

July 16-22

Week 29

We will still be in Act 2, scene 7 this week, which focuses on the southern kingdom of Judah, and we will continue to hear from the prophet Isaiah. As you read the prophet, watch for warnings of coming judgment, as well as the promise of a future for the remnant of God's people. Isaiah spoke to the southern kingdom of Judah, but he also prophesied against various nations in that part of the world. Continue to read the prophet's words carefully, tuning in to the figurative language and references to the various nations.

This week we will also meet Hezekiah, the greatest king of Judah after his forefather, King David. Hezekiah brought extensive religious reform, taking God's Word very seriously. He also faced two great crises during his reign, the first of which we will see in day 6 of this week. What in Hezekiah's life might we emulate?

Day 1

Read Isaiah 18-22

Act 2 - Scene 7 - Reading 4

Today we read oracles against Cush; Egypt; Babylon; Dumah (Edom); Arabia; Jerusalem; and Shebna, a palace administrator in Jerusalem. Cush was a powerful North African nation, known for their skill with the bow; they were sometimes called Ethiopians or Nubians in the Bible. At the time of Isaiah's writing, Egypt was ruled by a Cushite, Piankhi. Egypt is a special focus here because Jerusalem trusted that nation instead of the Lord for help.

The prophets at times acted out their messages, so Isaiah 20 shows the prophet acting out God's judgment, going naked to make a point! Chapter 22 addresses the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem in 701 BC, which will be further detailed in chapters 36–37. Shebna represents a self-serving leader deluded by his own power.

Choose two or three verses from today's reading and meditate on them.

Day 2

Read Isaiah 23-26

Act 2 - Scene 7 - Reading 5

Today's reading begins with a final oracle against Tyre, one of Babylon's allies. As we move to Isaiah 24, however, God brings judgment on the whole earth. Notice the rich figurative language here. God shows himself to be the King of the whole earth (see Isaiah 24:23).

In Isaiah 25 we continue to read words of judgment, but now they are mixed with words of salvation. Carefully read Isaiah 25:6-8, a wonderful promise about the destruction of death. Jesus accomplished this "on this mountain" (Isaiah 25:6), in Jerusalem, when he was crucified and resurrected (see Hebrews 2:14). This prophecy will be brought to full fruition at the end of the age, when God will "wipe away the tears from every face" (Isaiah 25:8; also see Revelation 21:4).

Isaiah 26 is a song of blessing for the nation of Judah, since it turned back to the Lord.

Praise God today for the blessings of his salvation and the promise of death's death.

Day 3**Read 2 Kings 18:1-8; 2 Chronicles 29-31; Psalm 48****Act 2 - Scene 7 - Reading 6**

Hezekiah, who ruled from about 728 to 686 BC, was one of the greatest kings of Judah, earning the rare praise “He did what was right in the Lord’s sight just as his ancestor David had done” (2Kings 18:3). In fact, after David he was the epitome of a good king, since he trusted the Lord and kept God’s law.

Second Chronicles 29–31 describes Hezekiah’s extensive reforms. Notice his detailed attention to the covenant and the law given through Moses.

As Psalm 48 celebrates, Zion, the mountain on which the city of Jerusalem sits, is exalted when God rules as the true King of his people.

Identify three aspects of Hezekiah’s character or three of his actions that serve as examples for you to follow.

Day 4

Read Isaiah 27-30

Act 2 - Scene 7 - Reading 7

The image of Leviathan seems to be used in Scripture to represent evil powers. The Vineyard Song of Isaiah 27 presents a beautiful picture of God's reestablishing the nation after it had been punished. Under God's loving care it would thrive like a well-tended vineyard.

Isaiah 28–30 offers words of judgment mixed with words of encouragement. Note especially 28:16, which New Testament authors understood as a reference to Jesus (see Romans 9:33; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:4-7), who gives believers an unshakable foundation for life. However, people of both Isaiah's time and Jesus's time tended to use religious words empty of true spiritual commitment (see Isaiah 29:13; Mark 7:6-7). Too often people tend to give lip service to the Lord while trusting other things or people to make life work.

Pray to the Lord, telling him that you want to trust him with your life. What areas do you need to trust to him today?

Day 5

Read Isaiah 31-35

Act 2 - Scene 7 - Reading 8

Isaiah 31 celebrates God as the only true help in life, and chapters 32–33 describe the Lord’s deliverance and the establishment of his righteous kingdom. He will bring judgment on the nations (see Isaiah 34) and will bring his people to a place of joy (see Isaiah 35). Carefully read Isaiah 35 and note the blessings of being in God’s kingdom. These realities will be fully experienced when Christ returns and his eternal kingdom is established. Yet as the people of God, we already benefit from these blessings.

Identify and thank God for some blessings of his kingdom that are evident in Isaiah 35.

Day 6

Read Isaiah 36-37; 2 Kings 18:9-19:37; 2 Chronicles 32:1-23; Psalm 76

Act 2 - Scene 7 - Reading 9

In 2 Kings 18:9-12 the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel is reviewed in contrast to the reign of Hezekiah in Judah. Generally speaking, among the rulers who had gone before him, Hezekiah was second only to King David as a monarch of Judah. Yet he had challenges, specifically two great crises. We read about the first today: the threat of Assyrian invasion under Sennacherib. Assyria was one of the greatest world powers in the ancient Near East. It had destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel just seven years prior, and in our passages today it threatened Judah.

As you read, contrast the attitudes and worldview of Hezekiah and the Assyrian leadership. When the king over God's people sought God's face and worked closely with God's prophet, the pagan king, without knowing it, was setting himself against God. From a human perspective the odds were overwhelming in favor of the Assyrians, but the assyrian threat was no threat to God. He would deal with them according to his will.

Is there a situation that seems overwhelming to you at present? Seek God. Call on him for help.

Day 7

Reading Summary for Week 29

King Hezekiah of Judah repaired the temple and joyfully restored worship of the Lord. The celebration of Jerusalem (Zion) as “the city of the great King” in Psalm 48 could well have been composed during his time. In our readings in Isaiah, we’ve seen the prophet announce further divine judgment on surrounding nations. Yet Judah was not exempt from the coming judgment. Isaiah also foresaw the time when “the redeemed of the Lord will return and come to Zion with singing” (Isaiah 35:10).

Prayer/Meditation

Lord, like Isaiah, I feel such tension. On one hand, I sense that the nations mainly ignore you and deserve only your condemnation. I often feel that the people of my own nation have abandoned your ways so much that judgment must lie ahead. But let me, like Isaiah, not give up the hope for divine mercy. And like Isaiah, may I be confident in the glorious future when you will restore all things in the kingdom of my Lord and Savior, Jesus. Amen.
