

July 9-15

## **Week 28**

We will continue this week with the eighth-century prophets, and in days 1–4 we will still be in Act 2, scene 6 of God’s story.

This week the focus will primarily be on the southern kingdom of Judah and the prophets Isaiah and Micah. We will also read about King Ahaz of Judah, one of the southern kingdom’s worst.

In day 5 we will come to another major turning point in the history of God’s people: the fall of the northern kingdom to Assyria. This moves us into Act 2, scene 7, “Kings and Prophets: The Southern Kingdom as God’s People.” From this point on, the divided kingdom was no more. Only the southern kingdom of Judah remained.

As you read this week, notice how the prophets mixed calls to repentance, warnings about coming judgment, allusions to the past, hope for a brighter future, and promises concerning a coming One who would lead God’s people.

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## **Day 1**

### **Read Isaiah 5-8**

#### **Act 2 - Scene 6 - Reading 25**

Chapter 5 presents the Vineyard Song, a dramatic word picture of judgment. As with significant portions of the prophets, this is poetic literature, so parallelism and figurative language are prominent. Parallelism offers the same thought, a contrasting thought, or more information in a parallel form.

Isaiah 6 gives the powerful, beautiful call of Isaiah, and words of judgment follow (see 6:9-11; Mark 4:10-12).

In Isaiah 7–8 the prophet mixed words of hope for Judah with warnings about the rise of Assyria. We also see the anticipation of a coming One, words the early church understood to be fulfilled by Jesus (see Isaiah 7:14; 8:14-15).

The picture of God presented in these chapters emphasizes God's sovereignty over the nations. Nations may be evil, like Assyria, but they cannot thwart God's plans.

*Worship God this day as a holy God who moves the political currents of the world toward his desired ends.*

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## **Day 2**

### **Read Isaiah 9-12**

#### **Act 2 - Scene 6 - Reading 26**

Look for four elements as you read Isaiah today:

- a call to repent (for abandoning aspects of the covenant),
- the coming judgment,
- echoes of Israel's past (look for allusions to the deliverance from Egypt),
- and hope for a bright future.

Two aspects of these chapters are especially striking.

1. Assyria would be both God's instrument of judgment and his object for judgment. God would use that nation to punish his wayward people, and then he would judge the Assyrians for their arrogance.
2. This section presents some of the most powerful messianic passages in the Old Testament (for example, see Isaiah 9:6-7) and the picture of a future messianic kingdom (see Isaiah 11:1-10).

*Isaiah 12 offers a beautiful song of salvation. Sing or speak this as a prayer of praise to the Lord. Meditate on the salvation he has given you or, if you have not experienced salvation, cry out to him, asking for salvation.*

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**Day 3****Read Micah 1-4****Act 2 - Scene 6 - Reading 27**

Micah was a prophet from Judah to Judah in the eighth century BC. He was a contemporary of Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea. Micah especially focused on the oppression and injustice of the wealthy and powerful of Jerusalem (carefully read Micah 2–3). Notice that Micah equated Mount Zion, on which the city of Jerusalem sits, with a pagan high place, or hill of worship (see Micah 1:5).

As you read Micah, again watch for these main elements found in the Prophets: a call to repentance and covenant faithfulness, the coming judgment, and the hope of a remnant whom God would deliver.

*Where do you see oppression and injustice around you today?*

*Pray against injustice, speak out against it, and act against it.*

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**Day 4**

**Read Micah 5-7**

**Act 2 - Scene 6 - Reading 28**

Watch today for elements that connect with the broader story of the Bible. There are allusions to God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt and passages that anticipate the coming of the Messiah, Jesus. Micah 5:2 foretells Jesus's birth.

*Read Mark 11:12-14 in light of Micah 7:1-3.*

The cursing of the fig tree by Jesus symbolized the judgment that was coming on Jerusalem and echoed the judgment pronounced by Micah.

*Meditate deeply on Micah 6:8 and memorize this verse this week. What does God desire of people?*

*How might you act justly, faithfully, mercifully, or humbly this week?*

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**Scene 7****Kings and Prophets: The Southern Kingdom as God's People**

Descendants of David continue to reign in Jerusalem. Judah struggles to retain independence amid the swirling change of political superpowers. Two kings stand tall for the Lord: Hezekiah and Josiah. Many others fall into idolatry. Mighty Assyria crumples before resurgent Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar enters the world stage and attacks Judah.

During this scene God's prophets continue the dire warnings of their predecessors. Isaiah and Jeremiah are the best known. They also foretell events both near and remote. Isaiah's word about the Suffering Servant and Jeremiah's prophecy of a new covenant wait to be fulfilled in the first coming of the messianic King, recounted early in Act 3.

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**Day 5****Read 2 Kings 16-17; 2 Chronicles 28****Act 2 - Scene 7 - Reading 1**

Judah's King Ahaz, who began his reign about 732 BC, was one of the worst kings of the southern kingdom. Attacked by Aram and Israel, he sought help from King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria. He also imported aspects of Assyrian religion, copying a large altar he saw on a visit to Assyria.

In the twelfth year of King Ahaz, Hoshea became the king over Israel in the north. During his reign the northern kingdom was destroyed by Assyria (722 BC), now under the rule of King Shalmaneser.

Second Kings gives an extensive explanation of why Israel was destroyed. Carefully read 2 Kings 17:14-15. The Lord removed Israel from his presence because it failed to live by his covenant. So now only the kingdom of Judah remained.

*What are the worthless things on which you are tempted to focus your life?*

*How do these things affect your relationship with the Lord?*

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**Day 6**

**Read Isaiah 13-17**

**Act 2 - Scene 7 - Reading 2**

Today's reading presents a series of prophecies about coming judgment. It will be important to notice what nation is on the receiving end of each judgment. At the back of your Bible, you probably have a map of the divided kingdom or the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Use this map to identify the minor kingdoms immediately surrounding Israel and Judah.

Babylon and Assyria, on the other hand, were nations hundreds of miles away to the east in the area of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and were major players on the world stage in the eighth through the sixth centuries BC.

Look today for the hope offered by the prophet. What hope was there for a brighter future?

*Read Isaiah 13:14 in light of Numbers 27:17; 1 Kings 22:17; and Matthew 9:36.*

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**Day 7**

**Reading Summary for Week 28**

During the long reign of Uzziah (Azariah) in Judah, the northern kingdom of Israel began unraveling. Politically, Assyrian aggression caused Israel's fall; religiously, Israel's abandonment of the Lord was the true cause. God sent prophets to Judah, warning that they too would fall if they did not repent. Micah emphasized the sin of idolatry as well as corruption, violence, and other social sins. The passages from Isaiah we've read emphasize oracles against the nations surrounding Judah.

**Prayer/Meditation**

O God of Micah, your justice means that you cannot and will not overrule the consequences of rebellion against you indefinitely. I thank you for using Micah to point out sin and its deadly consequences. I worship you for giving him the prophecy about the One who was to arise from Bethlehem. He would "be ruler over Israel for me. His origin is from antiquity, from ancient times" (Micah 5:2). In the Lord Jesus, this word has now been fulfilled, and in his wonderful name I pray. Amen.

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