



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

ISAIAH 1-39

Week 1

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Printed in the United States of America.

Before You Begin Your Journey...

The book of Isaiah is sometimes called the “Gospel” of the Old Testament because of its message of good news. Isaiah is directly quoted in the New Testament 62 times (second only to the book of Psalms), in addition to many indirect references. Christ himself preached from the book of Isaiah.

In fact, no other Old Testament book contains so many references to the Messiah—Jesus Christ. Isaiah prophesies Jesus’ first coming to live with us as a human being, his ministry, his death to pay for our sins, his second coming and his world-ruling kingdom.

Many New Testament teachings have their roots in Isaiah. This many-faceted book deals with issues of human sinfulness and the need for repentance, God’s grace and God’s offer of salvation to all humanity. Isaiah also contains some of the most beautiful and sophisticated poetic imagery in the Bible.

So rich is this book, that we will spend two volumes on it. Even then, we will not be able to cover every detail.

But as we will see, because of its historical setting, the book of Isaiah is conveniently divided into two parts.

When Isaiah wrote the first 35 chapters, Assyria was the dominant political force in the middle east. Isaiah tells us how God used this powerful nation to discipline his people. Chapters 36 through 39 provide a historical bridge to the second part of Isaiah—chapters 40-66. Here, we will see that Babylon had become the dominant power in the middle east, and the tool of God’s punishment. Isaiah predicts the Babylonian captivity of the Jewish people followed by their restoration.

This paves the way for the coming of the Messiah—first as a

suffering servant, and finally his return as a triumphant ruler, victorious over the forces of rebellion and evil—establishing the eternal kingdom of God.

We must remember that most of the book of Isaiah was written in the form of Hebrew poetry. As with any poetry, many subtleties and nuances are only apparent in the language and culture in which it was written. A poet's meaning is often conveyed through complex word pictures and metaphors. For this reason, most of Isaiah cannot be read literally, as one would read a newspaper.

We hope you will find this first volume on the greatest of the major prophets to be as rich and inspiring as it was for us as we produced it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Greg Albrecht". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "G" and "A".

Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

How to Use the CWR Bible Survey...

1—Read and study at your own pace. This is a devotional. It is designed to help you consider and ponder the great truths of God’s written revelation. It is designed to help you worship and come to know God. We plan to cover the entire Bible in 43 volumes, and while that sounds like a long time, don’t be in a hurry. Take your time! Even though each volume is divided into bite-size daily lessons, you may want to take two days on each “daily” lesson.

2—We suggest you set aside a special time for the *CWR Bible Survey* every day. We recommend allowing 30-45 minutes, but even if you can only spare 15 minutes, try to make it part of your regular schedule. You will find that the *CWR Bible Survey* will be an invaluable resource for facing your daily challenges.

3—You will need a good Bible. This might be an excellent time for you to consider purchasing a study Bible. Plain Truth Ministries has reviewed many of the study Bibles that are available, and in cooperation with Thomas Nelson and Zondervan, we are pleased to be able to offer two superb study Bibles that will be an excellent resource and help to you. Please see the back pages of this book for more details.

4—Always read the assigned passage of the daily lesson in your Bible first. Each daily lesson builds upon the portion of the Bible being covered that day. You may want to begin by praying about what God has in store for you as you read, and then look at the questions and background information.

5—Consider the format of each daily lesson. Almost every daily lesson will include:

- **Opening Up to the Word** —a section designed to help you open your mind to the teaching God has inspired.
- **Digging Into the Word**—this section will encourage you to get your nose into the Bible and think deeply about what it says.
- **Living Out the Word**—here you will be challenged to consider the practical implications for your life. How does this passage help you live?

• **Window On the Word**—will offer key insights to help you more clearly understand the daily Bible passage.

6—After you finish the daily lesson, take some quiet time. You may simply think, look out the window, take a walk, or even get down on your knees. But use this time to let this daily lesson sink in. Ask God to show you what he wants you to understand from your reading and study.

7—Consider the *CWR Bible Survey* for small groups in which you may be involved. Tell your friends about it. If you are involved in a small group that meets for prayer and Bible study, introduce your group to it. Many are seeking an easy-to-read guide to help them understand the Bible and to help them know God. The *CWR Bible Survey* can do that!

• **Abbreviations Used in the *CWR Bible Survey***—

Genesis	Ge	Nahum	Na
Exodus	Ex	Habakkuk	Hab
Leviticus	Lev	Zephaniah	Zep
Numbers	Nu	Haggai	Hag
Deuteronomy	Dt	Zechariah	Zec
Joshua	Jos	Malachi	Mal
Judges	Jdg	Matthew	Mt
Ruth	Ru	Mark	Mk
1 Samuel	1Sa	Luke	Lk
2 Samuel	2Sa	John	Jn
1 Kings	1Ki	Acts	Ac
2 Kings	2Ki	Romans	Ro
1 Chronicles	1Ch	1 Corinthians	1Co
2 Chronicles	2Ch	2 Corinthians	2Co
Ezra	Ezr	Galatians	Gal
Nehemiah	Ne	Ephesians	Eph
Esther	Est	Philippians	Php
Job	Job	Colossians	Col
Psalms	Ps	1 Thessalonians	1Th
Proverbs	Pr	2 Thessalonians	2Th
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	1 Timothy	1Ti
Song of Songs	SS	2 Timothy	2Ti
Isaiah	Isa	Titus	Tit
Jeremiah	Jer	Philemon	Phm
Lamentations	La	Hebrews	Heb
Ezekiel	Eze	James	Jas
Daniel	Da	1 Peter	1Pe
Hosea	Hos	2 Peter	2Pe
Joel	Joel	1 John	1Jn
Amos	Am	2 John	2Jn
Obadiah	Ob	3 John	3Jn
Jonah	Jnh	Jude	Jude
Micah	Mic	Revelation	Rev

ISAIAH 1-39

God's Plan
for Israel
and the World

Introduction to Isaiah 1-39

Authorship: According to Hebrew and Christian tradition, this book was authored by Isaiah, who prophesied in Judah. Little personal information is known about this prophet, but tradition tells us that he was of royal lineage: first cousin to king Uzziah and grandson of king Joash.

Some scholars have suggested that Isaiah was written by two or more authors because of a shift of emphasis in the middle of the book. It is unnecessary to come to that conclusion, however, as these sections fit together thematically and logically.

Furthermore, the New Testament writers assumed Isaiah's authorship of the book. The apostle John claimed that Jesus fulfilled the message in Isaiah 53 (Jn 12:38) and in Isaiah 6 (Jn 12:39-41). Our Lord himself affirmed Isaiah's authorship when he read from the "scroll of the prophet Isaiah" and applied the book's message to his messianic ministry (Lk 4:17). The portion of Scripture he quoted was from Isaiah 61, a section disputed by scholars.

Date: Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of Judah's kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (about 760-695 B.C.). He was contemporary with the prophets Hosea, Amos and Micah. The dominant power in the region during this time was Assyria, under Tiglath-Pileser, Shalmaneser V, Sargon II and Sennacherib.

Setting and purpose: Isaiah wrote to remind Israel of their special position as the covenant people of God. Specifically, Isaiah was encouraging Judah to return to the relationship from which they had strayed. Pointing out their sinful lifestyles and the judgment that would result from breaking their covenant with God, he hoped to bring about a national restoration. However, Isaiah was aware that Judah was probably destined for exile as a result of their sins.

In this first section of Isaiah (chapters 1-39), retribution for their sins is the major theme. God had been aware of their activities and their spiritual adultery and they had failed to live up to the Mosaic covenant they had made with him. When God punished

Judah, he would fulfill his promise and demonstrate that he indeed fulfills his word. Yet, in the midst of this judgment, Isaiah continually reminds Israel that God will also fulfill his promises to restore them to the land, and later, to bring about the wonderful kingdom where the Messiah will rule and reign. With judgment also comes hope and comfort.

Reading outline: Each capital letter corresponds to a day.

I. THE INDICTMENT OF A NATION, 1-6

- A. Raising Rebellious Children, 1
- B. Temporarily Abandoned, 2
- C. How the Mighty Will Fall, 3
- D. Pruning a Sick Vineyard, 4-5
- E. "Here am I. Send Me!" 6

II. HOPE OF DELIVERANCE, 7-12

- A. "A Virgin Shall Be With Child," 7
- B. Storm Watch, 8
- C. A Child Is Born, a Son Is Given, 9
- D. Let the Punishment Fit the Crime, 10
- E. The Coming Kingdom, 11-12

III. JUDGMENT ON THE NATIONS, 13-24

- A. What Goes Around Comes Around, 13-14
- B. The Fugitives, 15-16
- C. The God That People Forgot, 17-18
- D. Useless Alliances, 19-20
- E. Eat, Drink and Be Merry..., 21-22
- F. The Coming Apocalypse, 23-24

IV. TEMPORARY PUNISHMENT, ETERNAL BLESSING, 25-27

- A. Perfect Faithfulness, 25-26
- B. The Agony and the Ecstasy, 27

V. WOE! 28-33

- A. Misplaced Pride, 28
- B. Is It Just a Dream? 29
- C. Disciplining the Strong-willed Child, 30
- D. The Wrong Help, 31
- E. Back to the Future, 32
- F. Getting Away With It? 33

VI. DAYS OF VENGEANCE, DAYS OF BLESSING, 34-35

- A. Keeping His Promise, 34
- B. When All Is Right With the World, 35

VII. CAPTIVITY! 36-39

- A. Only Fools Taunt God, 36
- B. Deliverance! 37
- C. A Second Chance, 38
- D. The Danger of Flattery, 39

“You will be ashamed because of the sacred oaks in which you have delighted; you will be disgraced because of the gardens that you have chosen. You will be like an oak with fading leaves, like a garden without water.”

Isaiah 1:29-30



Photo by Monte Wolverton—PTM

Raising Rebellious Children

DAY 1

Isaiah 1

If you have children, have they ever rebelled against your parental authority? How does your children's rebellion make you as a parent feel?

1. What did the ox and donkey know that Israel did not (v. 3)?
2. What examples of judgment did God use against Judah (v. 9)?
3. What "religious" thing was Judah doing that God no longer took delight in, and why did he no longer take delight in it (vs. 11-17)?
4. What marvelous promise does God give to Judah in the midst of their worst rebellion (v. 18)? What blessing does he promise for obedience, and what punishment for disobedience (vs. 19-20)?

If you've ever dealt with a rebellious child, were your emotions like the ones God is described as going through in this chapter?

"A shelter in a vineyard, or a hut in a melon field" (v. 8). *These were temporary shelters built to shade people who guarded the crops against animals and thieves. These huts were isolated and very easily attacked, having no defense. Because Judah had been disobedient, God was removing his protection from her as he had promised he would if they disobeyed the covenant relationship they had with God. "I cannot bear your evil assemblies" (v.13). While these assemblies (Sabbath, festivals and feasts) were commanded by God, the hearts of the Israelites were not right before God as evidenced by their sinful lifestyle. They had come to believe that they could live any way they wanted, as long as they made restitution through sacrifices. The end result was that God called their offerings meaningless and their assemblies evil.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

DAY 2

Temporarily Abandoned

Isaiah 2

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever visited a “ghost town” and seen the abandoned buildings and homes? Did you wonder what caused the town to die?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What was the reason God abandoned Judah? Name the six issues God named (vs. 6-8)?
2. When God would bring judgment to Judah, what would those who had been arrogant and disobedient do to escape his judgment (vs. 19-21)?
3. What did God urge Judah to stop doing (v. 22) that was causing so many of their problems? Compare this verse with verses 6-8. How were these activities connected with “trusting in man”?

LIVING
out the Word

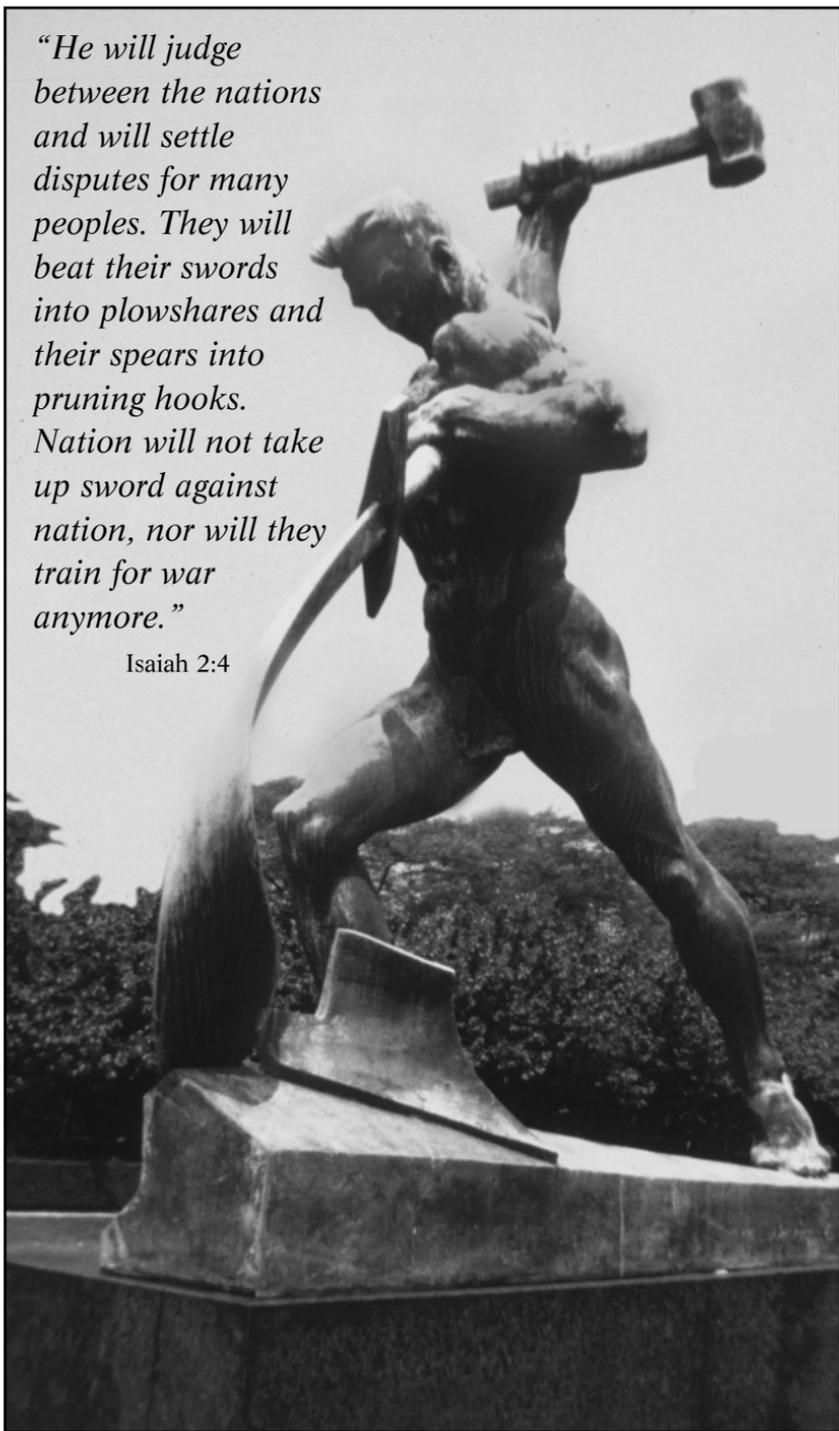
1. How does God’s kingdom differ from political systems favored by some? What aspect of the kingdom of God appeals to you most, and why?
2. If God was displeased with such activities as horoscopes and palm reading at the time of Isaiah, do you think he is pleased with them today?
3. A common theme in Isaiah is that God will humble the arrogant and proud. Can you think of any “proud” people? How about yourself?
4. Have you ever found yourself trusting more in people than in God? Would you ever be willing to transfer your trust from these people to God today?

WINDOW
on the Word

“Superstitions from the East” (v. 6). The people of Judah were instructed to trust in God alone, yet because of their idolatry they were now as superstitious as the peoples of the East, the Assyrian Empire. Divination was the belief that one could control people, circumstances or know the future through the power of spirits. God made it clear that the Israelites should already know the future, because he had told them what he would do (v. 1-4). “Will throw away to the rodents and bats” (v. 20). These were two creatures the people of Judah detested, while their gold and silver idols were their most precious possessions. The Israelites would one day be so desperate to escape their enemies that they would throw their idols away in the caves where rodents and bats dwell.

*“He will judge
between the nations
and will settle
disputes for many
peoples. They will
beat their swords
into plowshares and
their spears into
pruning hooks.
Nation will not take
up sword against
nation, nor will they
train for war
anymore.”*

Isaiah 2:4



How the Mighty Will Fall!

Isaiah 3

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever witnessed a powerful person or public figure come to shame? How do you think their downfall changed their everyday life?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What did God say he was going to remove from Judah to hasten their punishment (vs. 1-3)? What effect might these removals have on a culture?
2. How did God depict the void in leadership that would occur in Judah (vs. 6-7)?
3. What did God accuse Judah of defying? How were they defying God's presence (v. 8)?
4. What would happen to those who had not turned away from God (v. 10)?
5. God uses the imagery of a courtroom in verse 13-15. What does he accuse the leaders and elders of Judah of doing that deserves punishment?
6. In verse 12 we learn that the women of Judah were adversely influencing their husbands. How does Isaiah explain God's reaction (v. 16-17)?

LIVING
out the Word

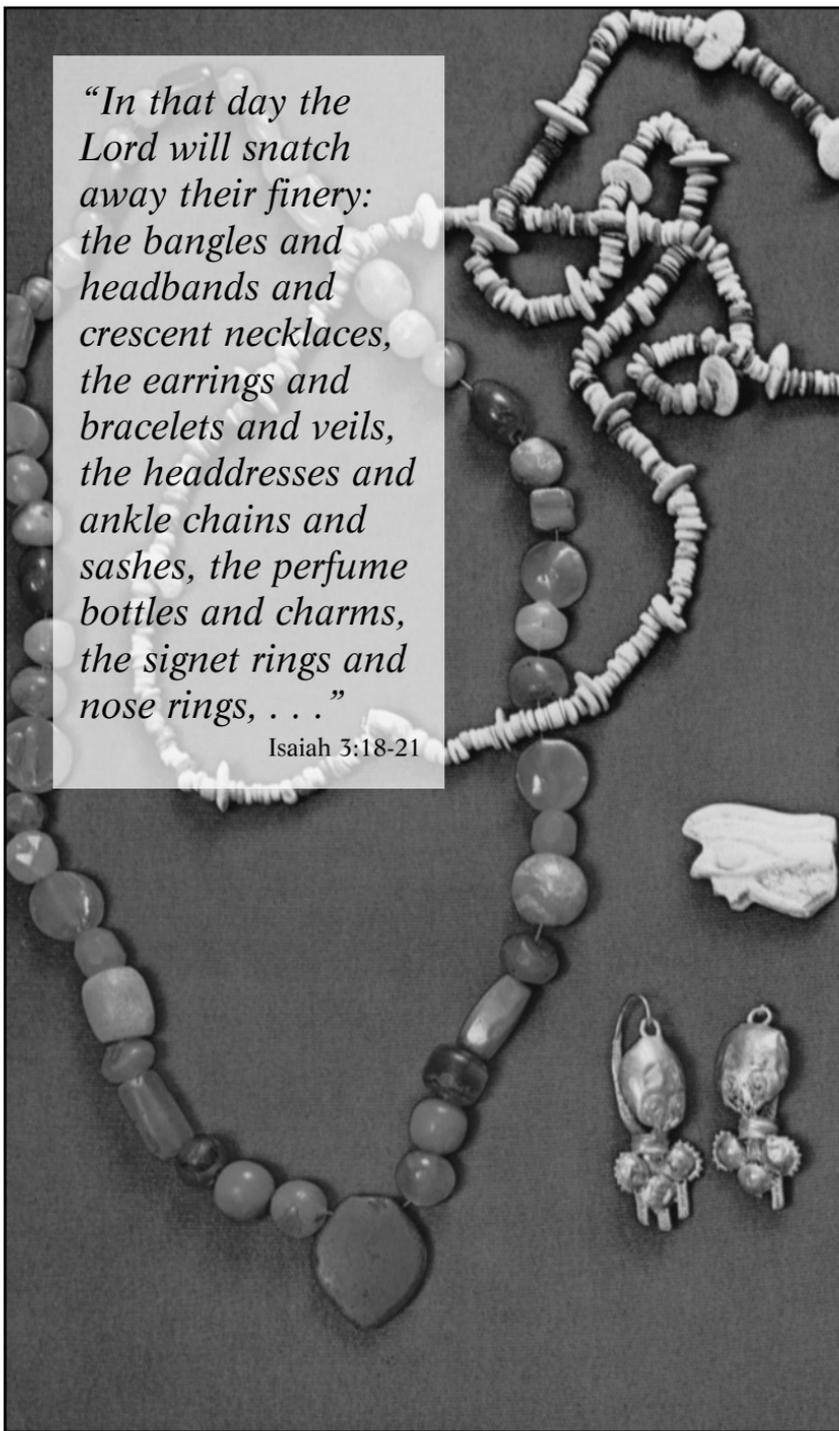
1. Have you ever experienced a fall from a place of honor? Have you ever been humiliated in front of others?
2. If you are in a position of responsibility, what do you think God expects from you in that position?
3. Someone once said, "Power corrupts." Is there a corrupting influence that might have made inroads into your life?

WINDOW
on the Word

"You have a cloak, you be our leader" (v. 6). The Hebrew word translated "cloak" referred to a garment worn by the poor. Isaiah spoke of times when things would be so bad that possession of such a garment would be grounds for becoming a ruler. "Grinding the faces of the poor" (v. 15). Grain used to be ground between two millstones. In their obsession with wealth and luxury, God accuses Israel of gaining their riches by grinding down the poor—cheating and mistreating them.

*“In that day the
Lord will snatch
away their finery:
the bangles and
headbands and
crescent necklaces,
the earrings and
bracelets and veils,
the headdresses and
ankle chains and
sashes, the perfume
bottles and charms,
the signet rings and
nose rings, . . .”*

Isaiah 3:18-21



Israelite jewelry from the time of Isaiah—photo by David Harris

DAY 4

Pruning a Sick Vineyard

Isaiah 4–5

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever grown flowers, vegetables or fruit trees that developed a sickness and began to rot? What did the sickness do to the produce?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Isaiah spoke of a time when war would destroy most of the men of Judah. How bad would the situation become (4:1)?
2. God also reminds them that he will one day fulfill his promises to bless them as a nation. What will the Lord do to the hearts of the people to change them (v. 4)?
3. What was God feeling when he planted Israel, and what did he do to make sure his “vineyard” had every chance to be healthy (5:1-2)?
4. In verses 8-9, what is God trying to tell Judah? (a) he is proud of their industriousness; (b) suburbs are fine, but don’t build the houses quite so close together; (c) lavish homes are money well spent; (d) their unfaithfulness will cost them all the blessings they have received from God.

LIVING
out the Word

1. Even though we are sometimes unfaithful to God, what does the New Testament tell us about God that should be a comfort to us (2Ti 2:13)?
2. If you were to compare your life to a vineyard, what has God done to make your life fruitful?
3. List the woe statements (Isa 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22). How many of these activities are present in people you know—or yourself?
4. What do you think would be the greatest spiritual danger of getting sudden wealth?

WINDOW
on the Word

“A ten acre vineyard will produce only a bath of wine” (5:10). Normally a vineyard would produce many gallons of wine, but here 10 acres would produce only about six gallons. A homer is the equivalent of 6 to 10 bushels of seed, yet all this seed would produce only a half bushel (ephah) of grain, 1/12th less than the amount of seed sown. God was keeping his covenant promises to withhold physical blessing from them if they were disobedient.

“I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit.”

Isaiah 5:1-2



Photo by Monte Wolverton—PTM

DAY 5

“Here Am I. Send Me!”

Isaiah 6

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever found yourself in a unique position to serve God, or felt a desire to serve him in a specific way?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What is meant by the train of the Lord’s robe (v. 1)? How could it fill the Temple?
 2. What are *seraphs*, and what seems to be their unique task (v. 2)?
 3. Why do you think Isaiah was afraid of God (v. 5)?
 4. How did God prepare Isaiah for ministry to the people of Israel (vs. 6-8)?
 5. How long was Isaiah told to prophesy to Judah (vs. 11-12)?
-

LIVING
out the Word

Isaiah made himself available to God for service. In what way have you made yourself available to God?

WINDOW
on the Word

The **train of his robe** (v. 1) refers to the manifestation of God’s majesty. In the Temple, in the Holy of Holies, God’s glory was evident. But in reality, the whole world could not contain the glory of God (1Ki 8:27). The **seraph** (v. 2) is an angelic being who lives in the presence of God, proclaiming his holiness and glory. **Thresholds** (v. 4) were the large foundation stones that supported the door posts of the Temple. A **live coal** (v. 6) was taken from either the altar of burnt offerings or the altar of incense. Since it was associated with sin offerings, it was symbolically able to atone for Isaiah’s sin.

“A Virgin Shall Be With Child”

DAY 6

Isaiah 7

Do you believe that God has ever given you a sign to show his will for your life?

1. Who was threatening to attack Judah (v. 1)?
2. What was Isaiah’s message to King Ahaz (v. 4)?
(a) prepare for battle, (b) this is my judgment for your sin, (c) be careful, stay calm, don’t be afraid, (d) time to panic!
3. God told King Ahaz to ask him for something in verse 11, what was it? (a) military power, (b) a sign, (c) a military alliance, (d) wisdom.
4. Even though Ahaz declined, God promised to give him a sign. What would the sign be (vs. 14-16)?

1. Has anyone ever threatened to destroy you or your reputation?
2. Despite how people may threaten us, what does the Bible teach that can bring us comfort (Pr 26:2)?
3. When danger threatens you in some way, what are your three most instinctive responses? From this passage (v. 4), what three responses would God have you bring to him? Why do you think God would have you respond in this way?

“The virgin will be with child” (v. 14). Though this is a prophecy of the coming Christ, commentators differ about how this sign applied in Ahaz’s day. Some interpret it to mean that a virgin (translated as “young woman” in some versions) was to be married and have a child (perhaps Isaiah’s son in 8:18) and before that child knew the difference between right and wrong (2-3 years old), the Aram-Israel alliance would be broken, hence God’s sign. Some see the verse relating only to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Others view it as relating to both—to Ahaz as an antetype, and ultimately to Mary and Christ.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

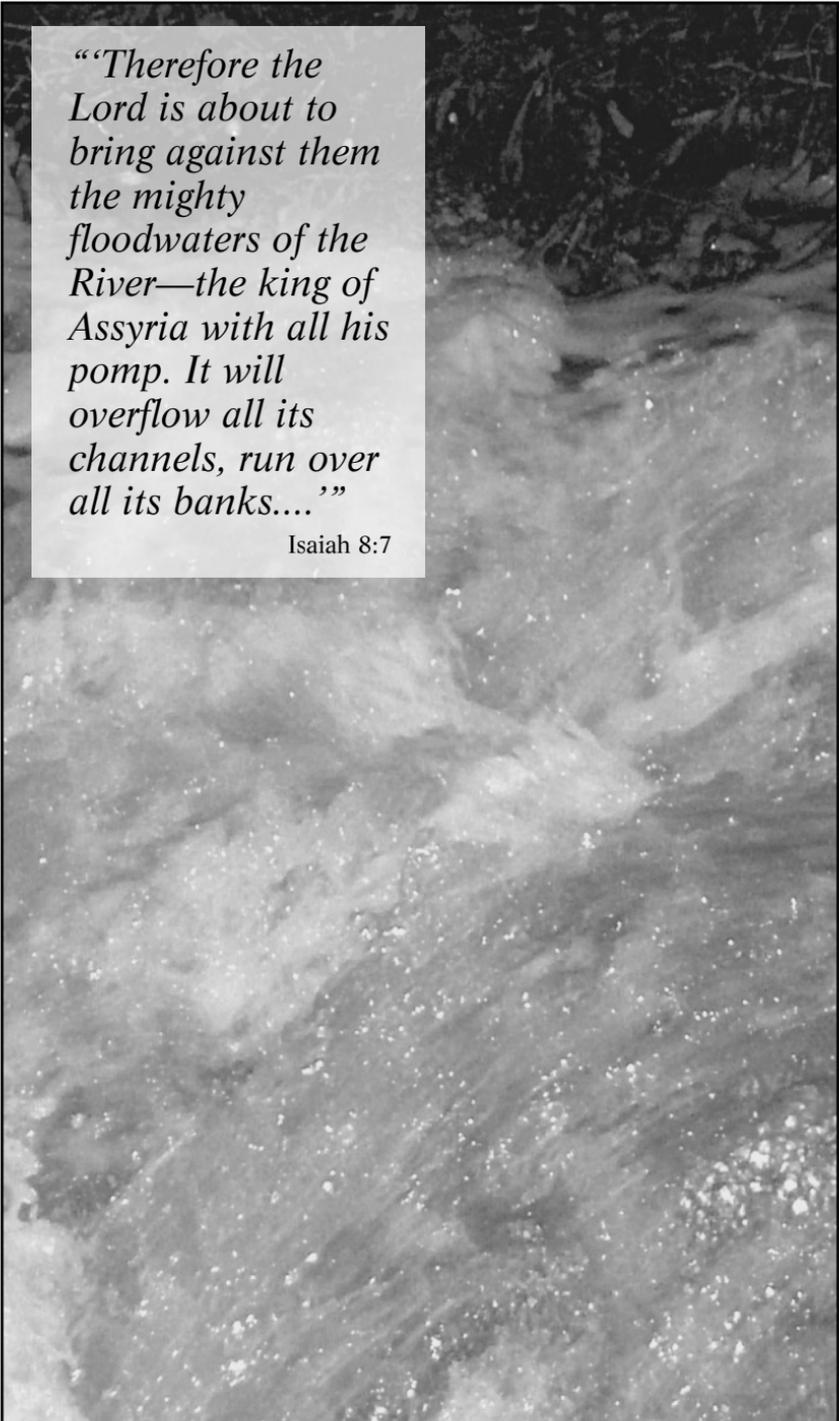
into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word



*“Therefore the
Lord is about to
bring against them
the mighty
floodwaters of the
River—the king of
Assyria with all his
pomp. It will
overflow all its
channels, run over
all its banks....”*

Isaiah 8:7

Isaiah 8

Have you ever seen a storm create a raging torrent out of a small creek or river? How long did it take the safe waters to turn treacherous?

1. God told Isaiah to have a child with his wife (vs. 3-4). What name did God want Isaiah to give the boy, and what did it mean?
2. Who was going to invade Aram and Israel and destroy them (vs. 6-8)?
3. Although Aram and Israel planned to invade Judah, what did God say would happen (vs. 9-10)?
4. What did Isaiah and his family plan to do in spite of all the military and political intrigue swirling about them (vs. 17-18)?
5. Why did Isaiah tell Judah not to consult mediums and spiritualists to determine what was going to happen (v. 19)? (a) they cost too much, (b) they would probably lie anyway, (c) you shouldn't try to communicate with the dead, (d) God had already told them, (e) both C & D.

1. Do you know what your name means? Does this hold any special significance for you?
2. Have you ever considered your life, and perhaps that of your family as signs of the reality of the power of God?

Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (v. 1) is the longest personal name in Scripture, meaning “quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil.” Hebrew soldiers would shout this phrase to one another as they defeated their enemies. Aram and Israel were planning this kind of activity upon Judah, but would themselves become the objects of Assyria's plunder. **The prophetess** (vs. 3-4) refers to Isaiah's wife. Within nine months and one year (nine months of pregnancy and about one year for Isaiah's son to learn to say “mother” or “father”) Aram and Israel would be invaded and destroyed. **“Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?”** (v. 19). Judah was practicing divination—contacting the dead to see what the future held. Isaiah points out the absurdity of asking the dead what would happen when people could ask the living God.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word