

July 23-29

Week 30

Week 30 will walk us through the end of Hezekiah's reign as we continue Act 2, scene 7. We will especially concentrate on the latter half of the majestic prophet Isaiah, with a couple of psalms accenting the themes of Isaiah. Day 1 will wrap up the first half of Isaiah, which, as we have seen, focuses a great deal on judgment.

As we transition to chapters 40 and following, the prophet's words sound a different note, and these are some of the most beautiful and powerful chapters in all Scripture. Here we find words of comfort, hope, salvation, and a promised future. We will also read about God's Servant, a theme that refers variously to God's people as a whole, an earthly ruler, or the coming Messiah.

We will still have words of warning and judgment in this section, and the idiocy of idolatry especially comes under blistering attack. But the overwhelming message delivers promises of God's salvation. Enjoy and meditate deeply on these chapters.

Day 1

Read Isaiah 38-39; 2 Kings 20; 2 Chronicles 32:24-33

Act 2 - Scene 7 - Reading 11

When Hezekiah was about forty years of age, he experienced a life-threatening illness, the second major crisis in his life. As we read in these parallel passages, Hezekiah called to the Lord, who granted him another fifteen years of life. Then because of his pride Hezekiah foolishly showed off the riches of his kingdom to foreign ambassadors, which eventually had devastating results.

When you read parallel passages like the ones before us today, look for the unique emphasis of each writer. For instance, 2 Chronicles, the account written last, attributes Hezekiah's folly to his pride, pointing out that he did not spiritually benefit as he should have from his miraculous healing. Pride causes us to do foolish things.

Examine your heart. Is there pride there for which you need to repent?

How are you taking or embracing credit for the blessings of God?

Day 2

Read Isaiah 40-42; Psalm 46

Act 2 - Scene 7 - Reading 12

Today we come to a turning point in Isaiah. The messages of chapters 40–55 are among the most beautiful and powerful in all Scripture. Here God both comforted and confronted his people.

In Isaiah 40:18 the prophet asked, “With whom will you compare God?” Then in 40:25 God posed a similar question: “To whom will you compare me, or who is my equal?” The repetition magnifies the uniqueness of the one true God, a key theme of Isaiah 40. The idols of the nations could not compare to him (see Isaiah 41). Only God could foretell the future deliverance of his people from their punishment, exile from the promised land. God’s Servant would bring righteousness to the earth (see Isaiah 42).

As you read these chapters, watch for the themes of comfort, God’s character and abilities, deliverance, and encouragement to turn away from idols. Also notice that Isaiah 40:3-5 was fulfilled in the ministry of John the Baptist hundreds of years later (see Matthew 3:1-3; Luke 3:1-6). In these and the following chapters of Isaiah, we see glimpses into the ministry of God’s ultimate Servant, Jesus.

Praise God today that no one can compare to him. Slowly read Isaiah 40 again, voicing your praise to God.

Day 3**Read Isaiah 43-45; Psalm 80****Act 2 - Scene 7 - Reading 13**

Isaiah now looks to the future restoration of Israel. Key themes in this section are God as the Savior of his people, the return of God's people from exile, the uniqueness of the one true God and the stupidity of idol worship, and God's anointed deliverer. Cyrus, mentioned in Isaiah 44:28; 45:1, released the Jewish people from exile in Babylon in 538 BC, almost two centuries after Isaiah's time. Cyrus is the only foreign king to be called anointed, the designation normally referring to King David or the Messiah.

Read Isaiah 45:18-25 very carefully. Do the words of 45:23 sound familiar? Compare them with Philippians 2:5-11. These words, with which God described the submission of the nations to himself, the early church used to describe the submission of all things to Jesus. God is the only true Savior, and salvation is found in submitting to him. Pray today for a person you know who is lost, exiled—distant from God in their sin.

Pray that they will come to know God's salvation, to experience the outpouring of his Spirit and his blessings.

Day 4**Read Isaiah 46-49; Psalm 135****Act 2 - Scene 7 - Reading 14**

There are three main messages in this section of Isaiah. Notice how God-centered they are.

1. The prophet continued the idea that no one can compare to God, and those who worship idols are foolish.
2. Only God could tell the future, and the prophet looked into the future to see the fall of the great nation of Babylon. Babylon thought it was untouchable, but God brought its pride crashing down.
3. Corresponding to Babylon's fall, God's people would be delivered from exile. Salvation would come. The servant seemed to be a representative of the people of Israel, who ministered on their behalf. He was used by God to proclaim that God was Israel's Savior and Redeemer.

In Isaiah's day people needed to be saved from their sin and the consequences of their sin. God's ultimate Servant, Jesus, brought about salvation, liberating us from our sin and the consequences of our sins. Praise him for his salvation.

Day 5**Read Isaiah 50-53****Act 2 - Scene 7 - Reading 15**

Notice several things about the powerful chapters we read today. God was not willing to let his covenant people fade into oblivion. In spite of their sinfulness and the devastation they had experienced because of their sin, God had a vision for them and was still committed to them. He pointed them back to the history of their relationship with him (see Isaiah 51:1-6).

Also notice the repeated call to wake up. God's people need to respond to God's grace, rising from their spiritual sluggishness.

Finally, the New Testament echoes several of these passages. For instance, Isaiah 52:7 and 53:1 are quoted in Romans 10:15-16, and words from the section on the Suffering Servant, found in Isaiah 52:13–53:12, were explained by Philip, when talking to an Ethiopian eunuch, as speaking of Jesus and the gospel (see Acts 8:32-33). Isn't it amazing that God, hundreds of years before the time of Christ, foretold Christ's sufferings?

Isaiah emphasized that God's ability to foretell the future showed him to be the one true God. Meditate on this aspect of God's person today.

Day 6**Read Isaiah 54-58****Act 2 - Scene 7 - Reading 16**

Enjoy the section of Isaiah, which expresses God's grace and vision for his people in eloquent ways. Notice echoes of the grand story of God's people (for example, see Isaiah 54:9). Also notice the foreshadowing of things to come.

Read Isaiah 54:11-12 in light of Revelation 21. Read Isaiah 56:7 in light of Jesus's words when he cleansed the temple (see Matthew 21:13). Focus on the important place of God's Word and instruction in his vision for his people.

In chapter 58 identify the nature of true fasting and observance of the Sabbath. This section is rich in theology.

Take time today to think deeply about God's vision for you as his person. How will you let these words affect and shape you today?

Day 7

Reading Summary for Week 30

What an exciting account about how the Lord halted the mighty Assyrian invasion of Jerusalem! In the showdown between Hezekiah's God and Sennacherib's gods, the Lord triumphed. As we've continued reading Isaiah, we've come to the intense passage about the Suffering Servant of the Lord. We've also read about God's open invitation for people to come to him: "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call to him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6).

Prayer/Meditation

God of Isaiah, from before the worlds were made you planned to send the Savior to die on the cross. How wonderful that you revealed to your servant Isaiah so many details about the death of the Suffering Servant. In your gracious provision, he came. "He was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds" (Isaiah 53:5). Hallelujah, what a Savior! Amen.
