

READING ISAIAH 1–35 TOGETHER

MARCH 2026

Who? Isaiah was a prophet in the southern kingdom of Judah. His name means "The Lord is salvation".

What? This is a collection of prophecies first spoken to Judah, with some sections of historical narrative. Prophecies are more than just predictions: they are messages declaring God's will for the present and future. Isaiah has ongoing relevance to us as we await the final fulfilment of God's words.

When? Chapters 1–35 address Judah in the 8th century BC, primarily in the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. The main world power was Assyria, who conquered the northern kingdom of Israel. Judah had to decide where they would look for protection: to the Lord or to political alliances with other nations.

Why? God's people failed to live the holy lives he had called them to. Isaiah was sent to announce judgement for their unfaithfulness, but with the hope of future salvation. This salvation would come through a righteous King, the Christ. God promised he would gather people from all nations and make them ready for life in his holy eternal kingdom. The people of Judah needed to learn to trust in the Lord's plans, which are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

A BREAKDOWN OF ISAIAH 1–35

Here's a quick summary of the first half of Isaiah, to help you avoid getting lost in the woods! (The first half really ends at chapter 39, but we will save chapters 36–39 for May.)

Chapters 1–12 – God's purifying judgement of Judah

- 1–5** The corruption and unfaithfulness of Judah, who have despised "the Holy One of Israel"
- 6** A vision of the Holy One, the true King, who gives Isaiah the task of preaching judgement, but with hope
- 7–8** King Ahaz's failure to trust the Lord
- 9–11** The promise of a greater King, who will act in justice and righteousness
- 12** A future celebration of the Lord's salvation

Chapters 13–27 – God's judgement of the nations

- 13–23** The pride and downfall of Judah's neighbours, with a warning for Jerusalem
- 24–27** A vision of final judgement and future salvation

Chapters 28–35 – Hope for those who trust the Lord

- 28–31** Judah's unfaithfulness and their false reliance on Egypt
- 32–33** Hope for the future through a righteous King
- 34–35** Warnings of judgement and a promise of rescue

FIVE KEY QUESTIONS

You might find it helpful to make notes as you read, so that you can remember what the Lord has been teaching you, use it to encourage others, and bring it to him in prayer.

1. **What do these verses tell me about God's character?** Isaiah's prophecies are rooted in the holiness, majesty and compassion of our triune God.
2. **How does this passage point me to Christ?** The warnings and promises of this book help us to understand more of the glorious work of Christ. All the promises of God find their "Yes" in him (2 Corinthians 1:20).
3. **What was the main lesson for the original hearers?** Thinking about a passage's meaning for God's people in the past helps us understand the meaning for us today.
4. **Is God calling me to repent through these words?** God still speaks through Isaiah to correct us. As you read, the Spirit may convict you of your own unfaithfulness or pride.
5. **How do these words help me to trust the Lord?** Isaiah shows us the confidence and hope we can have as we rely on the Lord and trust in his promises.

ADVICE FOR READING ISAIAH

Isaiah can be challenging, but is also rich with encouragement. There are extra resources to help you on our website, including maps, sermons, and study notes: litchardmission.co.uk/rbt

Some specific points for reading Isaiah:

- God wants you to understand him better as you read. If you're struggling, **remember to ask him for help!**
- Like the Psalms, Isaiah uses a lot of **poetic imagery**. If an image isn't clear, it may help to read another translation.
- The **original historical context** can be important. A Bible atlas (see website) may help your understanding.
- There are **different speakers and hearers** in the book (though it's all God-breathed Scripture). E.g. God may speak in the first-person ("I"), be spoken to ("You") or be spoken about ("He"). Ask: Who is speaking to whom here?
- Isaiah is **quoted frequently in the New Testament**. If you have a Bible with cross references, these can help you to interpret Isaiah in its wider biblical context.

A possible 31-day reading plan

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