**ISAIAH**

When Israel was split into two nations, the Northern Kingdom kept the name Israel, and the Southern Kingdom was called Judah. Both would eventually be conquered. Israel will be conquered by the Assyrians and Judah will be conquered by the Babylonians.

As you read the prophets it is important to know when in this timeline they did their ministry. Isaiah was a prophet of the Southern Kingdom, Judah, prior to their fall.

As such, you will see themes in those prophets who did their ministry after the kingdom split into Israel and Judah and prior to being conquered. Those themes will be God’s anger and judgment at the nation, calls to return to God, and promises of grace and restoration. There is warning and promises of mercy throughout the writings of these prophets.

Servant songs of Isaiah.

 One key feature of this book are what are called the Servant Songs of Isaiah. They are Isaiah 42:1-4, 50:1-7, 49:1-6 and 52:13-53:12. These are specific prophecies of the Messiah. The Servant Song of Isaiah 52:12-:53:12 is the most well known of the four. You will recognize these verses that explain what Jesus suffered on Good Friday. These will be highlighted in the readings.

**Chapter 1**

Vs. 1: Isaiah did his ministry during these kings. You can read about these kings in 2 Kings.

Vs. 3: Even an ox and donkey know who they belong to but God’s people have turned their backs to God who they belong to.

Vs. 10: God calls Judah Sodom and Gomorrah. This is not a good thing. Sodom and Gomorrah experienced God’s wrath and punishment. This is a warning to Judah.

Vs. 11-17: The people were still making sacrifices and participating in their sacred assemblies. They worshiped God and other gods at the same time (Isaiah 2:8). They were not devoted to the living God. Isaiah also tells us in verses 21-23 that the people were not taking care of the poor and weak among them. The bottom line, their religion had all of the right forms and rituals but there was no sincerity of the heart or in their actions.

Vs. 18-19: God is promising forgiveness if they repent.

**Chapter 2**

Verses 6-8: We see two things about what life is like in Judah at this time. First, the worship of idols (8). Second, the country was going great economically (7). When things are going well, we can still be living far from God. In the same manner, if things are difficult, we can be close to God. The circumstances of life are not necessarily indicative of how God views us.

Verse 22: Great advice. We are to trust only in God.

**Chapter 8**

Verses 12-13: We answer to God and to God alone. Nothing else matters.

**Chapter 9**

Verse 19: The wrath of God is never pretty.

**Chapter 10**

Verses 5-7: Assyria was the world power at this time. They will be the ones that conquer the Northern Kingdom Israel. God is using them top punish other nations as well.

Verses 12-19: Even though Assyria was used by God to punish other nations. The Assyrian’s pride was their downfall. They were saying, “look what I did”, as if it was their strength they were able to defeat their enemies. It is always good practice to acknowledge God in his help. To read a great example of Assyria’s pride read 2 Kings 18:17-19:7. You will also read Isaiah’s involvement as well.

Verses 24-25: God says He will destroy the Assyrians. This will happen and the next world superpower will be the Babylonians (the group that will eventually conquer Judah.

**Chapter 11 and 12**

This is the end of the first section of Isaiah. The focus on these chapters is the blessing that waits will come to them. Even through Isaiah is warning them of coming destruction, God is also reminding the people that grace and mercy will still await them.

**Chapter 13-24**

The focus turns to the surrounding nations. All of them are enemies of Judah. All of these nations will be punished/destroyed. God is going to show His power to all the world. Even though destruction is coming for Judah, God mercy will carry the day.

**Chapter 13-14:23**

The first nation addressed will be the nation that will eventually conquer Judah, the Babylonians.

**Chapter 15**

The city names in this chapter (and others) are hard to pronounce. You do not have to pronounce them correctly. Don’t let these names slow or stop your reading. It is enough to know these are city names in Moab and Isaiah is prophesying against Moab. Don’t let the hard names throw you off course or force you to take extra time in reading this chapter.

Verses 8-1: Even though Isaiah is prophesying God’s judgement against Mob, he doesn’t take joy in it. His heart breaks for people. At the same time, he knows what he is saying is going to happen.

**Chapter 20**

Verses 2-6: So, you want to be a prophet? Isaiah is told to walk around naked for three years (bet you didn’t learn that in Sunday School). He didn’t use words but actions to proclaim the actions of the Lord. The Egyptians will be carried off naked by Assyria. The grand point here is that Israel turned to Egypt to help them fight the Assyrians but the one they are turning towards will be conquered by them and carried away naked.

**Chapter 22**

After these prophecies against other nations, Isaiah’s focus turns towards Jerusalem.

Verse 11: The people of Judah were preparing water in case the city is being blockaded. God is telling them, why do you do this instead of looking to him who did it or planned it long ago. In other words, why not turn to God, the only one who can help you.

Chapters 24-27: Section deals with a summary of world history.

**Chapter 28-33**

6 great woes (ESV uses the word “Ah”) Politicians 28:1, Those who carry on the actions of religion without true faith, 29:1: Those who try to hide their plans from God 29:15, Those who wanted to make an alliance with Egypt (instead of trusting in God) 30:1, Those who want to trust in their military (horses and chariots) and to the Assyrians who, even though they were the world power at that time, would face judgment.

**Chapter 29**

Verses 1-14: Ariel is a word that not much is known about. It is used differently in different passages. Based on this context, it refers to Jerusalem.

Verses 15-24: Refers to people who hid their plans from God. One idea is this refers to political leaders who do things in secret- perhaps taking bribes or trying to work with other nations.

**Chapter 30**

Verse 2-5: Egypt was not going to help Judah. They should be turning to God. A good lesson for us.

Verses 15-33: In typical fashion, the prophets who wrote before the fall of their nations, warn of punishments to come. You also have moments where God says He will show grace and make them great again. There is always hope with God!

**Chapters 36-39:** These chapters deal with a key part in Judah’s history. We also read it in 2 Kings 18:19-20:19. These chapters also indicate a shift in focus from Assyria to Babylon. Assyria was the world power at this time but it was going to be Babylon who conquers Assyria and Judah.

**Chapter 40-45**: God knows punishment is coming for Judah. Isaiah has just prophesied at the end of chapter 39 that Babylon will conquer them. In chapter 40-45, God lays out his majesty and reminds His people that even through punishment is coming, they are still loved by God- 43:4. God will establish them once again.

**Chapter 42**

Verses 1-4: This is the first of the four Servant Songs of Isaiah. We see this passage referred to in **Matthew 12:15-21**: Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all **16**and ordered them not to make him known. **17**This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: **18**“Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. **19**He will not quarrel or cry aloud,  nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; **20**a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; **21**and in his name the Gentiles will hope.”

**Chapter 44**

Verses 9-20: God raises a great point about those who worship idols. God basically calls people dumb for worshiping these idols they make (vs. 19).

**Chapter 44:28-45:8**

God is going to use Cyrus, King of Babylon for His purposes. Cyrus will be used by God even though Cyrus does not worship God, or as written in chapter 45:4-5, “acknowledge God. God is in full control of the situation and uses people, people who worship God and even those who don’t.

**Chapter 46**

Verses 6-11: Idols can do nothing. God, however, can tell what is to come (verse 11). This is one difference between God and idols. Idols can do nothing, certainly not tell the future.

**Chapter 47**

Verse 11: Babylon will fall in one night. Daniel records this in Daniel chapter 5. Verse 30 of that chapter tells us how quickly it happened. God is telling them the future.

**Chapter 48**

Verse 5: Once again, God can tell the future. God is telling them the future so they can’t say ‘my idols did this’.

Verse 8-11: It is for the name (mercy) of God that His wrath was delayed. God was testing them through affliction because He will not yield His glory to another.

Verses 14-22: We must remember that at the time Isaiah is writing this, Assyria is the world power. They had already conquered the northern kingdom, Israel. God is telling them He will use the Babylonians for the purpose of conquering them.

**Chapter 49**

Verses 1-6: This is the second of the four Servant Songs of Isaiah.

Verse 6: The nation of Israel is to be a light to the Gentiles and bring salvation to the ends of the earth. This was part of the original covenant God made with Abraham (Genesis 22:17- 18: I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, 18 and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”)

 Israel and Judah, desired political greatness- to be the biggest and strongest nation on the earth. They were the ‘favorite’ ones of God and therefore that is how it should play out. They thought God only cared for them, so they developed this dislike for any other nation. They certainly did not care about the salvation of those from other nations. Christians are like this today. They don’t care about the salvation of non-Christians.

Verses 8-26: God is going to take out His wrath on Judah. But, notice here, God is telling them He will always be with them. He will deliver them. God’s grace will always carry the day.

**Chapter 50**

Verses 1-7: This is the third of the four Servant Songs of Isaiah. We see this played out in **Matthew 27:26-31:** **26**Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified. **27**Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the hole battalion before him. **28**And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, **29**and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, hey mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” **30**And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. **31**And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

**Chapter 51**

Verse 9: Rahab (also in Isa 30:7). This Rahab is not to be confused with the Rahab who helped the Israelites in Jericho. Rahab was a mythological sea creature and it was through to live in the Nile River. Rahab probably refers to the nation of Epypt. We can see this by the context of verses 9 and 10 that it refers to Egypt.

Verses 17-23: Once again, we see God’s wrath will be poured out on Judah but God will also have mercy on them (vs. 22-23).

**ISAIAH 52:13-53:**

The Fourth Servant Song of Isaiah. Isaiah was written about 800 years before Jesus was born and here we read about what Jesus went through on Good Friday.

**Chapter 54**

Verses 6-18: The Lord will call His people back. Again, God will not permanently abandon His people, even after His wrath is poured out on them.

**Chapter 55**

Verses 6-7: God is giving them another chance to return to Him. God is always giving us extra changes. As long as we have breath in our bodies, we have a chance at repentance and God’s grace and mercy.

**Chapter 56**

Verses 3-8: God is a God of all, not just Israel and Judah.

Verses 9-12: God is hammering the Spiritual leaders.

**Chapter 58**

Verses 1-10: This is the religion that God prefers. We see the same expressed in James 1:26-27: If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. **27**Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

**Chapter 59**

Verse 11: The gates of cities were closed at night to protect the city. Here, the gates are left open because there is no danger.

**Chapter 61**

Verse 1-2: Jesus went to a synagogue and pulled out a scroll to read, the passage He read from were these verses- Luke 4:16-19. What is interesting was that Jesus didn’t read the last part of verse two, “The day of vengeance of our God.” Jesus’s first coming was to fulfil the verse 1 and the first half of verse two. On The Last Day, the last part of verse two will occur.

**Chapter 65:**

Vs 3-4: The things mentioned refer to their idolatry. Gardens refers to the gardens that surround the shrines of these idols and verse 4 mentions sitting in cemeteries/tombs where people would sit and seek help from the dead. Flesh of pigs was a meal for a pagan god. Pork was an unclean food for Israel.

Vs. 16: Jeremiah represented God wherever he went. The pastor represents God where he goes. This is why a pastor will be the last one to leave a cemetery following a grave side service. He is representing to the family leaving that that God is with them. (NIV study bible note).