

# **A Study of the Book of Isaiah**

## **Chapters 1-39: The Book of Judgment and Promises**

### **Leader's Guide**

This Bible study was written by Marilyn Miller, a staff minister at Abiding Word Lutheran Church in Houston. The theological content was reviewed by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Professor-emeritus Armin Panning.

The study has eleven one-hour sessions and is written for mature women who can apply the words of the prophet to their lives and the world we live in. It is strongly recommended that the leader read through the People's Bible Commentary for each of these lessons as part of her preparation.

## Lesson 1: Chapters 1-4

### Opening Prayer

#### Introduction to the Book of Isaiah

1. What do we know about Isaiah, the author of this book?
  - His name means “the Lord saves”
  - He lived around 700 BC, during the time of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Judah and Israel were at war with one another during the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz and both nations were spiritually corrupt. Ahaz turned to Assyria for help instead of depending on the Lord. During the reign of King Hezekiah, Israel was taken into captivity by the Assyrians and disappeared from history. The Assyrians also besieged Jerusalem in 701 BC, but the city was delivered under King Hezekiah as 185,000 men of the Assyrian army were destroyed by the angel of death, forcing Sennacherib to return to Nineveh (see 2 Kings 19 and Isaiah 37 for more detail).
  - With great political chaos going on, Isaiah’s message did not say God would free Judah from oppression and military occupation, but rather he pointed the people to God for refuge from sin, death and hell. God used Isaiah to foretell the birth of Christ and the establishment of his Messianic kingdom through the Savior’s suffering, death, and resurrection.
  - Isaiah is the son of Amoz and a contemporary of Amos, Hosea and Micah. Jewish tradition says Amoz was the brother of King Amaziah, making Isaiah and King Uzziah cousins.
  - In 2 Chronicles Isaiah is named court historian for both King Uzziah and King Hezekiah.
  - He was married and had at least two sons. He most likely lived in Jerusalem and had his greatest influence during the reign of King Hezekiah.
  - His book is full of the promises of a Messiah, often given to us in vivid imagery and superb poetry. He has been called the greatest of the writing prophets because of his writing skills.
  - The book is divided into two parts. Chapters 1-39, often referred to as Isaiah I, were most likely written in early 700’s BC, before the Assyrian army was destroyed (701BC). Chapters 40-66, known as Isaiah II, may have been written in his later years, giving a message of comfort to those under exile in Assyria.
  - Isaiah’s prophecies do not always follow chronologically. Rather they flow in a circular movement of thought, similar to John in the NT, going around a certain topic and coming back to it with additional observations and points of emphasis.
  - According to Jewish tradition Isaiah died a martyr’s death under the wicked King Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, having been “sawn in two” (see Heb 11:37).
  - Two messages prevail throughout the entire book: LAW, which condemns Israel’s sins in the strongest possible language, and GOSPEL, proclaiming grace, forgiveness, and hope to a faithful remnant.

## Chapter 1

Isaiah introduces his first chapter by identifying his writings as a vision from God. Notice his writing style is poetic, figurative, and prophetic, rich in pictures and comparisons.

2. Which of the many descriptions of the people of Israel in verses 1-9 do you find especially contemptible? Why?
3. How do you reconcile verse 15 with the fact that God says he hears and answers our prayers?  
*The Bible tells us that God hears the prayers of the righteous. Look through your concordance and read some of the passages about prayer; they all talk about prayers said in faith being heard but the prayers of the unrighteous are not heard. Some of them talk about sins hindering our prayers. In verses 11-15 we are told of God's anger with those who bring prayers and sacrifices to him outside of faith, as if they can earn his favor. What a gross offense to our God of infinite grace.*
4. Why does God ask Israel to "reason together" in vs 18? How is this done?  
*God once again shows ultimate love and forgiveness to his people. He doesn't want the terrible law that he just laid out to condemn us, but we cannot possibly do what God demands (vs 16-17) on our own. God's sweet gospel shows us the only way to reconciliation – the blood of Christ that paid for the stain of our sins making us white as snow. It's free; it's complete; don't reject it! If you reject the gospel, God will reject you. Lord, let us know your light and follow the path it illuminates.*

## Read Chapter 2

5. Describe the picture of the New Jerusalem that Isaiah sees in vs 2-5.  
*High on a mountain, without rival, filled with people from all nations (vs 2), filled with joy, everyone doing what God desires (walk in his paths) (vs 3 & 5), no wars or discord (vs 4)*

In verse 6, the words of promise quickly change to words of a terrible judgment for those who do not repent. How does Isaiah describe the last day for the unbelievers in vs 9-21?

*They will be humbled and try to hide from God (vs 10, 19, 21), none of their usual areas of safety will help them now (vs 13-18), all the idols will disappear, they will try to worship their idols but it will do no good. They will be helpless.*

## Read Chapter 3 and 4

In chapter 3 Isaiah prophesies a terrible disaster that will befall Judea and Jerusalem. This was literally fulfilled 150 years later when the Babylonians invaded the land of Judea. The prophet describes the total lack of order and the shameful depravity of the nation of Judah that will precede this destruction. The first verse of chapter 4 actually closes the prophecy of destruction. Women take over the rule of the city; most of the men have been killed in battle, or taken into captivity.

6. Do you see any comparison between chapter 3 and our world today?  
*The quality of our leadership is often questionable, oppression is common, the Lord is defied in so many ways, people are proud of their sinful ways and suffer the consequences, sex is free and easy...*
7. What picture of the Messiah is used in chapter 4?  
*The Messianic promise of “the Branch of the LORD” provides a beautiful and glorious picture. The LORD will cleanse “those who are left in Zion,” the faithful remnant, protecting them in his grace and mercy. The same picture of a Branch reminds us of the “stump of Jesse (father of David)” from which the Messiah would come.*
8. What have you learned about God from these chapters?

### **Closing Prayer**

#### References:

Braun, John A. *People's Bible Commentary – Isaiah 1-39*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000. 1-70

## Lesson 2: Chapters 5-7

### Opening Prayer

### Read Chapter 5

- 1 Do you think the title of this first section of the chapter, "The Song of the Vineyard", is appropriate? Explain  
*The idea that God would provide such a beautiful place for us, in such an ideal location with just the perfect soil and care for us in such a tender loving manor is so amazing that it moves Isaiah to burst out in song.*

Name 2 or 3 ways the Lord makes use of a similar picture of a garden or plants in the New Testament.

- 1) In Matthew 21:33-44, Mark 12:1-11 and Luke 20:9-18 we hear the parable of the tenants who kill the servants and the son of the landowner 2) in Matthew 10:1-16 we have the parable of the workers who are hired at the beginning of the day demanding higher wages that those hired at the end of the day 3) in Luke 13:6-9 we are told of the fig tree that did not bear fruit and the gardener begging for one more year to help it become productive 4) in John 15:1-8 we hear the familiar words of Jesus saying he is the Vine and we are the branches and if we remain in him, we will bear much fruit.*
- 2 Compare some of the sins mentioned in the six woes in chapter 5 with conditions in our own times.  
*1) Greed, covetousness, insatiable desire for material things 2) debauchery 3) know God's message but scoff at it 4) pervert the truth 5) think they know best, pride in self 6) those who party to excess and pervert justice for a bribe*

### Read Chapter 6

Uzziah (also named Azariah) died in 740 BC after 52 years as king. This was the beginning of the end; the Israel would fall to Assyria in less than 20 years, and Judah would eventually fall to Babylon. It was in the year of Uzziah's death that God called Isaiah to be his prophet. Note this calling preceded the messages given us in chapters 1-5, an example of how the book does not always flow chronologically.

- 3 What are seraphs?  
*High ranking angels, only mentioned in this one place in the Bible*  
Why do you think they covered their face and their feet?  
*To show reverence, and not look directly at the glory of God; to show humility, unworthy to be in the presence of the holiness of God*  
What were they doing?  
*Hovering above the throne and calling out to one another in praise of the Lord. They sang with such loud praise that the doorposts and thresholds shook!*

What would you be thinking if you were Isaiah?

*"Woe to me!" Why should I be here? I am not worthy of such honor!*

Isaiah was just a man. How did he get the courage to quickly respond?

*"Here am I, send me"? His sins had been forgiven by God, through a seraph, his spokesman. With this knowledge Isaiah, and each of us also, are empowered to do God's bidding, even if it will be very difficult. The power to respond to God's call to action never comes from within us, it comes only from God working in us. We don't stop to ask what is needed or to think about it, we just say send me!*

When we enter the sanctuary to worship, we are in God's House, in God's presence. What might we do to show him just a bit of the reverence that the seraphs demonstrated?

*Wait for the service to begin attentively and in prayer, sing robustly, listen, be sincere, be on time, acknowledge that we are in God's house, teach our children how to behave....*

## **Read Chapter 7**

4. The first nine verses of this chapter reveal how Syria and Israel formed an alliance to attack Judah. Isaiah was commissioned by God to tell King Ahaz of Judah not to worry, since these two enemies would be destroyed. Note that King Ahaz did not follow the LORD, he closed the temple, built idols and even sacrificed his own sons to the gods. Yet God preserved him, at least for a time! What comfort can we take from God's message to Ahaz?

*In our world we too have evil rulers, both in this country and around the world. Yet they are there because God wants or allows them to be there. The 4th commandment tells us to give them honor even though we may find this very difficult at times. God is still in control and he is using these individuals for his purpose. They will answer to God when God is ready to bring their influence to an end. We don't need to worry, only take our concerns to God in prayer.*

Even though King Ahaz, in his unbelief rejects the LORD's offer of a sign, the LORD gives a sign to the house of David anyway. How do we know verse 14 is a prophecy of the virgin birth of Immanuel?

*In Matthew 1:22, the apostle tells us of the birth of Jesus, stating this birth fulfilled Isaiah 7:14. Matthew also assures us that this was not an ordinary birth but that Mary was indeed a virgin. As believers we see this as a great sign of hope but it was a sign of future judgment for Ahaz and all unbelievers.*

What does the remainder of this chapter tell about the time leading up to the birth of the Messiah?

*The house of David would lose its power and wealth because it would place its trust in men (wicked King Ahaz went to Assyria for help with the impending battle instead of to God). God did whistle for Assyria and others to come and attack Judah. The invading armies would destroy the farmland. Jesus came into this world of poverty, while the land was under the rule of Rome, another in a long string foreign rulers. God doesn't promise us peace and good rulers here on earth, but he does promise us a future life of perfect peace, a life in heaven with all him and all believers.*

5. What have you learned about God from these chapters? About yourself?

**Closing Prayer**

References:

Braun, John A. *People's Bible Commentary – Isaiah 1-39*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000. 71-108

## Lesson 3: Chapters 8-10

### Opening Prayer

### Read Chapter 8

1. Chapter 8 begins with a prophesy of destruction and plunder, to be fulfilled within a very short period of time. Most thought the destruction of Damascus, a year after Isaiah wrote “his billboard”, was a time to rejoice because an enemy had been destroyed. However God had a different message. The remainder of the chapter is a mixture of hope and comfort for the believers and words of judgment for unbelief. Give some examples of each.

**Hope** - 8&10: *O Immanuel, God with us* 10-14: *God will prevail no matter what men do*, 16-18: *God’s warnings will come to pass*, 19: *help only comes from the LORD*

**Judgment** – 6-8: *destruction because of rejecting the LORD*, 14-15: *if God isn’t the cornerstone of our life, we will fall*, 19: *men’s plans and methods will fail (spirits and mediums cannot help)*, 21-22: *a world of distress and darkness*

### Read Chapter 9:1-7

2. In the future God would honor Zebulun and Naphtali, the area that came to be known as Galilee. Pick out a striking phrase or picture that Isaiah uses in these verses and tell us what it means to you.

*Verse 2: “Have seen a great light” – the Savior, “a light has dawned” (see 1 Cor 4:4 re being blinded and Col 1:13 re devil is power of darkness)*

*vs 3: “You have enlarged the nation and increased the joy” – not just Jews but Gentiles also to be saved, the picture of a bumper harvest, believing people as far as you can see from every tribe and nation*

*vs 7: “there will be no end” – God’s rule won’t go away as earthly governments do...*

Why can we be confident that verse 6 points to the Messiah?

*No ordinary child could bring such joy, could be this great light, could have the full power and authority of the government, could go on without end. Look at the names that Isaiah gives this child. This child is Almighty God!*

### Read Chapter 9:8-10:4

3. God’s merciful promise of a Savior falls on deaf ears. Isaiah recounts four judgments that show how God tries to get the people to stop despising the gospel and its gracious blessings. Notice how each judgment ends with the same words as the people continue in their own ways (end of verse 12, 17, 21, 10:4).

What is the message of vs 8-12?



*Both Israel and Judah would be invaded and ravaged, yet the people would remain arrogant and self-reliant.*

What is the message of vs 13-17?

*They will be given poor leaders (head) and prophets who follow popular opinion instead leading people to God (seen as tails instead of spiritual leaders!). God had no pity on any of them or on the helpless (widows and orphans) because of their perverse ways.*

What is the message of vs 18-21?

*Wickedness consumes the people. There is no love left, as brothers betray brothers*

What is the message of 10:1-4?

*The people descend to the level of animals, preying on the weak; consciences are dead. Since the people reject the gospel, God turns them over to the consequences of the law. God punishes sin, he does not excuse it.*

Do you think these judgments are too harsh?

*The people have rejected the free gift of salvation, revealing an attitude of ingratitude and arrogance. We have a just God. This is a prelude to the final judgment. God does not change the rules by popular demand, giving in to those who reject him or want to picture him soft hearted.*

### **Read Chapter 10:5-34**

- 4 How do verses 5-14 remind us that God is in control of all of history, even what is happening today?

*He used evil Assyria to discipline his people. He was always in control even though Assyria thought they were making the decisions. When God decided to end the tyranny, he turned his wrath on the evil power he had just used as a tool. Because the Assyrians were evil and had taunted God, even claiming their gods were more powerful than the true God, they too would be judged. God is still in control of what is going on in our world. He is still calling the people to repentance. All world powers serve God's will in his time. And vengeance is his also.*

- 5 What is God saying about the remnant and does it give you, personally, any comfort?

*God would keep his promise that the line of the Savior would not be wiped out. Even though the discipline would be severe, including for those who still clung to the faith, they could take comfort in God's promises. For the faithful, what is the worst that can happen? They can be killed, but they would be in heaven. Today we also see God's people tortured and killed, think of India, Pakistan, Egypt and others. In other areas, including our own country, believers face opposition and persecution and it seems as if the powers that be work hard to silence God's truth. In these difficult times we look to God, who knows each of us intimately and has promised to care for us. We strive to do his will even though it may be painful. What grace and mercy God shows his faithful followers.*

6 What have these chapters taught you about God? About yourself?

**Closing Prayer**

References:

Braun, John A. *People's Bible Commentary – Isaiah 1-39*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000. 108-148

## Opening Prayer

### Read Chapter 11

1. What picture do you get from verse 1?

*Jesse's line (father of David) could certainly be considered a dead stump. God's ax of judgment, through the Assyrians and Babylonians, had cut the proud tree down to nothing. The majesty of his line was only a dim memory and a bunch of old stories. None of the wealth was left; none of the rulers came from David's line any longer. But God works a miracle in this dead stump. A tender sprout shoots up and becomes a great Branch, the Messiah, from whom all else gets its life.*

2. How does Isaiah describe the kingdom that would come from this shoot?

*This is the Kingdom of God, where there is all wisdom and understanding, all counsel and power, all knowledge and fear of the Lord (vs 2). It is filled with righteousness, faithfulness, peace. People with gospel-changed hearts, from all nations, fill the Kingdom as the barriers are removed. Picture the contrast between this Kingdom and our world today – hard to fathom!*

### Read Chapter 12

3. In response to the hope we are given in chapter 11, Isaiah breaks out in a song of praise. In what ways do the words of the first two verses remind us of our own worship services?

*Verse 1 is much like our confession of sins and absolution. Verse 2 is familiar to us as "The Song of Isaiah", sung as an anthem as well as a refrain in some of the Psalms.*

What is the mission message and motivation found in this chapter?

*The gift we have been given is so amazing that we will want to make it known among the nations, tell of his glorious deeds, tell the whole world, shout for joy.*

For a summary of the marvelous message we have read so far in Isaiah, read pages 162-3 in the People's Bible.

In chapters 1 to 12 there were several prophecies of the coming of the Messianic King. In this next section, chapters 13 to 23, Isaiah continues by prophesying what will happen to each of the ancient kingdoms that "gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One" (Ps 2:2).

### Read Chapter 13 and 14:1-23

Chapter 13 talks about Babylon, who conquered the Assyrians and then took down Judah and Jerusalem in 586 BC. (We remember Daniel, who was taken into captivity by the Babylonians.) The Babylonian Empire was conquered by the Medes and Persians under Cyrus in 539 BC, as prophesied in verse 17 of this chapter. It never regained its independence, and eventually

disappeared entirely as a major power. In chapter 14, the freed Israelites join in the taunt of the king of Babylon.

4. In 13:2 Isaiah says he saw a banner raised over a hilltop, beckoning the people to come. Can you think of other times when God uses the symbol of a banner to lead his people?

*This paints the picture of the general using a banner, or flag, to gather his troops for battle. Even in the heat of battle those troops look to the banner for both direction and encouragement. If the flag is still flying the battle has not been lost and the leader is still in control. This gives the soldiers the courage to continue fighting. God uses a similar image in the fire and cloud leading the people through the desert, the star of Bethlehem, the cross, the picture of us being a banner to the rest of the world as we lead them to Jesus. It is another of Isaiah's amazing pictures that make the message so clear and memorable.*

### **Read Chapter 14:24-32**

The Assyrians too are crushed, just as the Lord planned. They were defeated at the Battle of Carchemish in 605 BC.

The Philistines, an enemy of Israel since the days they entered the Promised Land, would also be destroyed.

- 5 Chapters 13 and 14 cover hundreds of years of war, death and destruction. Do you find any comfort in the words we have just read?
- *God is in charge and all happens according to his plan*
  - *Even as God kept all of these promises, surely he will keep all other promises he has given us. In 14:24 he even takes an oath that this will be so.*
  - *His promise of a Messiah has come true just as surely as the destruction of Assyria, Babylon and the Philistines has come to pass.*
  - *God protects his people and in the end will take them home, where we too will rejoice in his deliverance*
- 6 What have these chapters taught you about God? About yourself?

### **Closing Prayer**

References:

Braun, John A. *People's Bible Commentary – Isaiah 1-39*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000. 148-179

## Lesson 5: Chapters 15-20

### Opening Prayer

In our study today, Isaiah continues prophesying what will happen to each of the ancient kingdoms that *“gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One”* (Ps 2:2).

### Read Chapters 15 and 16 – concerning Moab

- 1 Moab is east of the Dead Sea and traces its origins back to Lot. The Israelites went through their land as they journeyed through the desert to the Promised Land. There was continual hostility between Israel/Judah and Moab. (An aside, we remember Ruth as a Moabite.)

Chapter 15 tells us of sudden disaster with everyone in Moab fleeing, most likely from Assyria, chaos and death everywhere. Chapter 16 starts with advice for the Moabites: become dependent upon Judah, ie, repent, believe and share in the hope of the Messiah (vs1-2). But Moab only wanted temporary relief from their enemies and wanted nothing to do with faith. Verse 5 pictures the Messiah, a rock of safety in the midst of a raging sea. What words or phrases in verse 5 give us a rich promise of hope and peace?

- 1) *“love” – God promises love and even made a covenant with the people promising his love. God’s love never changes, even though our love for God may grow cold, may come and go*
- 2) *“faithfulness” – God is dependable and certain. He absolutely will keep his promises*
- 3) *“house of David” – God had promised a Messiah from the house of David; God chose David when he was a lowly shepherd, his house had flourished and was now all but wiped out. Yet the promise remained and fills the heart of a believer with hope*
- 4) *“judging and justice” – the Messiah would have the full government of his kingdom on his shoulders, not dependent on man for anything; what comfort to have such a powerful and just leader*
- 5) *“Righteousness” – God sets the standard for good, not man; God has put into action his plan to declare each of us righteous according to his standard, unreachable on our own but ours through the Messiah given us through the house of David. What grace is ours!*

This isn’t just a deliverance from earthly problems, but a promise of eternal peace. Moab’s rejection of the Messiah moves God to mourn (vs 9-11) for his people.

### Read Chapter 17 – concerning Damascus

Damascus was the capital of Aram (Syria today), northeast of Israel, on a strategic trade route. They too were frequent enemies of Israel. Ephraim, in northern Israel, had made an alliance with Damascus against the Assyrians, but the Assyrians captured the entire territory by 722 BC. Thus these words included Ephraim as well as Damascus.

- 2 In this great advance of destruction, what messages of hope do you see in this chapter?  
*There will be survivors, a remnant, pictured here as a few olives left on the tree after harvest (vs 6). Even the tiniest grape that we would just walk past, God doesn’t forget! And in times of tragedy, God still stretches out his hand of deliverance and some will repent and take his*

*hand (vs 7). Still today, some hear God's open invitation in the midst of the tumult of life, they repent and are saved.*

### **Read Chapter 18** – concerning Cush

- 3 Cush was located south of Egypt. They had sent envoys to Jerusalem asking for allies against Assyria. Isaiah sends them back home with a message to all the people of their land. What is this message?

*God will save all the people of the world (vs3)*

When will this happen?

*In his time (vs 4); the rise and fall of all nations is in God's control. We may see what's going on with fear in our hearts, but God tells us to look to him for protection. Romans 8:28 "All things work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."*

What is the message of verse 7?

*The people of Cush would be among those who worship the Lord. They are so very different from the Jews, and yet they are a part of God's Kingdom. As John saw in his vision in Revelation 7:9 "there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb."*

### **Read Chapter 19** – concerning Egypt

- 4 The idols and gods of Egypt remember the ten plagues and the destruction of the army when the Children of Israel left the country years before, and they tremble. God sent civil war to the land (vs 2), and then a cruel master, Assyria (vs 4). God brought the economy of Egypt to its knees by drying up the Nile (vs 5-10). Their leaders and wise men could offer no help.

What is the sudden shift that takes place in verses 16-22?

*Some Egyptians seem to sense the source of their troubles. They come to faith, build altars, worship, offer sacrifices and put their trust in the Lord. Of interest, there was a decent sized community of Jews in Alexandria in 2-3rd century BC and they translated the Old Testament into Greek, known today as the Septuagint. The Coptic Christians of Egypt contributed a great deal to the early Christian church.*

What is the highway between Egypt and Assyria?

*It's not a physical highway, but a highway built by the bond of worshipping the same Lord. Again we think of the promises of many tribes and many nations in heaven, of the Pentecost message being heard in many languages, of so many people walls can't contain them. All these different nations being given equal status and an equal promise of salvation.*

### **Read Chapter 20** – concerning Egypt and Cush

This chapter calls us back to the earthly world, where there are enemies and war and prisoners of war, where Assyria will conquer Egypt and Cush. The Lord asked Isaiah to walk around in his underwear for 3 years and Isaiah did it without shame because following God's commands is

never shameful. Isaiah was dressed as a prisoner of war, as a sign of the impending downfall of Egypt and Cush. Those in Jerusalem saw Egypt and Cush as their allies against Assyria but Isaiah's message was much different. And still the people refused to repent and believe.

5 What have these chapters taught you about God? About yourself?

### **Closing Prayer**

References:

Braun, John A. *People's Bible Commentary – Isaiah 1-39*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000. 179-210

## Lesson 6: Chapters 21-23

### Opening Prayer

#### Read Chapter 21 – concerning Babylon, Edom and Arabia

- 1 The oracles in this section are difficult and vague, but all reference the invader from the desert described as a storm. The first part of the chapter talks about “*the desert by the Sea*”, i.e., Babylon. Isaiah sees an aggressor, the Medes and Persians, attacking Babylon and causing it to fall. Babylon was proudly built on the Euphrates River and they thought no one could ever breach their fortified city. Yet, the Medes and Persians diverted the river and, in 539 BC Cyrus captured and sacked Babylon (vv 1-10).

Seir is a synonym for Edom, the homeland of Esau’s descendants. “*Dumah*” is a Hebrew word meaning “silence.” Edom will become as silent as death itself (vv 11-12), never emerging in the morning.

The Dedanites were an Arabian tribe. Kedar was home to Bedouin tribes. These people also would be attacked and killed.

Does it bother you that we can’t pinpoint exactly to what these oracles refer?

*If we step back and look at these oracles from a distance, the fact that they are vague doesn’t really bother us if we understand that God is in control of all of history and he uses all the nations according to his will.*

#### Read Chapter 22 – concerning Jerusalem

- 2 Commentators warn of difficulties identifying the exact event Isaiah describes, but it is clear that Jerusalem too would be destroyed. Why might Jerusalem be called “the Valley of Vision?”  
*Though on a hill, Jerusalem was still lower than surrounding hills so might be considered a valley. At no other place did God give more visions of who he is and what he would have his people do than in Jerusalem.*

Which words or thoughts in this chapter help us understand why Jerusalem, too, is included in these oracles of destruction?

- *Looked to their own armory for defense (vs 8)*
- *Stored up their water and tore down their houses to repair the breaches in the walls (vs 9-11)*
- *They never looked to the Lord for help; no trust whatsoever (vs 11)*
- *They saw only futility in the future - they just ate and partied before they would die (13). No tears of repentance were visible. Do you see this in our world today?*

Go back and read 1:5-9. How do those words help us understand verses 22:13-14?

*It didn’t pay to send more afflictions because even that won’t bring them back to the LORD. They were beyond repentance and God abandoned them to their unbelief.*

#### Read Chapter 23 – concerning Tyre



- 3 Tyre was the commercial and economic center of the world and was known for its exceptional harbor. The merchants of the city were rich and influential. It was an island city and endured many attacks from the Babylonians (600 BC), Alexander the Great and finally the Crusaders in 1125 AD conquered but did not destroy the city. Isaiah sees the harbor destroyed and the nations speechless in astonishment but we can't be certain if Isaiah sees a snap shot of a number of these attacks or one in particular.

After a time, Tyre would be allowed to return to trading, but now the activity would bring blessings to God's people. Of note, the temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt after the Babylonian Captivity using cedar from Tyre, and Paul also found a small group of believers in Tyre as he returned from his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey.

How do verses 17-18 compare with 19:23-25?

*God's grace is ever present. He will save and bless his church, he will make it grow.*

How does verse 18 compare with Matthew 5:5?

*Those who are meek, who submit to God, will inherit the new heaven and the new earth. God will sustain his church with the blessings of this earth until the end of time, but our focus is to be on God not on the things of this earth.*

- 4 What major points have you taken away from these chapters (13-23) about the judgments against the various nations?

A summary of chapters 13-23: (from Braun, pages 237-8)

- Ten judgments, emphasizing God's justice, were revealed against Jerusalem's neighbors and against Jerusalem itself, each introduced with the word "oracle." Ten is a number of completeness and it tells us God completed his judgment against these nations. The judgments point to the day of final judgment.
- Repeatedly God is shown as the God of history who controls the fate of all nations. He holds nations accountable for their actions
- As God punishes the world for its evil, the strong and descriptive word "wail" is used several times – 13:6, 14:31, 23:1,6,14
- Three times Isaiah recorded his personal reaction to the judgments. In 15:5-9 his heart cried out over Moab; in 21:3,4 he doubled over in pain when he saw the destruction of Babylon; and in 22:4 he refused consolation when he saw what would happen to Jerusalem
- Even through all of this, God's grace is still at work. We remember the highway of unity in faith from Egypt to Assyria (19:19-25) and Tyre's wealth used as a blessing for the people of God (23:18). We especially remember the lament of the LORD's heart as people do not respond to his continued warnings.

- 5 What have these chapters taught you about God? About yourself?

### **Closing Prayer**

References:

Braun, John A. *People's Bible Commentary – Isaiah 1-39*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000. 210-238

## Opening Prayer

Today's study goes beyond the more specific judgments presented in the previous 11 chapters to the end of time and the final judgment of the world. Some modern day scholars have challenged Isaiah's authorship of this section because the content is so different than other parts of the book. However, vs 1 says "See, the LORD", vs 3 says "the LORD has spoken", and the way the author puts his readers into the middle of the action with vivid pictures are all similar to other parts of Isaiah's writing. These chapters also provide an important conclusion to the preceding 11 chapters. Ancient traditions, along with many other scholars, agree Isaiah wrote these chapters and the message of these chapters is not inconsistent with the Bible as a whole. It is not wise of us to get caught up with such arguments so much that we overlook the message of these chapters.

We could refer to this as "Isaiah's Apocalypse," similar in some of its pictures to John's Revelation. The style of writing is in symbolic, figurative language, using comparisons to illustrate concepts that often go beyond human understanding.

## Read Chapter 24

- 1 The picture that Isaiah paints for us when he uses words like "lays waste ... devastate ... ruin ... scatter" is not one of beauty or comfort. Verse 5 says the earth is going to be destroyed because the people have disobeyed God's laws, violated his statutes and broken their promises. How is this possible if God wrote his laws in men's hearts and Paul says we have a natural knowledge of God?

*SIN!! Once sin entered the world, by nature we'd rather do our own thing than listen to God.*

- 2 Who is Isaiah talking about in verses 14-16?

*Once again we are told of a remnant; those who trust in God's forgiveness will survive his judgment and enter the mansions of heaven. This remnant rejoices and sings praises to God.*

- 3 Isaiah says "I waste away! Woe to me!" (vs 16) Every bit of his strength leaves him as he sees what the judgment holds for unbelievers. How is that day described for us?

*Great agony, thorough – no one escapes, not a "slap on the wrist and another chance" as has been the case throughout history but final, shocking and brutal. The weight of sin is so great, the earth seems to cave in on itself and is destroyed, "never to rise again" (vs 20). The judgment is not limited to earth but will also include Satan and all of his angels (vs 21).*

But as believers, our hope rests in God's promises of the glory of the New Jerusalem (vs 23), where even the sun and moon are paled by the glory of God with his saints.

## Read Chapter 25

- 4 Isaiah bursts into a song of praise as he sees a glimpse of the perfect bliss of heaven. Evil has been forever destroyed (v2); the poor and needy have found a perfect place of refuge (vv 4-5); a heavenly banquet has been prepared (v 6); death has been conquered (vv 7-8). "Let us rejoice

*and be glad in his salvation!" (v 9) This chapter layers law (or its consequences) and gospel one on top of another. Can you give some examples?*

*gospel (vs 1) – law (vs 2) – gospel (vs 3) – gospel/law/gospel (vs 4-5) – gospel (vs 6-10a) – law (vs 10b-12)*

- 5 Look at the last words of verse 8. Of what do they remind you?

*We have seen these before in Isaiah (24:3, 21:17, 3:15, 1:20...). Just as surely as the Lord has spoken that his judgments will be carried out, he now tells us that the glory of heaven is also surely ours.*

- 6 Let's read together the first verse of the chapter. What does this verse mean to you, especially in light of the many words of law in this chapter?

*There but for the grace of God, go I. Lord, help me remain faithful to you. I place my trust wholly in you, my God. I am your servant and will sing your praise.*

### **Read Chapter 26**

- 7 Yet another song is on Isaiah's lips. In anticipation of this final victory over all the forces of evil, he pictures the land of Judah as the land of salvation for all nations, where those who are faithful to the LORD will live forever, enjoying in peace and safety the salvation which God has prepared for them. "The LORD" is used twelve times in this chapter. What special meaning does it have?

*The LORD (all upper case letters) is the Hebrew name Yehwah, God's personal, sacred name. When the name LORD is used, it is a sign of complete faith and trust in his promises. It occurs first in Genesis 2:4. In Roman times, Yehwah came to be known as Jehovah, which we still use today. This sits in opposition to Lord, (lower case) or Adonai, which is more of a title, meaning master.*

- 8 Scan through this chapter and identify some of the ways "The LORD" is used.

What is the "perfect peace" mentioned in verse 3?

*This is the peace that only comes from God himself, because only he removes the sin which destroys peace. This perfect peace will not be seen this side of heaven.*

- 9 How might you find use for verse 12 when sharing your faith with a friend?

*Without the gospel we would be lost forever because we are by nature sinful. The gospel brings us a peace that is not found any place other than at the foot of Jesus' cross. We can do nothing to save ourselves because salvation comes only from God. Confidence in our salvation and the peace this gives us in life comes only from God, not from anything we can do.*

### **Read Chapter 27**

- 10 The chapter opens with God's judgment, using his fierce, great and powerful sword. But then he gives encouragement to the believers and tells them to sing. Notice in verse 4 he says he is not

angry – toward the faithful, God is only grace and tenderness! What hope does he hold out for the unbeliever in verses 4b-5?

*God still holds out hope to the unbeliever that his chastisement will turn them from unbelief and then he can make peace with them also! What a beautiful gospel invitation! When the gospel comes to an unbeliever in great distress, it can and does work the miracle of faith in his heart.*

- 11 Isaiah sees Israel (the church), under God's special care, filling the earth with its fruit. But verses 6-8 say the church will also experience warfare and exile, will experience the fierce blast of the east wind. What is the message of verses 6-8?

*God's church will flourish but it will also suffer. There will be growth and joy, but there will also be troubles. These troubles are meant as a way to strengthen the faith of the people, to bring them to repentance, to reach the hearts of the distressed and bring them to faith. These trials are all part of God's plan, his discipline of those he loves, the pruning so that the shrub bears more fruit.*

While God has no anger with his people as he purifies them over and over again, the closing words of this chapter also say he has no compassion for his enemies as he turns them over to their sins. On the last day, the difference between believer and enemy will be very clear as the separation is made, one by one.

- 12 What have these chapters taught you about God? About yourself? About the trials that you face in life?

### **Closing Prayer**

References:

Braun, John A. *People's Bible Commentary – Isaiah 1-39*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000. 238-287

## Lesson 8: Chapters 28-30

### Opening Prayer

Again we see the word “woe”. Isaiah does announce woe to many people, but he also includes many words of comfort to God’s people. Braun says it well “The law and gospel are opposite yet companion revelations of the same God - the one announces judgment upon all those who do not believe, while the other announces grace and mercy for all humanity and invites all to believe.” (pg 288)

### Read Chapter 28

- 1 Chapter 28 begins with a description of Samaria, the luxurious and indulgent pride of Ephraim, being destroyed by a fierce hailstorm, destructive wind, driving rain and a flooding downpour. This is assumed to be pictures of the invasion by the Assyrians. Notice the pictures that result from this destruction in verses 3-4.

*The city’s crowning glory (wreaths) trampled underfoot, flower that fades and dies, a ripe fig that is plucked and eaten.*

But once again we are told there is a remnant who will see the LORD as their glorious crown and salvation.

- 2 Now Isaiah shifts to those left behind, and to the Southern Kingdom. What message is given in verses 7-10?

*Just because some were not carried away by the Assyrians, doesn’t mean they were without guilt. They also were drunkards, including their priests and prophets who should have been calling people to repentance! The leaders mock the prophet of the Lord for reprimanding them as if they were children, telling them to obey God’s rules, which they see as stupid and petty. This reminds us of God’s purpose in calling Isaiah in 6:9-10.*

What happens to those who continue to turn away from God?

*God says “very well then”, giving up on them. They will be given over to their unbelief to the point they can’t understand God’s grace, as if his Word is being spoken in a foreign language. In their unbelief they will be left to a religion of works, devoid of the power to save. They take refuge in their own alliances, in their idols and in themselves – none of which has any power.*

This is not only a message for those at the time of Isaiah, but we see it repeated in Matthew 23:37 and still today.

Have you ever put more trust in your friends, your job, your money, your position, your doctors, than in God to solve a problem? How did that work for you?

- 3 What is the tested, precious cornerstone that Isaiah talks about in vs 16? (see also 1Peter 2:4-8, Ephesians 2:19-20, Romans 9:33)

*The Messiah! Notice that this is said in the past tense, the cornerstone has already been laid, well before Christ came to this world. God’s plan of salvation was as good as done.*

Which stones are added to the building? Which are discarded?

4. What is God's strange and alien work in verse 21?

*This is the judgment and destruction of his people of Judah. He is a God of love and wants all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. He would much rather forgive repentant sinners than destroy the obstinate.*

The chapter ends with Isaiah imploring the people to listen and trust that God has a plan for their salvation.

### **Read Chapter 29**

5. Compare the leaders of the city of Jerusalem that Isaiah describes in 29:2-3 with David as he conquered Jerusalem in 2 Samuel 5:6-10.

*Jerusalem was important and thrived because David was a man after God's heart, because God was with him. It is now a burning heap because the leaders had turned from God.*

Notice the pictures Isaiah uses to describe how low Jerusalem will fall in verse 4. Verses 5-8 once again promise deliverance for the believers. We look at Jerusalem, not as the geographic city, but as all the faithful people of God. Those who persecute the church will only be as effective as a dream. They can never alter the reality of God's plans. How does this message give you comfort even today?

*God is in charge! His church will go on until he sees fit to take his people home.*

6. Why did God respond to the unbelief of the people by sending them into a deep sleep so they could no longer understand?

*God hardened them in their unbelief 1) Because they had turned from God in their worship and made it into nothing more than ritual, devoid of substance; this message is for those who worship today but without Christ foremost in the picture (vs 13) 2) Because they had rebellious hearts and wanted to raise themselves above God, as a pot thinking itself better than the potter (vs 16).*

7. Are we to see this as God turning against his people forever?

*Vs 22ff, the gospel message will work faith in the hearts of some (my Word will not return unto me void but it shall accomplish that which I please, Is 55:11). The Holy Spirit will continue to call believers and work faith in their hearts. In Christ, our future is secure. See Romans 8:18. There is a day coming when all will stand in grace and mercy, to declare God's name as holy, when all will stand in awe, when all will understand and accept.*

### **Read Chapter 30**

8. We begin a 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter today, and a 3<sup>rd</sup> woe, this time to the obstinate children, those who no longer seek help and deliverance from the Lord but look to worldly alliances, in this case Egypt. The people carry their riches through dangerous land to pay for utterly useless help, instead of asking God, who gives us his deliverance out of love and with no fee attached! Compare this trip to Egypt with the celebration of the Passover.

*These people are going to Egypt, where God made it clear they should not return, to ask for help. Passover was the celebration of fleeing from the country that imprisoned them, a feast they were commanded to celebrate annually. But they no longer looked to God as their deliverer.*

Why do you think God asked Isaiah to write this down?

*Spoken words last only as long as you hear them. Written words are here for eternity.*

*Trusting God is so important that God wanted it written down so even we today, can learn from it.*

- 9 We see a progression in these chapters: in 27 the leaders mocked God and his message, in 28 the people could no longer understand the gospel message, and now in chapter 30 they tell God to be quiet because they only wanted to hear pleasant things, things they wanted to hear. This chapter, like others of Isaiah, blends the harsh message of the law with the sweet message of the gospel. Why do we need to hear both, and not just the “pleasant things”?

*The law convicts us of our sin, deeply wounding our heart for how we look to everyone and everything but God, ignoring him and his commands and promises. Only this deep conviction can move us to repent and turn away from our sins. Only then can the sweet gospel message – that God loves us, has forgiven us, has a plan for us, will always protect us and will take us to be with him – only then can this message work in our hearts. Without the law, we see no need for the gospel. Without the gospel, all is lost; we are without hope.*

10. Read verse 18-19 again. Why is turning to God instead of ourselves one of the most difficult things we are asked to do?

*Because Satan wants to convince us that God is foolishness and we must take care of ourselves. Satan so easily makes us overlook the many promises that God longs to be gracious to us and shower us with blessings. When we fall for his lies, Satan celebrates and God weeps. From this, Lord, preserve us.*

Let us draw strength and power from God’s grace and the words of spiritual and physical renewal that Isaiah uses in verses 19-26.

11. The people Isaiah was writing to saw only the immediate deliverance from their enemies but failed to see the eternal spiritual blessings God was offering. How does looking past today and into God’s promises of eternal life help us through our day to day troubles?

*There will be calamities and destruction, but God has promised to deliver his people. He has in the past; he will in the future. He asks only that we trust that he has everything under control. Those who hold firm to his promises will rejoice at the last day, when he returns to take us home. Paul said in Romans 8:18 that our sufferings now are paled by the glory of what is ours to come. This must be our focus as we face trials.*

- 12 What have these chapters taught you about God? About yourself?

### **Closing Prayer**

References:

Braun, John A. *People's Bible Commentary – Isaiah 1-39*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000. 287-335



## Lesson 9: Chapters 31-33

### Opening Prayer

For the fourth chapter in a row, Isaiah begins with the word “woe”. We wonder how those people could be so dense that they didn’t “get it”; then we look in the mirror.

### Read Chapter 31

- 1 With Assyria on the move, Judah is facing a military challenge and they look for a military solution. Why do you think Isaiah used these two names for God in verse 1?

*He was repeating once again the message that the people should look to God for their help. “The LORD” is the faithful one who delivered them from Egypt, who promised them a Savior, who gave them day after day of grace, who implored them to lean on him. “The Holy One of Israel” is the one who chose these people and made them a holy nation, setting them apart from all other nations. More than a military crisis, this was a crisis of faith.*

2. In verses 2-3, what are some of the arguments Isaiah uses in an attempt to get the people to look to God?

*Unlike earthly alliances, God is wise (vs 2), God is reliable (vs 2), God is powerful (vs 2-3). Just look at history – God never let them down, gave them food and water in the wilderness, he performed miracles. He certainly showed his power any number of times (Jericho walls, parting the Red Sea). The Egyptians are just men, only have the power and wisdom of men, and in the end they die just like everyone dies.*

Notice the picture Isaiah gives us in the sermon that follows. The law - God is seen as a lion who will not give up his prey even though shepherds scream and shout; God will not go back on his word just because people say it isn’t fair or because they complain. The gospel – God will protect those who believe just as a he did at the time of the original Passover. The call to repentance – the response of God’s people to the preaching of the law and the gospel is seen in vs 6-7.

### Read Chapter 32

3. The first 8 verses talk about a spiritual renewal; a time when Christ rules in the hearts of men; a time when there is learning and God is honored; a time when the righteous are honored. Isaiah isn’t talking about life in heaven, because he says there are still fools and there is still suffering. Rather, he is talking about the blessings God gives his people on this earth when a nation turns to him and gives him the honor that he is due.

Why do you think Isaiah appeals to the women?

*The women may have had power in persuading the men to put their trust in God. However, Braun tells us the original Hebrew included both men and women in this section. So he could be calling the men weak and ineffective because they relied on Egypt and “good luck” to avert destruction.*

In verse 14 and following, Isaiah jumps beyond earthly chronology to a spiritual world and shows what happens when the Holy Spirit gathers souls to himself. While believers are blessed here on earth, they will experience the full measure of peace and righteousness in heaven.

### Read Chapter 33

- 4 The opening verses are a warning to Assyria. They laid siege to Jerusalem and held on until everyone in the city was near death. But God made the soldiers hear the approach of a great army and they fled, leaving all of their belongings behind. (2 Kings 7:3-16) The people of Jerusalem plundered what they left behind just like “a swarm of locusts.” How could we use Isaiah’s prayer in verses 2-6 in our own lives?

*We can begin each day by asking for God’s grace and strength to face the challenges the day is sure to bring (2). We acknowledge God’s great power, which he uses on our behalf (2-4). Yes, God is in charge of all things and all things work according to his plan (4-5). God alone is the source of all of our blessings (6).*

Beginning with verse 7, we see how the Assyrians return and are at the gates of Jerusalem. Everyone is frightened, crying, hiding. But we know that God once again saved Jerusalem by sending an angel of death into the Assyrian camp to kill 185,000 soldiers during the night and the remainder of the army retreated (2 Kings 19:35). Notice how Isaiah compares the great army to nothing more than straw in a fire (11-12). How will remembering this single-verse story help you when there are seemingly insurmountable problems in your life?

*God is more powerful than anything in this world. He will see me through!*

5. Isaiah asks everyone far and near to take notice of what God has done (vs 14). How do you think unbelievers would respond to the way God saved Jerusalem?

*They are terrified, knowing they can’t stand up against such power. They live only by the law and do not have the gospel for comfort, so they live in fear.*

How do you think believers respond to the way God saved Jerusalem (vs 15-16), and saves us also from every trial we face?

*In thanksgiving they live a life that praises God and God continues to supply all of their needs. They walk by faith, not by sight, with confidence in God’s promises.*

Isaiah finishes this chapter looking beyond Jerusalem to a city of festivals and joy, peace and plenty, where the LORD, our Messiah, is our judge, lawgiver and king. The ship described in verse 23 is the church. What can we learn from Isaiah’s picture?

*Without God as the head, the church is ill-prepared and can accomplish nothing. But the work of the church is not accomplished through human effort; rather it is through the grace and power of God alone that souls are saved.*

6. What does the closing phrase of this chapter “and the sins of those who dwell there will be forgiven” mean to you?

*That is the only way I can ever take possession of the great gift of salvation, through undeserved forgiveness.*

7 What have these chapters taught you about God? About yourself?

### **Closing Prayer**

References:

Braun, John A. *People's Bible Commentary – Isaiah 1-39*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000. 335-364

## Opening Prayer

Chapters 34 and 35 present a complementary message to conclude the previous chapters of woe. They direct our attention to the end of time with two contrasting pictures. Chapter 34 talks about the day of the Lord's vengeance and chapter 35 talks about day the glory of the Lord will be seen.

## Read Chapter 34

- 1 The chapter begins with an invitation for the entire world to listen to God's announcement of judgment. Why? Because he is angry with all nations, not just one or two (vs 2). He is the God of the Universe, not a regional God. From the next verses, how do we know Isaiah is talking about the end of the world? (Also see Matthew 24:29 and Revelation 6:12-14)

*Verse 4 tells us the stars and the heavens dissolve and are no more. New Testament writers used the same images when talking about the end of time.*

Once again Edom is singled out. They were a long time, hostile enemy of God's people and the two countries engaged in many battles throughout the centuries. On a spiritual level, the conflicts with Edom represent a battle between believers and unbelievers. Why do you think Isaiah goes into such graphic detail?

*The gory details let us know that God's judgment will be brutal, thorough and complete.*

What do you think it would be like to have "the measuring line of chaos and the plumb line of desolation" (vs 11) spread across our country?

*See the NIV study Bible footnote - the Hebrew for these words is used in Genesis 1:2 to describe the earth in its formless and empty state. See also Jeremiah 4:23. We can't even fathom what this would be like! Anyone who does not believe in Jesus as their Savior will be subject to this judgment. Lord, let this motivate us to share the precious gospel with all we know and actively support those who preach and teach the Word around the world.*

- 2 Notice that the judgment is coming from the LORD, the God of covenant grace. How is God's wrath related to his love?

*The LORD of the covenant doesn't just give us a promise of salvation that we can depend on, he also has given us a promise of judgment and justice that is also equally as certain. Just as believers are declared not guilty in God's courtroom, unbelievers are declared guilty and will suffer the consequences. If there were no judgment, wouldn't this make justice immaterial?*

What does it mean to you that God would fight this hard to save you?

The end days will bring great destruction. If anyone doubts this, what does Isaiah instruct them to do in verse 16?

*Read all of Scripture and see what the LORD says! Over and over we are told all of these things will come to pass. These prophecies come from God, by inspiration, and will not fail.*

## Read Chapter 35

As we read this chapter, let's look for the comparisons outlined for us by Braun (page 365):

<i>Chapter 34</i> <i>The Day of Vengeance</i>	<i>Chapter 35</i> <i>The Splendor of Our God</i>
All nations come to listen	The land will burst into bloom
The Lord is angry	Encouragement is given to the feeble
Stars and sky will be dissolved	The blind, deaf, lame, and mute will be changed
Blood from slaughter will bathe the landscape	Burning sand will become bubbling springs
Edom will burn and lie desolate	A safe highway will be there for the redeemed
Nothing will be left to call a kingdom	The redeemed will enter Zion with singing
Desert creatures will inhabit the land	
The scroll of the Lord will verify the truth of God's judgment	

- 3 Discuss the huge difference in what that day will bring to those who live by the law and are condemned by the law, and those who live by the gospel, no longer subject to the law. Take note of how someone who is blind, lame, feeble, or in fear for their life might see these words of comfort and promise.
- 4 What does the picture of the crocus bursting into bloom convey to you?  
*Easter morning? New life in Christ? The ultimate purpose of God's judgment is to bring us eternal life, and a life free from conflict, pain, sin. A life where we can praise God and do his will forever. A life of reconciliation.*
- 5 Compare the message of this chapter to Luke 7:22  
*Our physical bodies will be restored and all will hear God's Word preached to them – these are things that will happen because of the Messiah (vs 3-6)*

To John 14:6

*Jesus is the way to heaven, the highway upon which we travel, without detours or roadblocks that send us the wrong way (vs 8-10)*

To John 7:38-39

*The beautiful word of the Gospel is living water poured on us by the Holy Spirit (vs 6b-7);  
cool, refreshing and life-giving*

6 What have these chapters taught you about God? About yourself?

### **Closing Prayer**

References:

Braun, John A. *People's Bible Commentary – Isaiah 1-39*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000. 335-364

*Serendipity Bible for Groups*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Littleton, CO: Serendipity House, 1998. 993-995

## Lesson 11: Chapters 36-39

### Opening Prayer

King Sennacherib of Assyria conquered city after city as he approached Jerusalem. King Hezekiah set about preparing Jerusalem for a long siege (2 Chronicles 32). At the same time he sent a message to Sennacherib asking him to withdraw and in return he would give him whatever he asked (2 Kings 18). The temple was stripped of all the gold and silver and the treasury was emptied and sent to Sennacherib. But the Assyrians didn't keep their end of the bargain and continued their march toward Jerusalem.

### Read Chapter 36

- 1 The Assyrian field commander tells Hezekiah's men that their position is hopeless and tries to get them to surrender. How does Satan use the same type of reasoning to bring us to a crisis of faith?

*Satan is blunt and bold. He would have us think that we are totally overwhelmed, that God won't help us because he is angry with us or he doesn't care or that it's silly to trust in him. Satan tries to intimidate us. Satan twists God's promises to make us doubt and turns God's promises into earthly curses. He promises us peace, riches and delivery from the problem. Satan gets us to look only to ourselves and the situation, and forget/doubt that God has promised to be with us always. Satan wants us to forget he is only able to do what God allows him to do.*

### Read Chapter 37

- 2 What truths about God does Hezekiah confess in his prayer?  
*God's power, position, sovereignty; that he is the only true God and all others are just wood and stone with no power; God's ability to deliver his people from harm; that God wants to be praised by all*
- 3 What do we learn about God in his response to Hezekiah's prayer?  
*To Sennacherib: He will not tolerate being insulted and blasphemed (vs 22-25); he will not let people take the credit for what has been done; He had things planned before time began and his plan will be accomplished (vs 26); we can't hide from God! (vs 28); he will carry out his judgment (vs 29). To Hezekiah: He will care for his people (vs 31-33) and fulfill his promises*
- 4 Compare God's response to Hezekiah's prayer in the temple, to his response to Sennacherib's prayer to his god.  
*God was glorified as he answered Hezekiah's prayer to save Jerusalem; Sennacherib was killed by his own sons as he was praying to his god.*

### Read Chapter 38

- 5 In this chapter we get a glimpse of Hezekiah when faced with death. He responds in prayer. What does this teach us about God and our prayers?

*God hears our prayers and answers them in his own way; God knows our inmost fears, sufferings and anguish; God has the power to do the impossible, even extending life when human knowledge says there is no way and making the sun move backward. But through faith, these things don't surprise us.*

6. What do we learn about death from Hezekiah's psalm, verses 10-23?

*There is a very human response of not wanting to leave this world and seeing death as the end (10-14). But God has so much more in store for us. The second half of the psalm focuses on God's grace and love, on forgiveness of sins, and on our praise for our living God. He encourages everyone to work for God while they still can, not to postpone but to seize every opportunity.*

### **Read Chapter 39**

7. How does the Hezekiah we see in this chapter compare to the man described in the previous chapter?

*This Hezekiah lets the sin of pride derail the strong faith we saw in the last chapter. "I hate pride and arrogance" (Proverbs 8:13) and "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). We must beware lest we too fall. God, keep me from sin, strengthen my faith.*

This brings to a close Isaiah I: The Book of Judgment and Promise. We can certainly see the constant repetition of promise and judgment, promise and judgment. Isaiah II, chapters 40-66, is known as The Book of Comfort and is filled with promises of our Messiah.

8. What have these chapters taught you about God? About yourself?

### **Closing Prayer**

References:

Braun, John A. *People's Bible Commentary – Isaiah 1-39*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000. 380-413