2:44. The Messiah’s kingdom would be established in spite of the opposition of earthly rulers. His rule would be superior to theirs. He will dominate the affairs of men from His position in heaven.

B. 2b-3 – Unlike the old covenant, the spiritual kingdom would encompass men of all nations. They will come into the kingdom for the purpose of learning and following the ways of God.

1. God is the ultimate teacher; He will employ various means and methods to instruct those who wish to learn of Him.
2. Zion/Jerusalem as the source of this teaching has a literal as well as spiritual fulfillment (cf. Lk 24:47 through the early chapters of Acts). Through His omnipotent power, God determined events which caused both the kingdom to be established and the word to issue forth from the harlot-city (Is 1:21).

C. 2:4 – Peace and harmony would be the nature of this kingdom; its citizens would not advance their individual or collective interests through carnal means.

1. The nations/people of 2:4 appear to be the same group as in 2:2b-3; i.e., redeemed people.
2. Numerous references in the NT can be cited to substantiate the peaceful nature of Christ and His kingdom (cf. Jn 18:36; Eph 2:14-17; 2 Cor 10:3-5; etc.).

Questions:

1. What did the ox and donkey understand that Israel didn’t?
2. List the verbal exhortations of 1:16-17. What does God wish to “reason” about (1:18)?
3. Why had God forsaken the house of Jacob?
4. Where will the proud go when the terrible judgments of God come?
5. Describe what will happen to leadership in Israel/Judah (3:4-6, 12).
6. Why do the women dress themselves as they do?

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 4: “Woe” unto the People of God (chs 4-6)

1. Overview

A. Ch 4 – The picture is one of future renewal and reinvigoration under the Messiah.

1. 4:2 – The “Branch” image is used by several prophets of the Messiah (cf. Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12-13). We will consider this further in Is 11:1, 10.
2. 4:3-4 – Isaiah will develop the concept of “remnant,” the idea that God will preserve and purify a fraction of the people for His own special possession. The “spirit of judgment” and the “spirit of burning,” i.e., trial and tribulation, will identify those who are truly loyal to God.
3. 4:5-6 – The imagery of the exodus is used to describe God’s future protection upon the remnant. A day is coming when only a redemptive relationship with the Lord will be of benefit; there will be no shelter or haven in armies, alliances or ancestry – the things upon which Israel has come to depend.

B. Ch 5 – Isaiah continues from ch 3 the picture of Israel’s debauchery and corruption.

1. 5:1-7 – The figure of an unfruitful vineyard depicts God’s frustration with Israel.
2. 5:8-25 – A series of “woes” is leveled against the people for their greed, wantonness, moral confusion, arrogance and injustice.
3. 5:26-30 – Isaiah tells of a destroying force to be brought against Israel for its corruption and rebellion. The nations which will gather against Israel will do so at God’s bidding, for He is in ultimate control of all peoples of the earth.

C. Ch 6 – The commission of Isaiah.

1. 6:1-7 – Isaiah sees the glory of the Lord and is overwhelmed by his own sinfulness. Forgiveness is offered to Isaiah in preparation for the great task ahead.
2. 6:8-13 – As will later be the case with Jeremiah, God tells Isaiah that his words will be rejected by those who are willfully blind and deaf. The future is bleak and desolate, for God foresees eventual judgment upon a people unwilling to return to Him.

2. Special Emphasis – Is 6

A. 6:1-4 – Isaiah receives a vision of a throne scene similar to the one later shown to John (cf. Rev 4).

1. Without being overly tedious with details, Isaiah beholds the glory of the Lord. The train of His robe spills from the throne into the temple, perhaps a figure of the temple’s representation of God’s presence among the people.

2. Seraphim surround the throne. These are some sort of heavenly creatures who attend to the Lord. They are not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture. Cherubim (Ezk 10), four living creatures (Rev 4:6ff) and angels are among other beings that also inhabit heaven.
 3. The seraphim cry out of the holiness of God (6:3). God's glory fills not only heaven but the earth, the object of His creation and the habitation of those made in His image. But as Isaiah will see, that image has been irreparably tarnished.
- B. 6:5 – Isaiah is overwhelmed by the heavenly sight, as are others who see such glorious visions (like Daniel, Dn 10:1-3, 8-9, 16-17). The nearness of God makes Isaiah painfully aware of his own sense of guilt as well as the corporate guilt of Israel. "*Woe is me*" is added to the woes he pronounced upon the nation in ch 5.
 - C. 6:6-7 – A seraph flies to Isaiah and touches Isaiah's mouth with a live coal from the altar. This purifies Isaiah thus making him fit to be a spokesman for God. This demonstrates the great gulf between man and God, for even one as great as Isaiah is unfit on his own merits.
 - D. 6:8 – The call of God and Isaiah's response follows. There is nothing to indicate that Isaiah knew the fullness of what he was being called to do, but his readiness is demonstrated by his affirmative response to whatever the mission of God was.
 - E. 6:9-10 – The commission becomes the refrain for all situations in which people willfully reject the overtures of God to listen, learn and repent. Jesus uses this very passage in condemning the obstinacy of His generation (cf. Mt 13:14-15). So does Paul of Roman Jews (Ac 28:26-27). The issue is not that Israel *cannot* hear. The prophecies of Isaiah demonstrate that God is appealing to Israel in ways that could be understood *if they were willing* (cf. Is 1:18). Thus God's words add to their hardness by telling them things they do not wish to hear.
 - F. 6:11-13 – What Isaiah asks is unclear, whether how long he is to preach or how long until the people are completely hardened. Nonetheless, the answer given assures that doom and destruction lie ahead and only a remnant will be left.

Questions:

1. What is one of the basic causes of Israel's captivity (Is 5:13)?
2. How does Paul describe the writings of Isaiah in Ac 28:25?
3. Compare Is 4:3 with Phil 4:3, Gal 4:26-27 and Heb 12:22. Comment.
4. What confusion exists among Israel (Is 5:20)? Why is this so?
5. How do you know that Israel's ultimate adversary will not be Philistia, Moab or other nearby nations?
6. Did God's vineyard fail to bear fruit because of His neglect or incompetence? Discuss.

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 5: To the Law and to the Testimony (chs 7-8)

1. Overview

A. Ch 7 – The backdrop of this chapter is the threat of the Israel/Syria coalition against Judah under King Ahaz. The Assyrians are creeping closer to Damascus and Samaria, and Ahaz has refused to join forces with Israel and Syria against them. Instead, he wishes to thwart an attack by allying himself with Tiglath-Pileser (cf. 2 Kgs 16:5-9).

1. 7:1-6 – Ahaz and Judah are filled with anxiety over the threats against them. Isaiah is sent to give them courage, and the prophet calls Pekah and Rezin “*two stubs of smoking firebrands*” (7:4), i.e., brittle, burned out embers which can do no further damage.

2. 7:7-9 – God indicates that the borders of Syria and Israel would be extended no further; Judah has nothing to fear in spite of how dire the situation appears. “*Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken*” (7:8), a reference to the deportations and fragmenting of the populace that will later occur under the Assyrian king Esar-haddon, who ruled from 681-668 BC.

3. 7:10-17 – God instructs Ahaz to ask for a sign of his choosing to confirm this promise. Ahaz refuses, so God announces His own sign that assures the preservation of Judah. By inspired fulfillment the sign indicates that the Messiah will be of both human and divine origin; the mother will not be impregnated by man but directly by God (cf. Mt 1:22-23).

4. 7:18-25 – God further tells of a coming day of terror, shame and poverty, a day when the armies of Assyria and Egypt would trouble the land. Ahaz had thought to protect himself by appealing to the Assyrians, but it will be that very nation which will afflict them. Such is the fate of men who reject the counsel of God and seek carnal means of defense.

B. Ch 8 – Further prophecy is given that Assyria will overrun Judah, and personal exhortation is given to Isaiah to be faithful in his prophetic endeavors.

1. 8:1-4 – Isaiah is instructed to demonstrate his prophecies through his family: he is to have a son and name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, or speed the spoil, hasten the booty. This is to indicate the speedy overthrow of the threat of Israel/Syria.

2. 8:5-10 – The imagery here is that of Assyria flooding the land as an overflow of the Euphrates. The people “*refused the waters of Shiloah that flow softly*” (8:6); they rejected the stream of Jerusalem as impotent and embraced the great Euphrates (much as Naaman thought the rivers of Damascus were superior to the Jordan) as their savior. The people will be shattered and broken in pieces for their rejection of God.

3. 8:11-18 – God encourages Isaiah not to be intimidated or fearful because of the resistance and false accusations that will arise from his enemies. He, like all of God’s people, must fear God first and base his actions upon God’s expectations. The instruction to “*bind up the testimony*” seems to indicate the rejection of Isaiah’s message and a patient waiting upon God to carry out his will.

4. 8:19-22 – God chides the people for searching for guidance and knowledge in the wrong places, like mediums and wizards. *“Should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?”* As in Is 1:18, God is calling the people back to the law and testimony, the eternal truths He has revealed through Moses and the prophets. Because of this rejection, the future is filled with horrible images of madness and despair (8:21-22).

2. Special Emphasis – Is 7:10-16

- A. Clearly Matthew’s reference to this prophecy (Mt 1:22-23) indicates divine birth. Joseph is advised by an angel: *“Do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit”* (Mt 1:20). He then quotes Is 7:14 as being fulfilled in these events.
1. It seems clear from the history of Jewish writing, however, that the Jews did not consider this passage to indicate that the Messiah would be virgin-born.
 2. Such an understanding of Is 7:14 only comes from Matthew’s reference.
- B. Outside of the debate over the term “virgin” (Heb. *almah*), it is fair to inquire: What is the significance of a prophecy that will not be fulfilled for over 700 years as a sign to Ahaz and his generation?
1. Ahaz is instructed to “ask a sign for yourself” (Is 7:11). This he refuses to do because he is a faithless man with his own agenda. He does not want to submit to God’s will.
 2. A sign of God’s choosing will be given (7:13-14), and it is addressed not to Ahaz but to the “house of David.” It is a sign that will eventually affirm God’s faithfulness to the house of David; i.e., the covenant God made with David that his descendants would be the rightful heirs of the throne. Ahaz should have accounted for this and been confident in God’s power and willingness to protect him. But his lack of faith led him away from God.
 3. Isaiah indicates that before such a Child would reach the age of discerning right and wrong, the enemies of Judah would be overthrown (Pekah and Rezin – 7:16).
- C. This is a type of prophecy that is not clearly understood until explained by inspired commentary. Some prophecies are very specific and clear, others need clarification by the NT.

Questions:

1. How does Peter use Is 8:14?
2. Who will bring the king of Assyria upon the land?
3. Describe Ahaz’s reaction to the news that enemy forces were deployed in Ephraim.
4. How does Heb 2:13 connect with this section of Isaiah?
5. Find a NT correlation to the exhortation given to Isaiah in Is 8:12-13.
6. What did Pekah and Rezin want to do after invading Jerusalem?

1. Overview

- A. Ch 9 – This chapter further elaborates on the Son to be born in the future (Is 7:14) and the punishment to come upon Samaria for its unfaithfulness.
1. 9:1-7 – Isaiah speaks of the Messianic day which will dawn upon Zebulun and Naphtali (9:1-2). This passage is cited by Matthew in reference to the extensive work done by Jesus in Galilee (cf. Mt 4:13-16). This light will dawn after the dark days of battle (9:3-5). All the hopes for the future ride on the glorious coming of a Son who will rule on the throne of David and restore judgment and justice to the nation (9:6-7).
 2. 9:8-10:4 – Samaria will be humbled for its wickedness and arrogance. Note the repeated phrase, *“For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still”* (Is 5:25; 9:12, 17, 21; 10:4). All the discipline that God had sent had been rejected. The people merely hardened their resolve to continue their evil ways (9:10).
- B. Ch 10 – Judgment is pronounced upon Assyria followed by reassurance of God’s remnant.
1. 10:5-19 – God declares Assyria to be *“the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation”* (10:5). *“Yet he does not mean so ...”* (10:7); i.e., Assyria is acting out of its own selfish purposes. This fierce warrior nation is interested in conquest, not in punishing Israel on God’s behalf. Though the Assyrians had been used by God to accomplish His will, God will punish them for their wicked motives: *“I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks”* (10:12).
 2. 10:20-34 – God reassures the remnant of faithful people that though the Assyrians would cause suffering and anguish, *“for yet a very little while and the indignation will cease, as will My anger in their destruction”* (Is 10:25).
- C. Ch 11 – Isaiah turns to the Messianic future in which a glorious restoration of the ruling house of David will take place. Of course, at the time of the prophecy the people could not be expected to fully comprehend the spiritual quality of these images. But they should have been prepared by them for the fulfillment through the prophet John, Jesus and the apostles.
1. 11:1-9 – The idealized rule of the Messiah is depicted. The “Rod from the stem of Jesse” would provide the perfect rule Israel never had. Instead of evil, treacherous and compromising like Israel’s human kings, the “Rod” or “Branch” would rule in wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and the fear of the Lord, righteousness and equity. Peace would be truly found among men by His rule and principles, illustrated by the nature images in 11:6-8.
 2. 11:10-16 – The first image in this section is of people from all over the face of the earth streaming to God: *“There will be a highway for the remnant of His people”* (11:16). Jew and Gentile will come together (11:10, 12), and Judah and Ephraim will be at peace (11:13). The second image is of the routing of Israel’s enemies and freedom from bondage (11:14-15).

D. Ch 12 – A hymn of praise for the salvation and victory won by God for His people. If this chapter sounds familiar, it serves as the basis of the song *He Is in Our Midst*.

2. Special Emphasis – Is 9:6-7

- A. The Son, Immanuel (Is 7:14), is further elaborated upon. His divine nature is made clear in His names: Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
- B. Note the terms of rule: government, throne (of David), kingdom. His rule will be everlasting; it will not be defeated from without or collapse from within.
- C. “*The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this*” (9:7). Various Messianic passages indicate that what will unfold will be through the hand of God (cf. Dn 2:34, 44; Ps 118:22-23).

3. Special Emphasis – Is 11:1, 10

- A. The terms “Rod,” “Branch,” “Root” of Jesse (Is 4:2; 11:1, 10) carry the idea of a shoot or sprig growing up out of an apparently dead stump. So disappointing and flawed were the descendants of David that God declared of Jehoiachin: “*None of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah*” (Jer 22:30). Jeconiah, also known as Jehoiachin or Coniah, is in the lineage of Jesus (Mt 1:11). Thus, by decree of God, Jesus cannot rule in Jerusalem (not that this is in the scheme of God anyway, but such is taught by premillennialists).
- B. The throne of David would lie dormant until the stump shot forth a twig, indicating life remains in the promise of God regarding the throne. The life, death, resurrection and enthronement of Jesus represents the fulfillment of these prophecies (cf. Ac 15:16-17/Am 9:11-12).
- C. Note: “The passage (Is 11:1-10 – jj) finds its fulfillment in the conversion of sinners since Pentecost. If the whole passage is not now fulfilled in Christ, then the Gentiles have no basis of hope” (Hailey, *Commentary on Isaiah*, p. 124).

Questions:

1. Where does God place the blame for the wickedness of Israel (Is 9:14-16)?
2. What is causing the fire to burn through the land?
3. What did Assyria think of Jehovah (Is 10:8-11)?
4. Who is an ax, saw, rod and staff?
5. To what earlier event is the destruction of Assyria likened (Is 10:26)? How would you characterize that defeat?
6. How does Paul use Is 11:10?
7. About how much time has elapsed since the prophecies of Jesse/David (Is 11:1, 10) were given and Isaiah’s mention of them?

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 7: Judgments Against the Nations (1)(chs 13-17)

1. Overview

- A. Ch 13 – The downfall of Babylon, not yet having risen to world dominion, is declared. God knows in advance who He will raise up and for what purpose, and He knows who He will destroy.
1. 13:1-5 – God again calls for an army to assemble against Babylon. In 13:17, the threatening force is identified as the Medes. From Isaiah’s perspective, Babylon will not be destroyed for another 200 years (539 BC).
 2. 13:6-16 – When the great, proud city of Babylon realizes that its doom is near, its inhabitants will be filled with fear and dread (13:6-8). From a human perspective, such a battle will be nothing unusual: just nations warring against each other for territory and goods. But this is not the whole story: *“Wail, for the day of the Lord is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty (13:6, 13).*
 3. 13:17-22 – The Medes will not be bribed or appeased with money. They will engage in heartless slaughter, and Babylon will be as desolate as Sodom and Gomorrah.
- B. Ch 14 – The fall of the king of Babylon is portrayed from the perspective of Sheol, or the grave. As glorious as the king was and fierce in all his conquering power, he will eventually meet his fate as have all other monarchs before him. Also, judgments are given against Assyria and Philistia.
1. 14:1-2 – In a brief interlude, Isaiah contrasts the horror to befall the people of Babylon with the eventual bliss that will return to Israel.
 2. 14:3-11 – When the staff and scepter of Babylon are finally broken, the earth will rest and be at peace. The forests are personified as relieved that they are no longer cut for battlefields and for fortifications and engines of war. Death is the great equalizer, and the king of Babylon is seen taking his place among all the other arrogant, ruthless tyrants who in their lifetimes oppressed, murdered and robbed for their own pleasure and self-gratification.
 3. 14:12-23 – The king of Babylon, who thought of himself as a god because of his temporal glory and power (shining like a day-star, or Lucifer in NKJ), is now *“brought down to Sheol.”* So abominable were these kings of Babylon that their burial places will not be held in honor like those of other earthly rulers (14:18-21). Their descendants shall be cut off by God, and the royal line of Babylonian kings will come to a permanent end.
 4. 14:24-27 – The Assyrians, the current ruling power during Isaiah’s life, are given brief notice of their coming fate.
 5. 14:28-32 – This prophecy against Philistia can be dated to 715 BC, the year of Ahaz’ death. The Philistines had been a perpetual thorn in Israel’s side, and for their years of treachery and opposition God vows their destruction.

C. Ch 15 – A lengthy prophecy against Moab, encompassing ch 16 as well, is given. The Moabites, like the Philistines, have been continual enemies of Israel. Traced back to Lot through an incestuous relationship with his daughter, the Moabites were always jealous of their more blessed Israelite relatives. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos and Zephaniah all prophesy against Moab. Many of these Moabite cities, occupying a territory east of the Dead Sea, are of uncertain location. But the descriptive terms are clear: laid waste, destroyed, weep, wail, cry out, fugitives, blood, etc. The images depict a day of panic, sorrow, suffering and cries that reach surrounding cities.

D. Ch 16 – Moab's fate continues.

1. 16:1-5 – Homer Hailey observes that this section of Isaiah is very difficult to properly interpret and he gives multiple explanations offered by commentators. The overall thrust seems to highlight 16:5 where Moab's only hope for salvation will be through the "*tabernacle of David*," i.e., Messianic refuge. God will destroy the nation, but the Moabites will be able to gain entry into the eternal kingdom if they possess the proper spirit.
2. 16:6-14 – Moab has been stripped of its vineyards and the joy and gladness of their fruit. Again, note the descriptive phrases: wail, mourn, stricken, languish, weeping, singing and shouting cease, etc. According to the immediacy of this prophecy ("*within three years*," 16:14), the Assyrians apparently were the instruments of God's punishment against Moab.

E. Ch 17 – Syria and Israel are combined in this prophecy of doom because of their united opposition against Judah.

1. 17:1-8 – Like Babylon, Damascus is to be "*a ruinous heap*" and a place for herds and flocks. Jacob will be plundered till only a few olives are left on the tree; i.e., a small remnant is left.
2. 17:9-14 – Israel had looked to its heathen neighbors via alliances in order to survive. They had "*set out foreign seedlings*" (17:10). However, they would produce a crop of ruins. The Assyrians will enter Judah like "*the rushing of mighty waters*," but God will blow them away like chaff. The warning of 17:14 is apparently fulfilled by the slaughter of Sennacherib's army in one night.

2. Special Emphasis – Is 13:10, 13

- A. The term "day of the Lord" (13:9) is used in a variety of ways in the Scriptures, always of God's justice and wrath being expressed. While it may be used of final judgment, it often simply refers to some day of reckoning in the world's scheme of things.
- B. The apocalyptic images of 13:10, 13 are not indicators of final judgment but God's wrath being poured out on the Babylonians. The darkness of the heavenly bodies simply refer to the fear and gloom that shrouds people undergoing deep trials. It represents the upheaval of kingdoms, the inhumane slaughter of armies and innocents, the changing of the course of world events. When things are in such turmoil, it is as if the heavens and earth are being shaken.
- C. We must carefully assess such passages and not jump to unwarranted conclusions. This is apocalyptic language and refers to trauma of an earthly nature.

3. Special Emphasis – Is 14:12-15

- A. This section has long been misconstrued to be speaking of the origin of Satan. But a cursory reading indicates that Satan is nowhere in the context; it is clearly stated that this prophecy (of the *future*, not the *past*) is a “*proverb against the king of Babylon*” (14:4).
- B. As previously noted, “Lucifer” is an unfortunate translation of the NKJ. The term means day-star and refers to the temporary brightness of the king of Babylon’s reign. The light of his rule was bright and glorious, standing out from all others as Venus precedes the sunrise. But, alas, he is cut down to the ground, a ruined, inglorious heap.
- C. The reasons for such a fall: the king of Babylon “weakened the nations.” He weakened them by plundering and subjugating and deporting entire populations. It is God who sets the boundaries and defines the limits of nations. It is not the place of man to do so. But the Babylonian kings acted arrogantly, taking upon themselves the prerogatives of God. (**Note:** Various kings were guilty of this, not just one. Thus the term “king” likely signifies all the Babylonian kings as a class.)

Questions:

1. What qualities have invited Babylon’s destruction (Is 13:11)?
2. What do the former kings say as the king of Babylon comes to Sheol?
3. Describe the degree of God’s power from Is 14:24, 27.
4. Where will men look in the day of calamity (Is 17:7-8)?
5. How is the term “burden” used in these prophecies? Can you find out anything about the meaning of this word?
6. What does the warning of Is 14:29 mean?
7. What is a characteristic of Moab (Is 16:6)?
8. What had Israel forgotten (Is 17:10)?

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 8: Judgments Against the Nations (2)(chs 18-23)

1. Overview

A. Ch 18 – Prophecy regarding Ethiopia.

1. This chapter perplexes many commentators, for it is not completely clear who is speaking to whom. The basic conservative approach has the Ethiopian ambassadors appealing to Judah to help them against the encroaching Assyrians. Homer Hailey cites 2 Kgs 19:9 which indicates that Ethiopia and Assyria were enemies.
2. 18:1-6 – If this basic assumption is accurate, then the prophecy instructs the ambassadors to go back home and wait for God to assert Himself against the Assyrians. While it may appear that God is idle, He is actually letting the situation ripen to His satisfaction.
3. 18:7 – While this may be literally understood as gifts of gratitude being sent to Jerusalem, it also seems to have a Messianic flavor. Perhaps it is a foreshadowing of the Messianic blessings to come upon all nations, illustrated some 800 years later by the Ethiopian treasurer traveling to Jerusalem to worship and returning home a Christian.

B. Ch 19 – Prophecy against Egypt.

1. 19:1-17 – The great nemesis of Israel, the land of Egypt, now falls under God’s judgment. God will take away the judgment and wisdom Egypt derived from its idols: *“I will destroy their counsel”* (19:3); *“Pharaoh’s wise counselors give foolish counsel”* (19:11); *“The Lord has mingled a perverse spirit in her midst; and they have caused Egypt to err in all her work”* (19:14).
2. 19:18-25 – Egypt, Assyria and Israel are portrayed as being in fellowship with each other and commonly blessed by God. This is typical of Messianic prophecy which indicates that all nations will have a common Savior and King (cf. Is 11:10-11).

C. Ch 20 – Prophecy against Egypt and Ethiopia.

1. The historical background: In 713 BC, the Assyrians besieged the Philistine city of Ashdod. They had revolted against Assyria and apparently felt that the nearby Egyptians and Ethiopians could defend them against the foreign invaders.
2. Isaiah is given instruction to symbolically portray the future captivity of Egypt and Ethiopia by going naked and barefoot for three years (aren’t you glad you’re not a prophet?!). As Hailey and others note, “naked” is not likely total nudity, which would be morally reprehensible, but being stripped to the undergarments as captives would be.

D. Ch 21 – Prophecies against Babylon, Edom and Arabia.

1. 21:1-10 – Isaiah is distressed by the vision against Babylon. Even though the Babylonians will become enemies of Israel and bring great suffering and trial upon them, Isaiah seems greatly distressed at the horror that will befall them. *“Babylon is fallen, is fallen!”* (21:9) echoes

down the stream of time unto John's Revelation (Rv 14:8; 18:2). The eventual fall of this great and glorious city stands as a symbol of any power that opposes the people of God. In His own way and in His own time, God will crush such a threat.

2. 21:11-12 – Regarding this short, obscure prophecy against Edom, I have no better explanation than Homer Hailey's (cf. *A Commentary on Isaiah*, p. 178). It seems that the watchman of God sees only the faint light of the morning followed by night. Edom's future is very dark; Obadiah has already prophesied its eventual doom. The only hope for the inhabitants of this forsaken land (especially given the role they will play against the Messiah via the Herodian rulers) is for them to come to God through the Messiah. Otherwise, the physical nation has no future, and any inquiry of daybreak will be answered by the return of night.
3. 21:13-17 – The nomadic tribes of Arabia will also come under the threat of the Assyrians and be humbled. The immediate destruction would not be total, for Jeremiah later prophesies that Babylon would finish the job (cf. Jer 49:28).

E. Ch 22 – Prophecies against Jerusalem and Shebna, the steward.

1. 22:1-14 – The prophet describes the eventual fall and ruin of Jerusalem. Archers, horsemen, chariots and the images of siege warfare bring great distress to Isaiah (22:4). The people respond to the threat not by turning to Jehovah but to their own schemes of defense (22:8-11). This will be to no avail. Instead of heeding the warning of impending judgment, the people carried on with joy and celebration (22:12-14).
2. 22:15-25 – This is the only prophecy of Isaiah against an individual. Shebna was a high official of some sort, probably exercising royal authority. He apparently used his position to gratify himself, particularly in constructing a glorious tomb in which he planned to be buried. God, however, promises his demotion and his ultimate humiliation in a foreign land. He will be replaced by Hilkiah. See references to these two in Is 36:3 and 37:2.

F. Ch 23 – Prophecy against Tyre. Tyre was a city of Phoenicia, the foremost center of commerce and trade of its day. Apparently, its commercial interest had become greed and immoral excess. Perhaps it exalted itself in idolatrous reveling as a result of its prosperity. Whatever the case, God pronounces judgment upon this wealthy city.

1. 23:1-12 – Tarshish (Spain), Cyprus, Sidon, Egypt and other inhabitants of the coastlands (of the Mediterranean basin) are called upon to wail and lament the fall of Tyre. The whole world profited from Tyre's ships, seamen and merchants. But "*the Lord of hosts has purposed it, to bring to dishonor the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth*" (23:9). Again, Jehovah is the master of the nations; He rewards and punishes at His good pleasure.
2. 23:13-18 – Babylon, a city that grew and honed its fighting skills against the periodic incursions of the Assyrians, will be God's instrument against Tyre. The Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar besieged Tyre for thirteen years, yet the city withstood him. Ezekiel says that God gave Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar as a reward for doing His will against Tyre (Ezk 29:18-20). After this siege of Nebuchadnezzar, Tyre would return to its ways and "*commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth*" (Is 23:17). Compare this chapter and the fall of Rome as depicted in Rev 18:1-20. The city would eventually fall completely to Alexander the Great in 332 BC.

2. Special Emphasis – Is 19:18-25

- A. Part of Isaiah's concept of the Messiah involves the inclusion of the Gentiles. This will be studied in various places, particularly in the latter portions of Isaiah. This section of Is 19 is reflective of a universal faith that is to come under the Messiah.
- B. Three bitter enemies – Egypt, Assyria and Israel – are pictured as united under one Lord. In literal terms, nothing could be further from the truth in our own day. Egypt is a more moderate Arab/Islamic state; Iraq, the modern descendant of Assyria, are militantly Arab/Islamic, and Israel is fiercely Jewish. War, hatred, distrust and self-interest characterize the politics of this region.
1. Yet Isaiah sees altars and pillars to the Lord in Egypt (19:19).
 2. Egypt cries out for a Savior, and God sends a Mighty One to deliver them (19:20).
 3. The Lord will be known to Egypt and will make sacrifices and vows to Him (19:21).
 4. A highway will unite Egypt and Assyria (19:23). This highway will be traveled for peace and not for warfare as in previous days.
 5. Egypt, Assyria and Israel would all sustain a relationship with Jehovah (19:25). Compare Rom 9:25-26 with this language: *"I will call them My people, who were not My people ... and it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there they will be called sons of the living God."*
- C. Such unity and peace are not the products of détente, treaties, the U.N. or forced compliance. They can only completely occur among people of different cultures and religions by voluntary capitulation to the Son of God. When men and women of all nations cast aside bitterness, envy, idolatry and cultural pride and embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, only then can true peace prevail.

Questions:

1. How does God describe the downfall of Assyria in Is 18:5?
2. According to Is 19:5-10, what would God attack in which the Egyptians placed so much trust?
3. What would be the effect of Egypt and Ethiopia's destruction among those who trusted in them?
4. What is Isaiah saying in Is 21:10?
5. What attitude was manifested by Jerusalem toward God's punishment (Is 22:13)? What NT passage draws upon this image to describe the outlook of those who reject the resurrection?
6. What mistake did the inhabitants of Jerusalem make in Is 22:11?
7. In what sense do you think Tyre's behavior is called "fornication"?

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 9: Judgment Against All the Ungodly (chs 24-27)

1. Overview – This section presents several difficulties of interpretation. I would suggest that the picture is one of universal judgment against all ungodly nations and the rise of God’s indestructible kingdom; i.e., Mount Zion. A universal truth is developed in Isaiah: any nation that rejects God and thrives on evil will eventually fall before God’s wrath.

A. Ch 24 – Judgment will come upon the unbelieving world.

1. 24:1-13 – The “earth” and the “inhabitants of the earth” are terms describing unregenerate people. The book of Revelation uses these terms similarly. The earth is “defiled” by the transgressions of the people (24:5). Thus *“the land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered”* (24:3). All of the shallow frivolity and levity of evil people oblivious to God will be stilled (24:7-11).

2. 24:14-23 – After momentary and premature rejoicing over God’s judgments (24:14-16), Isaiah returns to the theme of God’s wrath being poured out upon the earth. The imagery of 24:18-19 harkens back to the flood where the fountains of the earth were broken apart and floodwaters released. As the “exalted ones” and the “kings of the earth” are cast into the pit, the Lord of hosts reigns upon Mt. Zion and in Jerusalem (24:23). This language is reminiscent of Is 2:2-4 and will be seen frequently in prophetic writing; it is indicative of the establishment of a spiritual kingdom and the rule of the Messiah being established.

B. Ch 25 – A song of praise.

1. 25:1-8 – When God’s judgments finally come against the ungodly, the righteous remnant will praise God for His power and His word. Various images describe the relief: shade from the scorching sun, refuge from the storm, a banquet fit for a king, tears wiped away.

2. 25:9-12 – God will humble the proud and destroy the enemies of His people (of which Moab stands as a symbol). Those who have “waited on God” (25:9) will be vindicated.

C. Ch 26 – Thanksgiving for God’s salvation.

1. 26:1-11 – Whereas chs 24-25 pictured a lofty mountain (Mt. Zion), ch 26 says *“we have a strong city.”* This city is inhabited not by faithless Israelites, as was Jerusalem, but by *“the righteous nation which keeps the truth”* (26:2). Hebrews 12:22 pictures the saved as both a mountain and a city. This is common terminology of the kingdom under the Messiah. Those in this city of safety and fellowship with God truly desire Him and all He stands for (26:8-9).

2. 26:12-21 – The faithful mention the *“other masters besides You”* who have ruled over them from time to time – always as a result of disobedience and faithlessness. But God is now exalted as the sole ruler and deliverer of His people. Two images are used to describe the present blessed state of the people: 1) childbirth (26:17-18), and 2) resurrection (26:19). Labor and death have been replaced by birth and resurrection. Thus, the night of pain and suffering has given way to a new day of blessing and life. Thus, the Christian is portrayed in the new testament as “born again” and “raised to walk in newness of life.”

D. Ch 27 – A contrast between the fortunes of God’s people and His enemies.

1. 27:1-6 – The phrase “*in that day*” is found three times in this chapter. Whereas God’s people had been previously portrayed as an unfruitful vine (Is 5:1-7), now they are pictured as “*a vineyard of red wine*” that is jealously protected by God.
2. 27:7-13 – The wind of God’s judgment will blast the stones of idolatrous altars to dust. The fortified cities will be brought to ruin and inhabited by animals of the field. Why? “*For it is a people of no understanding; therefore He who made them will not have mercy on them, and He who formed them will show them no favor*” (27:11). Not only would “that day” be a day of destruction upon God’s enemies, but it is a day when the faithful will be gathered at the blowing of the great trumpet (7:12-13). God’s remnant will be summoned from Assyria and Egypt to “*worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.*” Compare this with Is 19:23-25.

2. Special Emphasis – Is 26:3

- A. This verse has been selected for emphasis because of its exhortational value. It is a conditional promise: if our minds are fixed upon God, He will keep him in perfect peace. This principle is seen many times in the Old Testament as men like Noah, Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel, Hezekiah and many others entrusted themselves into God’s keeping.
- B. The concept reaches its fullest realization in the gospel, as God abundantly cares for those who put their full trust in Him. Philippians 4:6-7 is a good parallel verse. Consider also Mt 6:33-34. These promises are not of guaranteed health and wealth but the inner strength and joy that is based upon fellowship with God. This sense of eternal well-being puts all else in perspective.
- C. Let us not, as Peter did amidst the wind and waves, allow our minds to wander from God and His loving care.

Questions:

1. What does Is 24:2 say about the fate to befall human society?
2. How does Isaiah use a vineyard and olive tree to describe the destruction to come?
3. Compare Is 25:8 with Rev 7:17; 21:4. What do you think about this imagery?
4. Find another passage that encourages the faithful to “wait” upon God. What does this mean?
5. How do the wicked react to God and righteousness (Is 26:10-11)?
6. Who does God keep in perfect peace?
7. Why should God’s people hide in their chambers?
8. Compare Is 27:13 with Mt 24:31. See also Is 24:23 and Mt 24:29. Note the similarity of language.

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 10: Words of Warning and Comfort (chs 28-31)

1. Overview

A. Ch 28 – This chapter includes the errors of Jerusalem and Ephraim followed by God’s rebuilding under the Messiah.

1. 28:1-15 – Rebuke is given to Ephraim for relying upon its own strength and ingenuity against its foes. “The drunkards of Ephraim”; i.e., the Israelites who are stupefied and confused by their own stubborn pride, will be overwhelmed by the storms of God’s wrath. But His faithful remnant will recognize His sovereign rule and power (28:5). Isaiah condemns the priests and prophets who in their numbed sensibilities treat his words with contempt (28:9-10, 13). They consider Isaiah’s prophecies to be simplistic, tedious and redundant, not seeing that their scorn and rebuke are the very reasons for the coming judgment.
2. 28:16-29 – After the land is cleansed by divine flood (the invasions of Assyria and Babylonia), God will “*lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation*” (28:16). He will rebuild using justice and righteousness as a measuring line and plummet. Isaiah warns his enemies not to mock, “*for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts, a destruction determined even upon the whole earth*” (28:22). The chapter ends with a simple agricultural lesson indicating that God knows how to bring in the harvest of the nations.

B. Ch 29 – Woe unto Jerusalem.

1. 29:1-8 – Jerusalem will first be humbled by God and then her enemies will be dealt with for their own wickedness.
2. 29:9-16 – The quality of blindness is now added to the image of drunkenness. God will remove wisdom, knowledge and judgment from the people, and they will be unable to find their way. This is because of their spiritual destitution (29:13).
3. 29:17-24 – But all is not lost forever; God will eventually restore sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, understanding to the ignorant. Isaiah’s prophecies continually swing between judgment and restoration. Good times are ahead, times of spiritual blessing and renewal. But these will not come until after the storm breaks.

C. Ch 30 – God condemns Jerusalem for their alliances with Egypt; He promises a day of future blessings, and He vows that the Assyrians will be punished for their wickedness.

1. 30:1-17 – As the Assyrian threat grows, Israel nervously looks toward the ancient empire of Egypt, its own former captor, for help. But God says all their overtures, treaties and tribute would become a humiliation, shame and reproach to them. The people will be punished for silencing the prophets (30:10) and dealing in oppression and treachery (30:12-13).
2. 30:18-26 – God promises to return to the people and bless them. Note the descriptive words in this section: gracious, mercy, dwell in Zion, weep no more, eyes shall see, ears shall hear, rain for seed, streams of waters, etc. The picture is of abundance and bliss.

3. 30:27-33 – Punishment upon Assyria will be forthcoming. Contrast the foregoing section with the words here: anger, indignation, devouring fire, sieve of futility, scattering, tempest, hailstones, staff of punishment, etc. *“For through the voice of the Lord Assyria will be beaten down.”*

D. Ch 31 – God again chides Israel for relying upon Egyptian horses and chariots. At the appointed time, God will intervene: *“As a lion roars ... so the Lord of hosts will come down to fight for Mt. Zion and for its hill”* (31:4). If this is in reference to Sennacherib and his threat against Jerusalem, God certainly did swoop down upon this foreign army like a flock of birds (31:5) and the Assyrians were devoured by a sword not of mankind (31:8).

2. Special Emphasis – Is 28:16

A. This passage finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ (cf. Ps 118:22 and see references in Mt 21:42; Ac 4:11; Rom 9:33; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:6-8). There is no doubt that the inspired writers and speakers of the NT understood this reference as Messianic.

B. A key concept is that this foundation stone would be laid by God, Himself. We must let go of our own wisdom, judgment and strength and establish ourselves firmly upon the principles and character of Christ. This is building our lives upon the rock instead of the sand (Mt 7:24-27).

3. Special Emphasis – Is 29:13

A. Homer Hailey draws a distinction between the apostate worship of Israel, which was open and brazen, and the hypocritical service of Judah. Judah maintained outward rituals with the temple, priesthood, sacrifices, etc., but inwardly the people were far from God.

B. Since Jesus faces a similar situation in His own day, He applies this observation of Isaiah to the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders (cf. Mt 15:8-9).

Questions:

1. How will God speak to Jerusalem in the future (Is 28:11)? What do you think this means?
2. What words describe the woes to come upon Jerusalem (Is 29:1-4)?
3. What is the attitude of Israel as they engage in wickedness (Is 29:15)?
4. Compare Is 29:23 with Eph 2:10. What is the work of God's hands?
5. How would the people have been saved, if they would (Is 30:15)?
6. What was the attitude of the people toward the prophets?
7. What is the significance of “Tophet” (Is 30:33)?
8. Why is it futile to trust in Egypt (Is 31:3)?

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 11: Future Blessings Upon Israel (chs 32-35)

1. Overview – Isaiah looks beyond the destruction of Assyria to a brighter day coming. It would appear that nothing in Israel’s physical future fulfills these grand promises. We must look for the answer in the coming of the Messiah, the only ruler and kingdom which can offer the kind of peace and prosperity that Isaiah envisions.

A. Ch 32 – Words of comfort and warning.

1. 32:1-8, 16-20 – The beginning and end of the chapter speak of an ideal ruler who will “*reign in righteousness*” (32:1). This harkens back to Is 9:6-7; 11:1-9. In a day of political uncertainty, military threat, social chaos, fear and dread, the people longed for stability and protection. Isaiah foresees a new regime where good and righteous men will provide leadership. The end result: “*My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.*”
2. 32:9-15 – Sandwiched in between these words of gladness is a section of warning against complacency. Specifically targeted are women who are at ease and unconcerned about anything but themselves. Isaiah warns of difficult days that lie ahead when both city and country will be laid waste. Mourning will replace the thoughtless revelry that once existed.

B. Ch 33 – The purification of Zion.

1. 33:1-9 – Note the “woe” in 33:1. This is the sixth woe in a series (cf. 28:1; 29:1, 15; 30:1; 31:1). The faithful are waiting on the Lord to rise up and defend them. They pray for the defeat of their enemies and the establishment of justice, righteousness, wisdom and knowledge. Presently, the highways are deserted and even the physical land is mourning.
2. 33:10-16 – God responds to the wishes of the faithful, but His judgment will begin with His own people. This is reminiscent of 1 Pet 4:17. God will put all through the refining fire, and all the wicked purposes of man, Israelite or Gentile, will be brought to naught. Only the genuinely godly man will come through unscathed.
3. 33:17-24 – God will preserve Zion and Jerusalem; the city will be defended and the enemies will be plundered. While this may have an immediate reference to the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrians, the broader fulfillment is Messianic. Only on spiritual Mt. Zion and in spiritual Jerusalem is true safety to be found, for it is a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb 12:28).

C. Ch 34 – Chapters 34-35 are a unit and complete this section of prophecy. The images are very apocalyptic and graphically describe the wrath of God as poured out upon evil nations.

1. 34:1-7 – As a result of the outpouring of God’s wrath, Isaiah sees piles of rotting, stinking corpses and mountains washed away by blood. He also sees a great slaughter of sacrifices, indicating the magnitude of the sins of God’s enemies.
2. 34:8-17 – “*It is the day of the Lord’s vengeance, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion*” (34:8). As a result, the enemies of God will be laid waste and their lands made desolate. God is affirmed

as the ruler of all the earth and the One who holds the destinies of the nations in His hands. This principle has not changed. God still controls nations according to His purposes, and He defends His citizenry from their enemies.

- D. Ch 35 – This chapter is a contrast to the hideous images of ch 34. The blessings are many: blossoms in the desert, joy and singing, blind eyes opened, deaf ears hearing, full pools of water, bustling highways, etc. Again, these images find their fullness in life under the Messiah. It is a life of richness and blessing, of security and peace, of happiness and joy.

2. Special Emphasis – Is 33:14-16

- A. When the devouring fire of God's wrath comes, only the righteous and upright will survive. The wicked will be purged and the pure will remain.
1. Fear will seize the hypocrites, for their emptiness will be exposed.
 2. The righteous man vigorously removes himself from evil. He walks and speaks uprightly and refuses even to be in the presence of the wicked. He does not leave the impression that he would entertain anything ungodly. He takes a clear, firm stand for what is right.
- B. Note the similarity between this passage and Rev 6:12-7:17.
1. Similarly, God's refining fire will come upon Rome, and His enemies will beg that the mountains and rocks *"fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb"* (Rev 6:16).
 2. God would set a seal on His servants, those who have been redeemed and serve God day and night. These would never hunger, thirst or weep anymore; they would be protected from the scorching heat.
- C. There will be many conceptual parallels between Isaiah and Revelation noted in this study.

3. **Special Emphasis – Is 35:3.** This is cited by the author of Hebrews (12:12) as an encouragement to keep pressing ahead. Christians have every reason to rejoice in the spiritual blessings that are found in Christ. Even in times of turmoil and heartache, we have access to many spiritual blessings and an eternal outcome of this life that cannot be forcibly taken away. Our Lord rules over the universe on our behalf, and He will protect and defend us according to His purposes and will.

Questions:

1. If Is 32:1-4 is properly identified as Messianic, how might these verses be applied?
2. What had God's people been doing (Is 33:2)?
3. Why might the ambassadors weep (Is 33:7; cf. 2 Chr 28:20-21; 2 Kgs 18:37)? What does this say about the true source of peace and security?
4. Who cannot walk on the "Highway of Holiness" (Is 35:8)? By contrast who shall walk there?

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 12: Sennacherib's Threat Against Jerusalem (chs 36-39)

1. Overview – This section ends the first major division of Isaiah (chs 1-39). It also provides a transition from Assyria being the major threat to Judah to Babylon. As God had said, He would spare Jerusalem from destruction; the Assyrians would not enter the city. But further disobedience would bring Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians against them in another 100 years.

A. Ch 36 – The threat against Jerusalem and blasphemy of God.

1. 36:1-12 – A high official of the Assyrian government, the Rabshakeh, stands outside the walls of Jerusalem and makes a speech designed to dishearten the men of Judah. The land has already been devastated and the fortified cities, except for Lachish and Libnah, have been taken. In this speech, the Rabshakeh undermines confidence in Egypt (36:4-6), accuses Hezekiah of forsaking God (36:7), offers a bribe (36:8) and claims Jehovah's blessings in attacking the land (36:10). His speech is a psychological masterpiece; it is designed to undermine confidence in Egypt, Hezekiah, God and their own military weakness.
2. 36:13-22 – The Rabshakeh continues his onslaught: he belittles Hezekiah (36:14-16a); he paints an attractive picture of surrender and deportation (36:16b-17); and worst of all he attacks the honor of Jehovah (36:18-20). With this insult of Jehovah the Rabshakeh seals his own fate and that of the Assyrian army.

B. Ch 37 – Isaiah promises the deliverance of God.

1. 37:1-7 – Hezekiah is deeply troubled by the threat outside the city walls. He and all the people truly seem helpless to defend themselves, and thus they appeal to Isaiah to intercede for God's intervention. Isaiah assures them that God has indeed heard the Rabshakeh and will come to Jerusalem's rescue.
2. 37:8-20 – The Rabshakeh returns to Sennacherib, who is now besieging the city of Libnah. Rumor reaches the king that the king of Ethiopia is advancing to meet him in battle, and he sends a letter to Hezekiah urging his surrender. He does not want to fight on two fronts, and he doesn't want Jerusalem being encouraged by the Ethiopians. Hezekiah spreads the threatening letter before the Lord and prays an eloquent, humble prayer.
3. 37:21-38 – Isaiah assures Hezekiah that God has heard his prayer and will defend His people. Jehovah rebukes the arrogance of Sennacherib, attributing to himself what had actually been made possible by God (37:23-27). God vows to turn the Assyrians around and send them back home: *"For I will defend this city, to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake"* (37:35).

C. Ch 38 – Hezekiah is spared from a life-threatening illness.

1. 38:1-14 – What a time of stress this was for Hezekiah and the nation. In the middle of the Assyrian crisis, Hezekiah becomes extremely ill and God tells him that he will not recover. Another interesting sidelight to this is that the Davidic succession is in jeopardy, for at this time in Hezekiah's life he has no children (cf. 2 Kgs 21:1, where Manasseh is born three

years later). Hezekiah is still young (39 years old), and he reminds God of his loyalty and faithfulness. He weeps bitterly at the thought of an untimely end to his life, especially with Jerusalem in such crisis. God responds to Hezekiah's prayer, and through Isaiah the king is informed that he will live fifteen more years.

2. 38:15-22 – Hezekiah's bitterness turns to ecstasy as he receives the news that he will live. He vows, as all men tend to do when saved from dire circumstances, that he will walk through life with circumspection (38:15). Unfortunately, he will break this vow through pride.

D. Ch 39 – Hezekiah receives a delegation from Merodach-Baladan, the king of Babylon, congratulating him on his recovery.

1. Likely, there were ulterior motives to such a visit, not the least of which was the enlistment of an ally against Sennacherib, and probably an opportunity to find out about the internal strength of Judah while feigning good will.
2. At any rate, Hezekiah seems completely taken in by this flattering gesture and shows the Babylonian ambassadors all of his assets. Isaiah confronts him with his foolish and self-centered behavior and warns Hezekiah that this is the precursor of things to come in the future (39:6-7).

2. Special Emphasis – Is 37:14; 38:2-3. Whether in times of national threat or personal crisis, Hezekiah turned to God for comfort and strength. Hezekiah was not a perfect man, and at times he made mistakes of judgment as king. But he did not rebel against God, and when the situation became dire, he knew where to turn. In both these cases, God granted Hezekiah's petitions. May we have a similar trust in God and in His benevolent power on our behalf.

Questions:

1. What is significant about where the Rabshakeh stands (Is 36:2; cf. Is 7:3)?
2. Was the Rabshakeh correct in his observations about Egypt?
3. What is the implication of lacking riders for horses (Is 36:8)? How does the Rabshakeh use this insult against Judah?
4. What request is made of the Rabshakeh by Eliakim, Shebna and Joah? What was his answer?
5. How does the letter from Sennacherib portray Jehovah?
6. Describe what befalls the Assyrian army. What is Sennacherib's ultimate fate? Where was he killed? Why is this significant considering his boast against Jehovah?
7. What sign is given to Hezekiah to confirm his recovery from sickness?
8. Describe Hezekiah's thoughts from his prayer in Is 38:10-14.
9. What does Hezekiah wish to do with his new lease on life (Is 38:18-20)?

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 13: Affirming the Greatness of God (chs 40-42)

1. Overview – Chapters 40-48 stress the superior greatness of Jehovah over idols. The Assyrians had the notion that God should be spelled with a lower-case “g.” But He proved them wrong. However, the ultimate defeat of Jerusalem lay in the future at the hand of the Babylonians. Undoubtedly, the Babylonians as well as many Israelites would conclude from the humbling of Jerusalem that God was inferior. Therefore, before the people can be restored to the land, their faith in God will have to be restored.

A. Ch 40 – A lofty, inspiring picture of God and His eternal power.

1. 40:1-11 – The picture here is of God returning to His people after their punishment. The call goes out to prepare the way for Him (40:3-5). After all has been said and done, the men of the earth, both Jew and Gentile, have been brought to nothing, punished for their sins. But the word of the Lord has been vindicated (40:6-8). All has happened according to His declared will.
2. 40:12-20 – Isaiah points to the creation as evidence of God’s surpassing power and wisdom (40:12-14). He then compares God with all the nations (40:15-17) – their might, their sacrifices – and declares that *“they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless”* (40:17). He then places God beside the idols created by men (40:18-20). In every way, God is superior.
3. 40:21-31 – *“Have you not known? Have you not heard”* (40:21, 28) calls attention to the things observed of God generation after generation. Man keeps making the mistake of ignoring or underestimating God – or esteeming things created by their own hands as more valuable and powerful than God. In despair, Israel will come to think that God has lost interest in them (40:27), but such is untrue. God constantly upholds the weary and strengthens the weak (40:29-31). But one must *“wait on the Lord”*; i.e., put their trust and confidence in Him, in order to receive such blessings. These *“shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”*

B. Ch 41 – *“Fear not ... I will help you.”*

1. 41:1-20 – Homer Hailey notes that in chapters 40-49 three entities are mentioned several times: Cyrus, the Persian king whom God will raise up and who will allow conquered people to return to their homeland; God’s servant Israel, who had been unfaithful and subject to punishment, and the ideal Servant, the Messiah to come who will fulfill all of God’s redemptive purposes. The *“one from the east”* (41:2) is Cyrus, who will defeat Babylon and rule over the kings of the earth. Three times God urges Jacob not to fear, for God has raised up Cyrus to help them (41:10, 13-14).
2. 41:21-29 – Lest Israel think that the idols are superior to God because Jerusalem has been destroyed, God challenges the idols to display something to substantiate their existence. Jerusalem had been destroyed, not because foreign idols were more powerful, but because He had declared it to be so based upon Israel’s unfaithfulness. And when God so declares, this condition will be reversed. God chides the idols and those who believe in them for being nothing, an abomination, mere wind and confusion.

C. Ch 42 – God contrasts His faithful Servant to come (the Messiah) with His unfaithful servants, (Israel).

1. 42:1-9 – Isaiah begins to develop more fully the inclusion of the Gentiles (42:1, 6). The character of the Messiah is revealed in a passage specifically applied by Matthew to Jesus (42: 2-4/Mt 12:18-21). When Scripture interprets Scripture, we can be certain of the meaning. Though the idols are mute and powerless, God openly declares what He will do long in advance of its fulfillment (42:9).
 2. 42:10-17 – A “new song” will be sung to the Lord, new because it is sung by Gentiles, those not formerly covenant people. God will stir Himself after a long period (by man’s standards) and will replace His wrath with blessing and help.
 3. 42:18-25 – Israel has been downtrodden because of their disobedience unto God: *“For they would not walk in His ways, nor were they obedient to His law”* (42:24). God had already poured out His anger and fury upon Judah, but they did not heed. Therefore, Jerusalem was destroyed and the people taken into exile. The people should not conclude from these events that God is impotent, for He will rise up and bless the faithful remnant by bringing them back into the land.
- 2. Special Emphasis – Is 40:3-5.** All the gospel writers apply this passage to John. As God returned to Israel after the captivity and blessed them, so He would return to them after several hundred years of silence through John. John would prepare the hearts of the people for what God was about to do in the Messiah.
- 3. Special Emphasis – Is 40:7-8.** These passages are cited by Peter (1 Pet 1:24-25). Peter’s epistle addresses the suffering of God’s people, but he assures his readers that the purposes of God will be fulfilled even through their hardships. We must never let our own personal circumstances undermine our confidence in God’s care and promises.
- 4. Special Emphasis – Is 42:1-4.** Matthew cites this passage to describe the desire of Jesus to avoid unnecessary publicity. He was not a rabble rouser; He did not make a spectacle of Himself even though His wonderful works often drew multitudes. Jesus was gentle with the needy and hurting; the “little people” were not overlooked or ignored by Him as they are by those filled with self-importance.

Questions:

1. What three entities are mentioned several times in Is 40-49?
2. What is not part of God’s nature (Is 40:28)? Why is this important to we humans?
3. What phrase is repeated three times in Is 41:10-14?
4. Give an example of Jesus helping a “bruised reed” or blowing upon “smoking flax.”
5. Why did God give Jacob for plunder and Israel to the robbers?

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 14: Jehovah: the Only Creator and God (chs 43-45)

1. **Overview** – God is bolstering Israel for the stormy conditions to come. Because of His punishment upon their sins, they may conclude that the idols are stronger than Jehovah or that He has abandoned them. God affirms His sovereignty and assures the faithful remnant that He will yet again act on their behalf.

A. Ch 43 – God’s special relationship with Israel: a showcase to other nations.

1. 43:1-21 – God draws attention to what He has done in Israel: “*I have redeemed ...*”; “*I have called ...*”; “*I have loved ...*”; etc. (43:1-7). God multiplied, gathered and constituted them as a nation; He will *reconstitute* them after the captivity (43:6). Three times God says of Israel, “*You are My witnesses*” (43:10, 12; 44:8). The history of Israel stands in stark contrast to the fortunes of nations who follow false gods. God is calling upon His people to realize the special relationship He has sustained with them. Even though they have sinned, He will see to it that they continue as His special nation.
2. 43:22-28 – Though God had created them as a people, and though He is the only true God, the people have rejected Him and turned to idols. Because they have been wearied by keeping the laws of God (43:22), God has become weary of them in their iniquities (43:24).

B. Ch 44 – God, the source of Israel’s blessings.

1. 44:1-8 – God, who formed Israel “from the womb,” will again return to bless the people (44:3-5). Israel will undergo trials that will cause men to think that the nation is destroyed forever. But Jehovah reassures them this is not the case; they must not be deceived by appearances.
2. 44:9-20 – God now gets very specific in His condemnation of idol-making. He chides the practice of taking inanimate objects and, passive in the hands of the craftsman, making them into gods. First, the craftsman himself is weak (44:12). Trees made into idols have ironically been watered by Jehovah (44:14). The same material from which the god is made is used for fuel, thus becoming ashes (44:16). What sense does it make, God asks, for men to create an object out of nature (which He made in the first place) and then ascribe divine qualities to it?
3. 44:21-28 – God promises not to forget His people (44:21); He again assures them of His forgiveness (44:22; cf. 43:25). God presents Himself as the Creator, the One who frustrates false prophets and diviners and the One who confirms the words of His servants (44:24-26). Then, in anticipation of the future deliverance from captivity, God introduces Cyrus, the Medo-Persian king who will allow the remnant to return to Israel.

C. Ch 45 – God exalted in the return from captivity.

1. 45:1-13 – Over 150 years before Cyrus is born, before Persia becomes a world power (Assyria is yet to decline and Babylon is yet to arise), this extraordinary prophecy is given. God names this heathen king and tells of the success that Cyrus will enjoy by God’s divine will.

God affirms His judgments and chides any who would contend with the events to unfold (45:9-13). It may be that some will take issue with God for raising up a heathen to deliver them instead of a faithful Jew. But God reserves the right to do things as He chooses: *"Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' Or shall the handiwork say, 'He has no hands'?"* (45:9).

2. 45:14-25 – God justifies Himself against the idols. He says His words and works have been on display for all to see. Several times God declares that there is no other god besides Him (45:14, 18, 21-22). God has provided evidence for all men to see His true nature. *"I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth"* (45:19), God says. Indeed, many Gentiles were able to see His works on behalf of Israel and fear Him, though many did not respect and submit to Him. Unbelief, or belief misdirected in idolatry, is inexcusable – then and now. God has amply substantiated His existence, but it takes a disposition of faith to understand the significance of His works.

2. Special Emphasis – Is 44:18-20

- A. God chides the senselessness of idolatry. God has made man to worship Him, for He alone is the Creator and only true God. Yet, as he so often does, man gets this backward. Instead of worshiping the God who made him, he makes gods to worship. This foolishness and lack of reasoning is part of the judgment God brings upon the wicked.
- B. A similar thought is found in Eph 4:17-19. The Gentiles walk *"in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart ..."*. Rebellion and wickedness bring blindness of judgment, and pride often leads to the very course of action that will destroy the sinner.
- C. The only escape from such a self-destructive mindset is humble submission to God and a glad conformity to His stated will.

Questions:

1. Because of His care for them, what does God twice tell the people not to do?
2. Who will God punish in protection of His people (Is 43:14)?
3. What was the deeper significance of the people failing to offer sacrifices (43:22-24)?
4. List the ways God refers to Himself in Is 44:6-8. What are some other terms from ch 43?
5. What has God removed from men who make idols out of created things (Is 44:18-20)?
6. What will Cyrus do for Israel (Is 44:28)? Why would this be unusual?
7. What does Cyrus acknowledge after coming to power (Ezra 1:2)?
8. Where is the sentiment of Is 45:23 found in the NT?
9. What would not motivate Cyrus to let the people return (Is 45:13)?

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 15: God's Superiority to Babylon (chs 46-48)

1. Overview – This lesson concludes the section of Is 40-48 in which God has exalted Himself above the idols and the nations who created them. Jehovah reminds the people that He has always spoken His will and unfailingly brought it to pass. He will do so in the future. Things will appear very bleak, but they should trust in Him and His divine power to accomplish His stated will for Israel: return from exile and spiritual blessings through them to all the world.

A. Ch 46 – God addresses the Babylonian gods and professes His superiority to them.

1. 46:1-7 – The contrast: the idols of Babylon have to be carried by the people and will be carried helplessly into exile. Jehovah, however, carries His people: *“Who have been upheld by Me from birth, who have been carried from the womb: even to your old age, I am He, and even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you”* (46:3-4). Though the idols may be of precious metals, they merely sit stationary, unable to do anything good or bad since they are merely lifeless objects of man’s construction.
2. 46:8-13 – God calls Jacob to “remember, recall to mind” (46:8-9), “listen” (46:3, 12). He reminds them of great declarations and works of the past. These stand as witness that what God declares for the future, He will do.

B. Ch 47 – Babylon will be humbled. Homer Hailey notes that the king of Babylon has been condemned (Is 14), the idols of Babylon have been exposed (Is 46) and now the city itself will be laid low.

1. 47:1-11 – The arrogance of Babylon, exemplified in Nebuchadnezzar (cf. Dn 4:30), will be deflated by God. Babylon is portrayed as an aristocratic, refined lady who will be humiliated by nakedness, menial labor, sitting in the dust. Babylon had said of itself, *“I am, and there is no one else besides me”* (47:8, 10). This great empire saw itself as supreme, unaccountable to anyone, sovereign in its own decisions and will. But only God occupies this position of superiority (cf. 45:5-6, 18; 46:9), and when men think that they are masters of their own destiny, God has a way of bringing them back to reality.
2. 47:12-15 – God particularly condemns the enchantments and sorceries of the astrologers and stargazers in Babylon. Again, the book of Daniel gives helpful background on such empty counselors (Dn 2:1-13; 5:7-8). How tenaciously men hold on to false gods and prophets even when they are proven vain. This world can be very uncertain and terrifying, and men desperately wish to know the future and the status of their well-being. Those who reject God and the comfort that comes with His benevolent power will turn to senseless methods of prognostication such as heavenly phenomena, positions of the stars and other meaningless happenstances of this material world.

C. Ch 48 – God: Israel’s only hope.

1. 48:1-11 – God exposes Israel’s attitude as all talk and no action. Israel has shown obstinacy and stubbornness from the beginning, and God says He has taken great pains to declare Himself every step of the way so they would not attribute their fortunes to idols. God says

He is constantly working new things that cannot be predicted or foreseen. This is so that Israel would not pride itself on its own knowledge and insight. God says that He will bring His words to pass for His own sake, to demonstrate His own power and faithfulness, not by virtue of Israel's greatness or value.

2. 48:12-22 – God laments the course that things have taken: *“Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea”* (48:18). Who can fathom what would have happened in history if men had cooperated with God?! But God has patiently borne with the weakness and rebellion of man to bring about his redemption.

2. Special Emphasis – Is 47:1-9

- A. Compare the language and attitude characteristic of Babylon with that of Rome/Babylon of Revelation 18:7-8.

1. She glorified herself and lived luxuriously (Rev 18:7a) – Cf. Is 47:1, 8.
2. She saw herself as regal and above the tragedies and misfortunes of life (Rev 18:7b) – Cf. Is 47:5, 8.
3. Plagues would come suddenly and fire would consume her (Rev 18:8) – Cf. Is 47:9, 11, 14.

- B. As Homer Hailey notes: “From the dawn of human history to its sunset, Babylon has been and will continue to be a symbol of pride and enmity against the eternal God and His standard of righteousness ... John’s Babylon thus became a permanent symbol of all that is lustful, seductive, and enticing – all that appeals to the flesh. Each of the Babylons either has been or will be brought to an end by divine judgment.” (*Commentary on Isaiah*, p. 391)

Questions:

1. What does God say is yet not done?
2. What is Israel’s spiritual condition (Is 46:12)?
3. Why does God find fault with Babylon in Is 47:6? Cf. Zech 1:15.
4. What two horrible things will come upon Babylon (Is 47:8-9)?
5. Compare Is 48:8 (“And were called a transgressor from the womb”) and Ps 51:5. What do you think is being said in these passages?
6. How is Israel’s religion verbal only?
7. To what would Israel have attributed its turn of fortunes if God had not declared these things beforehand (Is 48:5)?
8. Find three passages in the past few chapters of Isaiah where God has spoken of His creation of the physical universe. Why does He emphasize this? How can this help us?

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 16: The Servant: God's Source of Blessing (chs 49-51)

1. **Overview** – Chapters 49-57 describe the Servant whom God will send in the future to bless His faithful people. The same One has previously been described from the standpoint of royalty and power (cf. Is 9:6-7). Isaiah now emphasizes the service He will render to those who yearn for fellowship and harmony with God.
 - A. Ch 49 – Jehovah looks to a day when not only the faithful remnant of Israel will be blessed but those of the Gentiles who respect Him as well.
 1. 49:1-13 – God invests the future hope of Israel in this One called the Servant. But it is clearly stated that *“it is too small a thing”* (49:6) that He is a blessing to physical Israel only. No, the Jews were going to have to think bigger than a Mosaic covenant established only between God and the fleshly descendants of Abraham. *“I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth”* (49:6). There is a hint of rejection of the Servant (49:7), but this will not prevent God from blessing His people.
 2. 49:14-26 – God addresses the despondency and depression of His people who have been disciplined harshly and scattered from the land. God refers to Israel as His own child whom He cannot forget (49:15). God foresees multitudes of people who will grow out of the remnant, so many that the land will not hold them all (49:19-21). In a favorite image of Isaiah, God will lift a standard or banner and command all the nations to bring the captives back (49:22-23). No matter how bleak the outlook, how powerful the enemy, how hopeless the future looks, the remnant should believe *“That I, the Lord, am your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob”* (49:26).
 - B. Ch 50 – A closer look at the Servant.
 1. 50:1-3 – God reassures the remnant that there has not been a permanent breach between Him and them. They had departed from Him: *“For your iniquities you have sold yourselves”* (50:1). But if they return, He will exercise His great power on their behalf.
 2. 50:4-9 – The Servant emphasizes His words: His teaching and preaching and the truth He shares with those in need. The subject of rejection introduced in Is 49:7 is expanded in 50:6-9. But the Servant places His trust squarely upon Jehovah and is confident that He will be upheld in His endeavors.
 3. 50:10-11 – Those who will belong to the Servant are those who will place their trust and dependence upon God. By contrast, those who build their own fire and depend upon its light for protection will be condemned. It is instructive to study how often Jesus stated His submission to His Father's will, His execution of His Father's purposes, His proclamation of His Father's words. Even in death, Jesus said, *“Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit”* (Lk 23:46). We are called upon to show the same trust in God that Jesus demonstrated in Him.
 - C. Ch 51 – God calls on the people to awake, look and listen. He reaffirms His divine power to accomplish whatever He wills. They must remember that all things are yet under His control; they must not fear man and forget the One who made them.

1. 51:1-8 – The despondent remnant is encouraged to remember Abraham and Sarah, just two people who in time became a great multitude of people. God emphasizes His righteousness and salvation, repeating them three times in 51:5, 6 and 8. He cautions the people not to fear men, for those who oppose them will be eaten up like moths consume wool (51:7-8).
2. 51:9-16 – The cry goes forth for God to awaken and show His strength as in the days of old, when Egypt was humbled (51:9; cf. 30:7) and the Red Sea parted. God chides the people for fearing their human enemies, for such fear betrays their lack of faith in Him (51:12-13).
3. 51:17-23 – God tells Jerusalem that they have drunk from the cup of His fury long enough. They will be restored, and the cup now given to those who had afflicted them.

2. Special Emphasis – Is 49:6

- A. These passages which speak of restoration and the Servant coming to bless the people are never fully realized in physical terms. New Testament applications help us understand the spiritual fulfillment that comes through Christ.
- B. This passage is quoted by Paul as he turns from the unbelieving Jews to the receptive Gentiles (Ac 13:47). Paul considers his work among the Gentiles to be a direct outgrowth of Isaiah's teaching. In other words, his inspired commentary on Is 49:6 is the preaching of the gospel about Jesus Christ from city to city, gaining converts mostly from the Gentiles.

3. Special Emphasis – Is 49:8

- A. On another occasion Paul cites this verse as an exhortation for the Corinthians "*not to receive the grace of God in vain*" (2 Cor 6:1-2). He had been speaking of his work as an ambassador of Christ to reconcile sinful men to God and prepare for the coming judgment (2 Cor 5:9-21).
- B. Paul then says, quoting Isaiah, "*Behold, **now** is the accepted time; behold, **now** is the day of salvation.*" Neither the physical return from Babylonian captivity nor some future fulfillment fits the bill. Isaiah foresaw the atoning death of the Servant and the preaching of the gospel in His name for salvation from sin.

Questions:

1. Where in the NT is Jesus depicted as having a sword protruding from his mouth (Is 49:2)?
2. Describe the blessings to come upon those under the Servant (Is 49:10). Compare this with Rev 7:16. What two classes are under consideration in Rev 7? See 7:4-8, 9.
3. What would the people feel in the midst of punishment (Is 49:14)? Where had God inscribed their names?
4. How would the Servant respond to the words of God (Is 50:5)?
5. Compare Is 50:8 with Jn 8:46. What could the enemies of Jesus not do? Who did they bring in to testify against Him at His trial?

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 17: The Suffering Servant (chs 52-53)

1. **Overview** – Even more detail is now given about the Servant to come. Isaiah 53 speaks at length about the atoning sacrifice that He is to offer and the suffering that will attend that sacrifice.
 - A. Ch 52 – Isaiah looks forward to a day when His people will be released from bondage and joy and singing will return.
 1. 52:1-6 – God promises that the circumcised and unclean will not defile Jerusalem any more. God will redeem His captive daughter of Zion “without money.” In fact, her redemption would be much more expensive than money could buy. God is weary of His name being blasphemed and His people suffering. He will act on their behalf, and the people will know that it is God who speaks.
 2. 52:7-12 – God expresses the joy to be experienced as a messenger coming with good news; the watchmen of the city will cry aloud at the news, “*Your God reigns!*” The people are instructed to leave the captivity of the Gentiles and return unto God (52:11-12).
 - B. Ch 53 – Isaiah describes the great suffering that will come upon the Servant of God.
 1. Stanza 1: 52:13-15. Most commentators consider this to be the first verse of a “Servant Song” that continues through ch 53. Jehovah indicates that His Servant would do His will without fail and be highly exalted. In spite of this, He will provoke astonishment among many for the life He will lead and the things He will suffer.
 2. Stanza 2: 53:1-3. Men would reject the Servant and fail to believe the things He said, even though He would speak the words of the Father. He would be despised and rejected, for He would not meet the standards and preconceptions of man. Rather than enjoying royal privilege and a life of comfort and ease, the Servant would experience sorrow and grief.
 3. Stanza 3: 53:4-6. While the Servant’s suffering has been touched on previously (cf. 49:7; 50:6-9), it is now connected with sin, not His own but that of others. Note the terms that indicate the vicarious nature of His suffering: our griefs, our sorrows, our transgressions, our iniquities, our peace, the iniquity of us all. For sinful men, the Servant would endure wounds, bruising, chastisement, stripes and the burden of the iniquity of others.
 4. Stanza 4: 53:7-9. The Servant would not raise an army to defend Himself against false charges and undeserved punishment. He would allow Himself to be slain and would go “*as a lamb to the slaughter.*” He would stand silent as a sheep before its shearers. Even though guilty of no wrongdoing, “*they made His grave with the wicked.*” The Servant would not enjoy a dignified death, but it would be associated with criminals and lawbreakers. Truly this was the case not only in the manner in which Jesus died but in the others who died with Him.
 5. Stanza 5: 53:10-12. The idea of iniquity being laid upon the Servant (53:6) is further clarified by “*You make His soul an offering for sin*” (53:10). Further, “*He shall bear their iniquities*” (53:11) and “*He bore the sin of many*” (53:12). This idea of vicarious atonement for sin is more fully developed by Jesus Himself and His apostles.

2. Special Emphasis – Is 52:7

- A. Paul again appeals to Isaiah to describe the process of preaching the gospel. This passage is found in Rom 10:15.
- B. Paul refers to it to indicate that the bearers of good news were commissioned by God. The Jews had no excuse for rejecting the gospel, for God had empowered the speakers and given them the message.

3. Special Emphasis – Is 52:11

- A. Paul alludes to this verse as he encourages the Corinthians to separate themselves from fellowship with sin.
- B. The physical departure from the midst of unclean Gentiles prefigures the spiritual separation from sin that is to take place in the life of the believer. God makes a conditional statement: *“Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty”* (2 Cor 6:17-18). The whole purpose of the Servant and His suffering is to remove sin from His people. Consequently, His people should remove themselves from sin.

4. Special Emphasis – Is 53:1

- A. Again, it is Paul who goes to Isaiah and pulls out a passage to define events surrounding the preaching of the gospel. This verse is cited in Rom 10:16.
- B. Paul is explaining that the majority of the Jews rejected the message concerning the Messiah or the Servant. But this, too, was prophesied. God knew the Jews would reject the gospel and resent the acceptance of the Gentiles.

5. Special Emphasis – Is 53:7-8

- A. This is the specific passage being read by the Ethiopian treasurer as he rode in his chariot. *“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him”* (Ac 8:35).
- B. This citation, as well as the others above, make it clear that the Servant is Jesus Christ, His death on the cross was an atoning sacrifice for sin, His rejection was predicted rather than unexpected. Isaiah outlined in great detail events that transpired in the life of the Son of God 700 years later.

Questions:

1. What does Is 53:2 indicate about the Servant?
2. What NT writer quotes Is 53:4? In what context does he refer to this passage?
3. How would men consider the suffering that would come upon the Servant (Is 53:4)?
4. When was Is 53:7 fulfilled in the life of Jesus?

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 18: God's Exalted People (chs 54-56)

1. **Overview** – After the dreary presentation of a suffering and rejected Servant, Isaiah now turns to the effect of His sacrifice. The forgiveness of sin will allow for a spiritual nation to be formed, drawn from all peoples of the earth.
 - A. Ch 54 – The fortunes of God's people are reversed. God's wrath will be taken away, replaced by His love and protection.
 1. 54:1-10 – Whereas the nation had become desolate and only a fraction of the original population would return to Canaan, God foresees a time of swelling tents full of His people. Because of their unfaithfulness, *"For a mere moment I have forsaken you ... but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you"* (54:7-8). God vows to keep a covenant of peace with His people, for as a spiritual kingdom they would be holy and separate unto Him.
 2. 54:11-17 – Jehovah changes the image of His people from a wife (54:6) to a beautiful city constructed of precious gemstones. In this idealized city, the children would be taught of God, righteousness would govern, fear and oppression will be banished. Note the similarity between the figure of a wife/bride with Rev 19:7-9 and the city of jewels with Rev 21:9-21. In these passages God's people and their relationship with Him are under consideration. They would return to God after unfaithfulness, and they would be rebuilt in splendor after having been razed because of disobedience.
 - B. Ch 55 – Seeking the transcendent and holy God.
 1. 55:1-7 – Listen to the universal invitation of God: *"Come to the waters ...", "come, buy and eat," "incline your ear, and come to Me ...", "seek the Lord ...", "call upon Him ...", "return to the Lord."* God promises to give food and drink, but not for the body. *"Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live ..."* (55:3). These verses reflect the knowledge and teaching that would come to all through the Servant. Indeed, Jesus promised "living water" and "bread from heaven" for those who had an appetite for such.
 2. 55:8-13 – Four "fors" or reasons are here given for seeking the Lord. We must lift ourselves to the level of God's thinking, for our own thoughts promote evil and harm (55:8-9). It is God's word that succeeds and profits, for He has the power to make it so (55:10-11). Only in God is true joy and blessing to be found (55:12-13).
 - C. Ch 56 – God specifically focuses upon the "foreigner" *"who has joined himself to the Lord"* (56:3). God promises to bless him who "keeps the Sabbath" and holds fast the covenant; i.e., who respects and honors God and His laws. They will receive an exalted place within the walls of God's house (56:5), they would come to His holy mountain (56:7). He will make them joyful and accept their sacrifices (56:7). God yet again indicates that more than the physical Jews will be included in this future gathering: *"The Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, 'Yet I will gather to him others besides those who are gathered to him'"* (56:8). While such prophecies were undoubtedly obscure at the time, the Jews should have been open to the teaching of the Servant upon seeing His credentials. Jesus Himself indicates the universal nature of the kingdom that He was establishing (cf. Jn 10:16; Mt 8:11-12). (Is 56:9-12 fit better with ch 57)

2. Special Emphasis – Is 54:1

- A. Again, NT citations help us get a handle on what Isaiah was prophesying. Paul cites this verse in Gal 4:27 and applies it to spiritual Jerusalem.
- B. Isaiah was speaking of the enlargement of the people of God, the barren woman giving birth to more children than the married woman. Paul alters this slightly by reference to Sarah and Hagar and states that Christians are children of the free woman – Sarah. Paul includes all Christians, Jew and Gentile, as citizens of “*the Jerusalem above*” (Gal 4:26) and states that they will be persecuted as Hagar did Isaac (Gal 4:28-29). Thus, we must look beyond fleshly Israel and its return from captivity to fully understand Isaiah’s message.

3. Special Emphasis – Is 55:3

- A. Isaiah declares that God will make an everlasting covenant with His people and refers to the “sure mercies of David.” There are several mentions of David relative to the coming Messiah in OT prophecy: Hos 3:5; Jer 30:9; 33:15-18; Ezk 34:23-24; 37:24-26. A literal view of this prophecy created within the Jews an expectation of military deliverance. But such was not intended by God.
- B. This is made clear by Paul’s reference to this verse in Ac 13:34 and his application to the resurrection of Jesus. In Jesus God has given men “*a leader and commander for the people*” (Is 55:4), a perpetual ruler who cannot be defeated by enemies, who will not falter in bad judgment and who will not abandon His people in selfish pursuits. Jesus was raised to ever rule and reign over all the earth forever and ever. He rules for the blessing and benefit of His people.

4. Special Emphasis – Is 56:7

- A. Jesus refers to this description with a slightly different twist (Mt 21:13). It seems that Isaiah’s context was that “*My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.*”
- B. But Jesus’ application addresses the corruption of the purpose of the temple: it was no longer a house of prayer but a house of merchandise. The spiritual purpose of the temple was completely overlooked.

Questions:

1. What does Isaiah 55:6 imply?
2. What does God demand of, and what is promised to, those who wish to come to Him (Is 55:7)?
3. What is God called in Is 54:5?
4. What does Is 54:15-17 indicate about the church?
5. What is the practical application of Is 55:8-9? Is it merely a statement of God’s intelligence?

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 19: The Continuing Sins of Judah (chs 57-59)

1. **Overview** – Isaiah returns to the theme of Israel’s unfaithfulness, perhaps addressing the ongoing sins of Judah after the downfall of Samaria.

A. Ch 57 – Isaiah targets unfaithful leaders of the people and the idolatry that they never could seem to overcome. But the chapter ends on a high note of hope.

1. 56:9-57:13 – Isaiah condemns the watchmen and shepherds – the leaders of the people – for their slothful, greedy and self-serving ways. Judah enters a period where wickedness gains the upper hand: the righteous are persecuted, sorcery and harlotry are rampant, idolatry is practiced in the valleys and atop the hills. God accuses the people of taking advantage of His patience: *“Is it not because I have held My peace from of old that you do not fear Me?”* (57:11).

2. 57:14-21 – Jehovah states His concern for those who are humble and contrite over their sins. He notes, *“For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry, for the spirit would fail before Me”* (57:16). We do not realize how mighty and holy God is, that if His wrath were not tempered we would be consumed in a moment. God promises peace and healing in spite of the fact that men had been persistent in their sinning. He is patient and compassionate.

B. Ch 58 – Jehovah contrasts the self-serving worship of His people with the true worship He desires.

1. 58:1-5 – The picture is one of an outwardly religious people who *“seek Me daily”* and *“ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching God”* (58:2).

2. 58:6-14 – God reminds the people that the true ordinance of fasting involves inward reflection that restores godliness and renews compassion upon others. If they will do these things and observe the Sabbath as He desires, He will *“guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones ...”* (58:11).

C. Ch 59 – Rampant sins have separated the people from God.

1. 59:1-8 – The people were blind to their own faults, so when disaster came they blamed God for His weakness. But God affirms that the problem does not rest with His ability but His willingness. God has turned His face from the people because of their iniquities (cf. Hos 5:6, 15; 9:12). Consider the descriptive phrases of their behavior: defiled, iniquity, lies, perversity, evil, violence, wasting, destruction, no justice, crooked paths, etc.

2. 59:9-15 – The people are hopelessly mired in spiritual blindness and moral darkness. They have departed from Jehovah’s ways: *“transgressing and lying against the Lord ... departing from our God ... speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood ... truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter ...”* (59:13-14). God has promised to restore the people if they will confess their sins and turn back to Him (cf. Dt. 30:1-10).

3. 59:16-21 – God vows to bring salvation to man, to punish those who do evil and to bless *“those who turn from transgression in Jacob”* (59:20).

2. Special Emphasis – Is 57:11

- A. It is true with God and men that patience and forbearance are often taken for granted by the wicked.
- B. *“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”* (Rom 2:4). *“Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil”* (Ecc 8:11).

3. Special Emphasis – Is 57:19

- A. This wording is found in Eph 2:17. Paul speaks of those far off (Gentiles) being made near by the blood of Christ (Eph 2:11-13). Further, the wall of division has been removed by Christ so that Jew and Gentile are both reconciled to God in one body (Eph 2:14-17).
- B. Note the emphasis on “peace”: Eph 2:14-15, 17. Those who obey God and receive His salvation have peace; *“but the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt”* (Is 57:20).

4. Special Emphasis – Is 59:1-2. Sin causes spiritual separation from God, and spiritual separation results in death. *“The face of the Lord is against those who do evil”* (1 Pet 3:12). We may rest assured that our transgressions will cause God to turn away from us, and those who are enemies of God are without hope.

5. Special Emphasis – Is 59:17. Paul also uses this terminology in Ephesians 6:14, 17 in reference to the “Christian armor.” In Isaiah the armor is worn by God; in Ephesians the child of God. This simply enhances the concept of conforming to the character of God and operating our lives by His principles.

6. Special Emphasis – Is 59:20. Paul cites this passage in Rom 11:26 in his discussion of the breaking off of the natural branches of the olive tree (Jews) and the grafting in of the wild branches (Gentiles). He verifies the point made in Is 59:20 that only those Jews who come to God in faith will be saved. God will save all Jews who wish to be saved on His terms. Thus God has not *“cast away His people”* (Rom 11:1). The Jews, *“if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in again”* (Rom 11:23).

Questions:

1. What were the people doing in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks?
2. What do the people wonder about God (Is 58:3)? What is the answer?
3. How did the “drunkards” of Israel look at the future (Is 56:12)?
4. To what do viper’s eggs and spider webs refer?
5. What makes men growl like bears and mourn like doves?

1. Overview – Chs 60-61 contain no condemnation of Israel. The image is of a glorified Zion and a blessed Servant who has come to restore the people of God to their glory and splendor. Such lofty ideals are not found in the physical restoration of the Jews to Canaan; we must look to the spiritual fulfillment of these concepts in Christ and His church.

A. Ch 60 – In contrast to the Jerusalem of old, despised and desecrated by the swarming armies of the Gentiles, spiritual Zion will have foreigners streaming into its gates and bringing their wealth with them. The idyllic picture is of a world-wide church with men and women of all nations rejoicing in the salvation that has been introduced among men by the Jewish people.

1. 60:1-9 – In its former state of punishment, Jerusalem longed for light but only found black darkness (Is 59:9). But the Servant/Messiah would rise and illuminate the people with heavenly glory, glory that would draw the Gentiles. The coming of Jesus was associated with light (cf. Mt 4:16; Jn 8:12; 9:5; 12:46). Again, how the Jews could have missed the international emphasis of a passage like this is puzzling. *“They shall ascend with acceptance on My altar, and I will glorify the house of My glory”* (60:7). This indicates far more than simply physical Jews being served by Gentiles; it suggests joint worship and acceptance before Jehovah.

2. 60:10-18 – While 60:10 can be isolated from the context and given a literal meaning (cf. Ezra 1:1-11; 6:1-12; Neh 1:7-10), the overall context and especially 60:11 works against literalism. *“Therefore your gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day or night ...”* certainly does not bear a literal interpretation. Rather, this reflects the continual openness of the spiritual kingdom to all who wish to enter and partake of its richness. Is 60:14 does not picture Assyrians and Babylonians becoming proselyte Jews but their descendants and others who historically persecuted the Jews coming to the Jewish Messiah for salvation.

3. 60:19-22 – Again, light is the theme as spiritual Zion is pictured as perpetually illuminated by the Lord Himself. Righteousness would characterize all the people; there would be no covenant people who were evil and wicked. As the Messiah would be a Branch of Jesse, so Jehovah’s people would be the branch of His planting, the work of His hands.

B. Ch 61 – The theme shifts from the glorified Zion to the Servant Himself. He speaks both of Himself and the people who would come to Jehovah through Him.

1. 61:1-3 – Whereas in other passages different aspects of the Servant are revealed, here His anointing of the Spirit to preach good tidings and proclaim liberty to the captives is under consideration. The grief and mourning that had so long afflicted the people would be replaced with beauty, oil of joy, garments of praise and trees of righteousness.

2. 61:4-9 – The picture of restoration continues with rebuilding, foreigners as servants, acclaim and being made Priests of the Lord.

3. 61:10-11 – The Servant sees Himself as greatly blessed by God and in turn rejoices in His close relationship with Jehovah. The picture is of hope, blessing and richness to spring upon the land as the glory of a bride and groom or the return of spring.

2. Special Emphasis – Ch 60

A. Note the similarities between Is 60 and Rev 21:

1. Open gates (60:11; Rev 21:25).
2. No night; God is light (60:19-20; Rev 21:23).
3. Gentiles walk in light (60:3; Rev 21:24).
4. Kings/Gentiles bring glory (60:5-7, 13; Rev 21:24, 26).
5. Righteous inhabitants (60:21; Rev 21:27).
6. Walls/gates (60:18; Rev 21:12-14).
7. Cf. also the walls, gates, foundation and pinnacles of stones (Is 54:11-12) with the picture in Rev 21:19-21.

B. Isaiah's imagery of redeemed people as a glorious city has a significant bearing on John's image of *"the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God"* (Rev 21:10). Consistency suggests that both images are speaking of redeemed people, the church, the spiritual kingdom of God, and not heaven itself. Further, there are many other images in Isaiah that are reflected in Revelation, and since we can be fairly certain that Isaiah foresees spiritual Zion, the glorified church, can we not be equally certain of John's images?

3. Special Emphasis – Is 61:1-3

A. This is one of those definitive passages that helps us nail down the Messianic thrust of Isaiah's prophecies. This is the passage Jesus reads in the synagogue in Nazareth, and upon its conclusion states: *"Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing"* (Lk 4:18-21).

B. Jesus was unflinching in His assertions that the OT prophecies were about Him. We can see that Isaiah's references to healing, deliverance, release of captives, etc. is not realized in Cyrus' decree to return home. Israel never did enjoy such exalted and fruitful days as portrayed by Isaiah's grand prophecies.

Questions:

1. Where does Is 61:6 find a NT parallel?
2. Where does the description of the Servant in Is 61:10 find a NT parallel?
3. Find two other passages in Isaiah besides Is 61:1 where the Spirit is to have a hand in the Servant's work.

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 21: A Plea for Restoration (chs 62-64)

1. **Overview** – These chapters foresee the coming desolation of Jerusalem over one hundred years later. The faithful plead for God to restore His loving care for them and bless them as He did in the past.

A. Ch 62 – A revitalized land with a new name.

1. 62:1-5 – As Jerusalem and Judah lie in ruins, it is hard to see a future purpose for them. But God vows, *“I will not rest until her righteousness goes forth as brightness and her salvation as a lamp that burns.”* The land once called “Forsaken” and “Desolate” will be renamed “Hephzibah” (My Delight Is in Her) and “Beulah” (Married). As in most of Isaiah’s prophecies, the future glories he sees are not fulfilled in physical restoration but in a spiritual kingdom. The idea of being married to the land (62:5) seems to play upon the Jews’ attachment to Canaan. As the Jews became inseparable from the land itself, so will the people of God esteem the kingdom.
2. 62:6-12 – God promises to make Jerusalem *“a praise in the earth.”* Figuratively, the people will eat of their harvest and new roads will be built into the city. Once-despised Jerusalem will become The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord, Sought Out and A City Not Forsaken. These terms, as well as Hephzibah and Beulah, define the “new name” by which they shall be called (62:2).

B. Ch 63 – This chapter focuses upon the wrath of Jehovah which has been outpoured and the petition of the people for God to restore His blessings to them.

1. 63:1-6 – As Isaiah had indicated earlier in the book, Jehovah was coming in judgment upon all the nations who rejected Him. He is now portrayed as returning from the exercise of His vengeance, blood-spattered from trampling His enemies underfoot. (Edom has been used before as a symbol of the enemies of Israel, cf. Is 34:5-6). God has undertaken this judgment Himself, since He found no nation righteous enough to cooperate with Him.
2. 63:7-14 – Isaiah reflects upon the past goodness of God toward Israel (63:7-9), but His lovingkindness was repaid with rebellion (63:10). God has now turned against Israel in His anger. No longer is His presence among the people like it was when Moses led them out of captivity and into the peace and rest of Canaan (63:11-14).
3. 63:15-19 – The plea goes forth for God to return to the people, to exercise His great and glorious power yet again on their behalf. In hindsight, the lamentation is that the people had possessed the land for so short a time. Now, the righteous among the remnant feel abandoned by God, *“like those of old, over whom You never ruled”* (63:19). This prayer of penitence continues through ch 64.

C. Ch 64 – The prayer for God’s return continues.

1. 64:1-5 – The prayer is for God to show His presence again as He has done in the past. The people now long for that which once made them afraid. At Sinai they were frightened by the manifestations of God’s power, but now they know what it is like to live without God’s bles-

sings and presence. They long for His return.

2. 64:6-12 – Three times in 64:5-7 confession of sin is made. This is what God wanted to be produced by the afflictions He had brought upon the people. But they feel consumed, overwhelmed by what has befallen them. The land is in ruins: *“Your holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and beautiful temple, where our fathers praised You, is burned up with fire; and all our pleasant things are laid waste”* (64:10-11). Will God be furious with them and remember their iniquity forever?

2. Special Emphasis – Is 63:10

- A. The rebellion of Israel, their constant murmuring and complaining and challenging of Moses’ authority, grieved the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was working cooperatively to guide and inform the people of God’s will. Their rebellion against His laws, promises and prophecies was troubling to the Spirit.
- B. This same concept is repeated by Paul in Eph 4:30 in relation to the sins of Christians. When we act contrary to the nature and principles that the Spirit is working to instill within us, it grieves and disappoints Him. We must strive to appreciate what richness and benefit there is in the work of the Spirit through His word. The greater that appreciation, the more diligent we will be in cooperating with the Spirit and conforming to His word.

3. Special Emphasis – Is 64:4

- A. This verse magnifies God as the only true help for man. God is the one *“who acts for the one who waits for Him.”* As noted earlier, the idols were non-entities. They could say or do nothing because they were not real. Their only attributes were what man conferred upon them. God, and God alone, is the only hope and help of man.
- B. Paul takes this sentiment and adapts it to God’s eternal work of salvation (1 Cor 2:9). This work was hidden from man’s understanding and the rulers who conspired against Jesus had no clue of what they were participating in. God was acting on man’s eternal behalf when no one was aware of it. But now that it is accomplished, God has made man aware of His work through the revelation of the Spirit (1 Cor 2:10-13).

Questions:

1. What were the watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem to cry out?
2. How might Is 62:10 tie in with evangelism?
3. Who had been in the winepress and why?
4. What had God first hoped about Israel (Is 63:8)?
5. Where did God lead Israel *“as a horse in the wilderness, that they might not stumble”*?
6. About how long will it be until Is 64:11 comes to pass?

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 22: The New Heavens and the New Earth (chs 65-66)

1. Overview – Isaiah concludes his extensive prophecies of a Messianic future by reemphasizing God’s judgment upon the rebellious and His blessing upon the faithful.

A. Ch 65 – God declares His intent to create a whole new system or relationship between Himself and faithful people. He again faults the nation of Israel for their idolatry and abandonment of Him.

1. 65:1-16 – Homer Hailey holds that ch 65 is God’s answer to the prayer of penitence in ch 64. God replies that those who should have known Him best had continued in rebelliousness and that He would be found by those who had been distant from Him. God considers the continual idolatry of Israel as *“smoke in My nostrils,”* and He will punish those who have *“burned incense on the mountains and blasphemed Me on the hills”* (65:7). Yet, as He does so often, God promises in the midst of His condemnation to preserve and bless a remnant of faithful people (65:8-10). But Jehovah immediately returns to the theme of condemnation: *“I will number you for the sword, and you shall all bow down to the slaughter; because, when I called, you did not answer; when I spoke, you did not hear, but did evil before My eyes, and chose that in which I do not delight”* (65:12). Consider the irony: idolaters call out to their gods who do not hear while the true God calls out to His covenant people who refuse to heed.

2. 65:17-25 – God anticipates a wholesale change to come in the future. As seen previously, the picture is one of prosperity, safety and joy. This terminology has been used before by Isaiah (cf. Is 11:6-9; 61:1-11; 62:8-9) and is the opposite of the condition of the land when forsaken by God and overrun by the Assyrians and Babylonians. The scene depicted was never fulfilled in Israel’s return from captivity. Only the Messianic ideal satisfies this imagery.

B. Ch 66 – Isaiah’s prophecy closes with this contrast of God’s favor upon the humble and godly and His wrath upon the disobedient. As much time as Isaiah has spent on this theme, it is apparent that God wants to plant the message firmly in the minds of men. This repetition is also an indicator of how slow men are to learn. We must be told over and over again – and then sometimes we are still slow on the uptake.

1. 66:1-13 – God declares that He is not interested in a physical, earthly dwelling place, for whatever may be constructed by man is only material that God has already made. No, God seeks *men*, men of a certain character who will please Him. He searches for the one who *“is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word”* (66:2). God foresees the birth of a new nation, the multiplying of people who will revitalize Jerusalem. This birth will be, as it were, without the pains of labor. This may refer to the relatively quiet beginning of the church as opposed to the great upheavals when Egypt finally expelled Israel.

2. 66:14-24 – God sees a global movement unfolding: *“It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory”* (66:18). This sounds very much like Pentecost where so many from across the Roman Empire were gathered to see the effects of the Holy Spirit and hear the gospel. Further, from that day to the scattering of the disciples to the travels of the apostles *“they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles”* (66:19). A figurative picture

is painted of people coming “*for an offering to the Lord out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem*” (66:20). This is similar to the previous references to God raising a banner and people flowing unto it from all corners of the earth (cf. Is 11:10; 30:17). God envisions “priests and Levites” coming from Gentile nations, a sign that there is to be a significant change of order coming (cf. Heb 7:12). Those who choose to worship God in truth and purity will stand victorious and will look upon the corpses of those who have died in rebellion.

2. Conclusion: Isaiah is a collection of prophecies which contain good news and bad news. There are some dark days ahead, for God is coming in judgment upon both heathen nations and first, Israel, then Judah, for their own transgressions. We know in hindsight that hundreds of years would pass for the process of exile, restoration and spiritual renewal to occur. So that men would not lose heart altogether, God foretold both in great detail and in prophetic obscurity what would transpire in the future. His prophecies, and those of other prophets, were successful in that a faithful remnant was waiting in great expectation for the Messiah to arrive.

3. Special Emphasis – Is 65:1-2

A. Paul quotes these verses in Rom 10:20-21. He says of God’s appointed speakers that “*their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world*” (Rom 10:18; cf. Is 66:19-20; 52:7). Paul then indicates that the Gentiles have responded (as a whole) and the Jews have remained stubborn and disobedient (as a whole).

B. The obstinacy of the Jews should not have been a surprise to those who were familiar to Isaiah. Surely Paul saw his own insolence and that of his brethren in a wholly different light after the Lord’s appearance. And perhaps this is why he could withstand the horrific persecution that came to him from city to city.

4. Special Emphasis – Is 65:17; 66:22. The “new heavens and the new earth” from Isaiah’s point of view is not after the second coming of Christ. Such has not been addressed by Isaiah. Isaiah sees a day when God’s true people will be of a wholly different sort than a physical nation occupying geographical territory, offering animal sacrifices and worshiping in a material temple. This wholesale change, enlarged to include all peoples of all nations, is called a new heaven and earth, a new arrangement, a new world order. Peter adapts this terminology to refer to another new order, the eternal existence of resurrected and glorified men after the judgment (2 Pet 3:13).

Questions:

1. What is the attitude of the idolaters toward others (Is 65:5)?
2. What is described as “new wine found in the cluster”?
3. What is God’s attitude toward the needs of His redeemed people (Is 65:24)?
4. How does God react to His enemies (Is 65:6-7; 66:6, 14)?
5. Where does Jesus refer to Is 66:24? In what context?

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 23: Review

Note: This is a “do at home” review. See what you can do on your own and then check your notes and/or Bible as needed. Have fun! Scores will not be printed in the bulletin.

1. Multiple Choice

1. The prophet **not** a contemporary of Isaiah:
a. Hosea c. Micah
b. Jeremiah d. Amos
2. The Judean king **not** ruling during Isaiah’s prophetic tenure:
a. Uzziah c. Manasseh
b. Hezekiah d. Ahaz
3. The one **not** an Assyrian king:
a. Cyrus c. Sennacherib
b. Sargon d. Tiglath-Pileser
4. Of whom is it said: “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!”
a. Sennacherib c. Satan
b. Hezekiah d. The king of Babylon
5. What was a “broken reed” that would be of no benefit to Judah?
a. Egypt c. Jerusalem’s walls
b. Idolatry d. The temple
6. Sennacherib’s capital city was:
a. Babylon c. Cairo
b. Nineveh d. Damascus
7. What was the sign confirming that God would extend Hezekiah’s life?
a. A child would be born c. The lion and lamb would lay down together
b. The moon would not shine d. The shadow on the sundial would go backwards
8. God promised a coming ruler from the root of whom?
a. Abraham c. Judah
b. Solomon d. Jesse
9. Who in the NT was reading Isaiah 53?
a. Jesus, in the synagogue in Nazareth c. The Ethiopian treasurer
b. The noble-minded Bereans d. Paul, when he served the Lord’s supper in Troas
10. What would be established in the “latter days”?
a. The mountain of the Lord’s house c. A fortress at Masada
b. A banner in Zebulun and Naphtali d. The reign of Cyrus

2. True/False

1. T/F Isaiah was married.
2. T/F When God first called him, Isaiah was willing and ready to serve.
3. T/F God faulted Ahab and Jezebel for refusing to ask for a sign.
4. T/F Nebuchadnezzar captured Samaria in 722/721 B.C.
5. T/F Tyre was a coastal city noted for merchant ships and trading.
6. T/F Rabshakeh was one of the principal gods of the Assyrians.
7. T/F After recovering from his illness, Hezekiah showed his wealth to Babylonian messengers.
8. T/F Pekah and Rezin were called “two stubs of smoking firebrands,” which meant that they would consume Samaria for its sins.
9. T/F God said He would stir up the Medes against the Babylonians.
10. T/F Isaiah said the Servant would be with the rich at His death.

3. Short Answer

1. Whose garments were dyed red from trampling people in the winepress? _____
2. To whom did Jesus say of Is 61:1-2: *“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”*? _____
3. Who said, *“Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips ... For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts”*? _____
4. List as many of the five names of the Son as you can as given in Is 9:6.

5. In what NT letter does Paul refer to Is 52:7 in order to make the point that God had sent out approved spokesmen whom the Israelites had rejected? (*“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’”*) _____
6. Who said, *“I shall be a lady forever ... I shall not sit as a widow, nor shall I know the loss of children”*?

7. Of whom does God say, *“He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built,’ and to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid’”*? _____
8. Of whom does God say, *“Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; let them show the former things, what they were, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare to us things to come”*? _____
9. Who lamented: *“In the prime of my life I shall go to the gates of Sheol; I am deprived of the remainder of my years”*? _____
10. Who was murdered by his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer while worshiping in a temple?

4. Fill in the Missing Words

1. "Come now, let us _____ , ' says the Lord."
2. "Now it shall come to pass in the _____ that the mountain of the _____ shall be established on the top of the mountains."
3. "Therefore my people have gone into captivity, because they have no _____ ."
4. "Woe to those who call _____ , and _____ , who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter."
5. "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name _____ ."
6. "For though your people, O Israel, be as the sand of the sea, yet a _____ of them will return."
7. "The grass _____ , the flower _____ , but the word of our God stands forever."
8. "But those who _____ shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."
9. "I will also give You as a light to the _____ , that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth."
10. "But He was wounded for our _____ , He was bruised for our _____ , the chastisement for our _____ was upon Him, and by His stripes we are _____."
11. "For My _____ are not your _____ , nor are your _____ My _____ , ' says the Lord."
12. "For My house shall be called a house of _____ for all _____ ."
13. "But your _____ have separated you from your God; and your _____ have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear."
14. "I have stretched out My _____ all day long to a _____ people, who walk in a way that is not good, according to their own thoughts."
15. "For behold, I create _____ and a _____ ; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind."