

READING ISAIAH 36–66 TOGETHER

MAY 2026

- Who?** Isaiah was a prophet in the southern kingdom of Judah. Some suggest chapters 40–66 were written by another prophet who lived much later than Isaiah, but the whole book is presented as the word of the Lord through Isaiah, son of Amoz.
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- What?** This is a collection of prophecies first spoken to Judah. These words have ongoing relevance to us as we await the final fulfilment of God's words.
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- When?** Isaiah's ministry is dated between 740 and 681 BC. Chapters 40–55 look ahead to the Babylonian exile (6th century BC), speaking words that would later provide comfort to those in exile – as well as to us!
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- 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, who would also be the Servant of the Lord. 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.
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A BREAKDOWN OF ISAIAH 36–66

The second half of Isaiah can be divided into three basic sections:

Chapters 36–39 – Hezekiah's rise and fall

A narrative from Hezekiah's reign, providing background for the rest of the book. Hezekiah is an example of faith, though his foolish actions lead Isaiah to foretell Judah's exile to Babylon.

Chapters 40–55 – Hope through the Servant of the Lord

Chapter 40 opens with a message of comfort, addressed in advance to exiles in Babylon, promising hope beyond exile. God will fulfil his kingdom promises through the Servant of the Lord (42, 49, 50, 53), who brings salvation to the ends of the earth.

Chapters 56–66 – Preparing for future glory

The final section of the book gives us a vision of a renewed creation, where God's people will experience final salvation and his enemies will face final judgement. All people are called to turn to God and find life in his Kingdom.

A SUGGESTED READING PLAN

There are 31 chapters in this section of Isaiah, and 31 days in May. It makes sense to aim for 1 chapter per day. You might prefer, though, to read bigger chunks multiple times.

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?** Isaiah has much to teach us about our Saviour and King, the Servant of the Lord. 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.
- You don't need to understand every detail. Try to **summarise the main point** of each passage as you read.
- 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.
- Isaiah's words have **different times of fulfilment**. Think about how Jesus fulfilled these prophecies when he first came, how they are becoming true in history now, and how they will be finally fulfilled when he returns.