

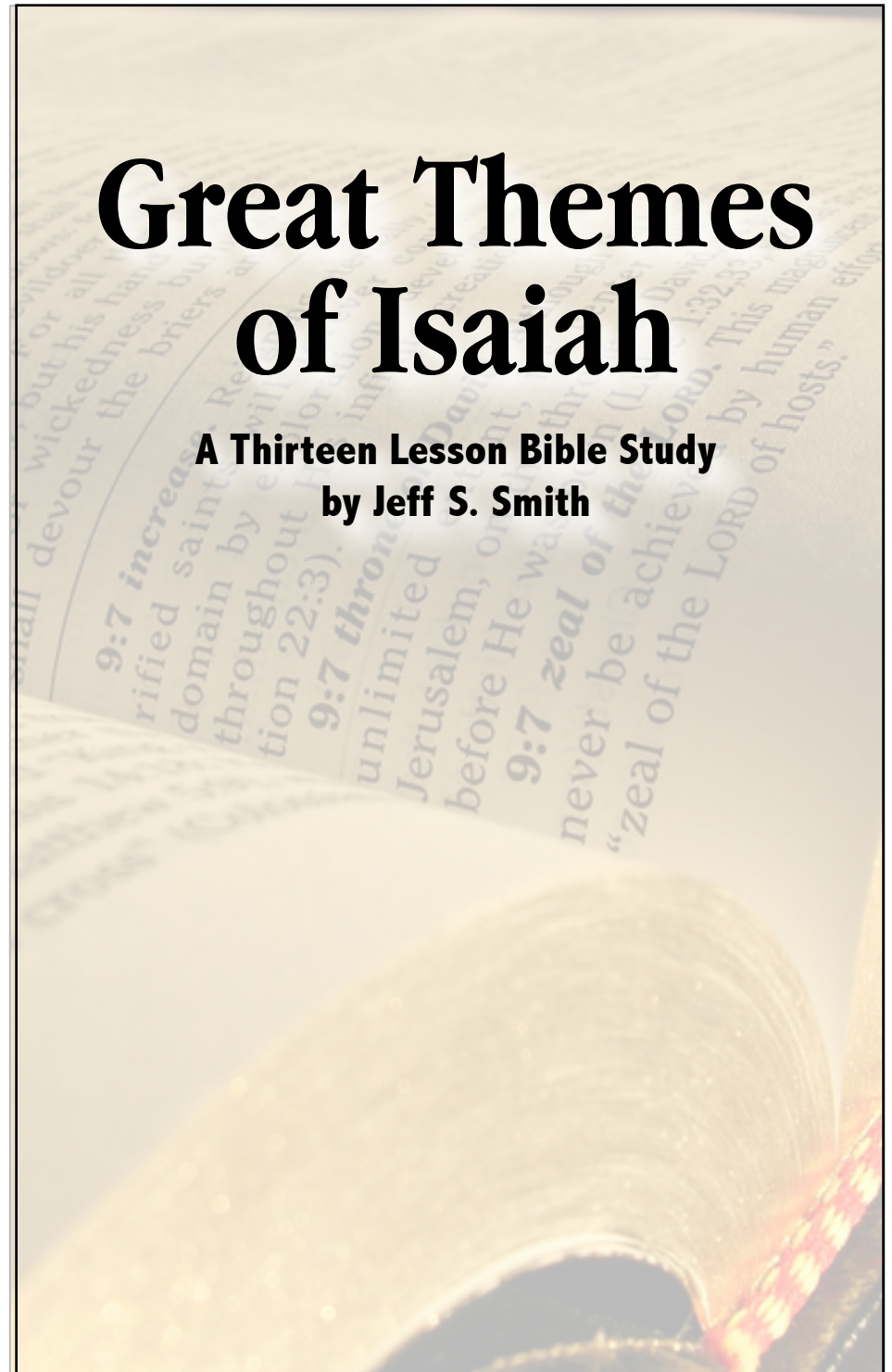
Great Themes of Isaiah

**A Thirteen Lesson Bible Study
by Jeff S. Smith**

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6. What did the Hebrew writer say concerning backsliding (10:35-39)?

7. How is there is no peace for the wicked (John 9:31, Mark 9:42-48, Philippians 4:6-7)?

8. What prevents God from hearing and forgiving some sinners (59:1-3)?

9. What are some empty words or phrases in which many people trust (59:4-5)? An example is “You only live once.”

10. How can the saint ensure that his thoughts are not given over to iniquity (59:6-8; Philippians 4:8, Matthew 5:27-30)?

11. What happens when the blind lead the blind (59:9-15; Matthew 15:1-14)? Whom did Jesus identify as the blind leaders? Who are blind leaders today?

12. Isaiah says that one’s works will testify for or against him before God. How did Jesus say it (John 12:48)?

13. What did God mean by calling false worship “smoke in his nostrils” (65:1-5)? How should our worship be characterized (Ephesians 5:2, Philippians 4:18)?

14. What is God’s attitude toward man’s desire to serve both him and other “idols” (65:6-12; Matthew 6:24)?

15. By what name are God’s servants now called (65:13-16; Acts 11:26)?

Introduction

The book of Isaiah the prophet is one of the longest in the Bible, at 66 chapters. It covers a wide variety of issues, relating to its original audience and those who would be living when the Messiah finally arrived. Although it was written more than 2700 years ago, the lessons that Isaiah communicates appear to be timeless. The heartless worship that he encountered in ancient Israel is no different in nature than when it occurs today. The cure is the same as well. Isaiah is also of great benefit to the reader for what he says about the Messiah. His message in chapter 53 is touchingly beautiful and ever reminds us of the true sacrifice Jesus made for us.

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Lesson 13: *True Faith*

Jesus was very adamant when he taught the Samaritan woman at the well about true worship coming from the spirit and the truth. The New Testament is a document fiercely interested with genuine faith and discipleship. Likewise, Isaiah's message concerned rebuking Israel back to a genuine concern for godly behavior, faith and compliance with the law of Moses.

1. Isaiah warned Israel to keep the Sabbath (56:1-8). The church was not given any Sabbath commitments, but marked the first day of the week as a time to assemble. What warnings might one give concerning our responsibilities on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7, Hebrews 10:24-31, First Corinthians 16:1-4)?

2. Define "humility" (57:15-21). How is it described in Proverbs 15:33? What did Peter say about humility in First Peter 5:5?

3. Define "contrition." How did the converts in Acts 19:18-19 show theirs?

4. How did David express his contrition in Psalm 51:1-4?

5. Read Second Corinthians 7:8-12. What makes sorrow "godly sorrow"?

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Lesson 1: *Background*

5. How is Isaiah's prediction concerning plowshares, pruning hooks and making war partly fulfilled in Paul's words in Second Corinthians 10:3-6 and Christ's rebuke of Peter's severing the ear of Malchus and the Lord's claim that his kingdom was not of this world?

6. What is the house of God in New Testament times (First Timothy 3:15)?

7. Isaiah prophesies in highly figurative terms of a time when Jerusalem will be made new (65:17-25). How is this prediction harmonized with Hebrews 12:22-24?

8. Other prophets were also occupied with predicting the coming of God's kingdom. During the reign of which kingdom did Daniel predict God's kingdom would be established (2:31-45)?

9. What did Jesus say regarding the establishment of the kingdom in Mark 9:1? Did Christ succeed in establishing that kingdom on time?

10. Could the statement made by Jesus in John 17:4 be true if he failed to establish the kingdom?

11. What did Colossians 1:13 indicate about the existence of the kingdom?

When Isaiah began his prophetic work, the nation of Israel, separated from the tribe of Judah, was careening toward collapse. Isaiah's work spans the administrations of five Hebrew kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Manasseh. Israel was destroyed by the invading Assyrians in the midst of Isaiah's tenure, around 722 B.C. Judah, however, was headed for a similar fate at the hands of the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

Isaiah's prophecy is often quoted in the New Testament and is among the best at describing the coming Messiah. The book speaks to the nation rather than the individual. The prophet had a pending captivity and restoration in mind, but was also interested in the future reign of the Christ.

The book's authorship has been attacked for many years. Some note the apparent change in tone between the initial 39 chapters and the last 27 chapters and claim there were two authors named Isaiah or that many men wrote the book under the single pseudonym. The Dead Sea Scrolls damaged these claims when they were discovered, for there is no break between chapters 39 and 40. Moreover, the New Testament quotes both divisions.

Isaiah's name means "The Lord is Salvation" in Hebrew and very clearly, our prophet foresees salvation for God's people. The justice of God is underscored by Isaiah who sees just two alternatives: salvation or condemnation. He labored for more than half a century, revealing his visions and painting with precise brushstrokes a portrait of the Christ to come.

Little is known of his personal life. His father is named but is obscure. His wife is referred to as "the prophetess." He witnessed one of the great tragedies in Hebrew history but continued to preach courageously.

The reader can identify four main themes with modern relevance from Isaiah. First, our prophet extols the holiness of God, an idea somewhat lost on a nation that seeks to preach tolerance above righteousness. There is a just standard of good and evil and God reveals it to man in the word in which He also demands that we strive to live holy.

Second, Isaiah points out the benefits of a righteous way of life. Living righteously requires the saint to be just with his fellow men, to walk by faith and not by sight, and to seize the hope God has laid before him.

Third, Isaiah warns man of God's justice and judgment. There is no escape from God's plan to settle all accounts, rewarding the just and punishing the wicked. The reality of a final judgment needs to be impressed.

Fourth, Isaiah is likely unparalleled in his revelations concerning the coming Messiah. The world is rife with polytheism and the denigration of Jesus Christ to the magnification of false prophets like Muhammad, Buddha and Joseph Smith. Isaiah tells us that the Messiah is deity who would dwell among men in a tabernacle of flesh and then suffer and die on a cross.

1. Isaiah speaks to both Israel and Judah. In times past, these two entities were one united kingdom (First Kings 11:41-12:33) Who was the last ruler of the united kingdom? How had Israel and Judah become separate nations?

2. At what point in Isaiah is there an apparent change in tone that has caused some to believe there were at least two different authors?

3. What does Isaiah's name mean in Hebrew? How is this significant?

4. What two results are possible according to God's justice?

5. To understand better the times in which Isaiah lived, summarize each of the reigns of the kings of Judah in his career.

- Uzziah (or Azariah, Second Kings 15:1-7):

- Jotham (Second Kings 15:32-38):

- Ahaz (Second Kings 16:1-20):

- Hezekiah (Second Kings 18:1-20:21):

6. How was the northern kingdom of Israel (Samaria) destroyed (Second Kings 17:5-18) Why? When?

7. How was Judah destroyed (Second Kings 25:1-30)?

Lesson 12: *Mountain of the Lord's House*

Premillennialists claim that the Jews surprised God when they rejected Jesus as their Messiah in the first century and that the church was only a contingency when the Lord's original plan to institute the kingdom then failed. The book of Isaiah, however, clearly points to the Hebrew rejection of Christ, the chief cornerstone, and the establishment of the church as God's kingdom.

1. In what period did Isaiah claim this prophecy would be fulfilled (2:1-4)? The prophet Joel pointed to this period and the apostle Peter quoted him in Acts 2:1-17 and thereby identified when the period commenced. When is this period?

2. What was established on the day that Peter spoke and preached here (Acts 2:47)? What did Isaiah claim concerning those flowing into the Lord's house?

3. How did the New Testament describe the composition of Christ's church (Galatians 3:28-29, Romans 2:28-29, Ephesians 2:11-22)?

4. What prophecy of Isaiah's is fulfilled as the apostles obey Jesus's command in Luke 24:46-49 on the day of Pentecost?

6. Isaiah 53:4-6 predicts the true nature of Christ's mission as well as any. Was this mission to return Israel to national power and prominence? What was his mission?

7. How is Jesus like a silent lamb taken to the slaughter (53:7-9; First Peter 2:19-25)? How was the prophecy regarding his burial in verse nine fulfilled (John 19:38-42)?

8. How was Christ numbered with the transgressors (53:10-12)?

9. Premillennialists claim that the Jewish rejection of Jesus as the Christ forced God to abandon his plan to create a universal theocracy based in Jerusalem and institute the interim church period instead. Judging by this passage, was God surprised when the Jews rejected Christ as the chief cornerstone of the kingdom of God?

10. What is a prominent New Testament word that sums up the idea of "good tidings" (61:1-3)?

11. What liberty did Jesus promise to all obedient believers (John 8:30-36)? Upon what condition was this promise predicated?

Lesson 2: *Jehovah Calls Isaiah*

The prophecy revealed and recorded by Isaiah teaches the reader a great deal about God and the prophet himself. Isaiah's zeal is impressive as he tells God that he will do the difficult, divine will. Every generation of God's people must have men and women willing to go and do the will of their Lord. We must have preachers, elders and members willing to stand up for the will of God, even when it is out of season with men.

1. In polytheistic, pagan, creation accounts, the gods always argue among themselves over how and why the world should be made. How did God handle the creation (Isaiah 40:12-14)?

2. What is the prophet teaching by this sequence of images that begins with a "drop in a bucket" (40:15-17)?

3. How successful will be the efforts of idolaters to capture God in wood or metal (40:18-20)? Why?

4. What is the importance of the fact that Isaiah refers to "the circle of the Earth" (40:21-24)?

5. How did James state the idea brought forth here by Isaiah in verse 24 (James 4:13-17)?

6. What host did God call out by name and number (40:25-26)?

7. How did the Hebrew writer state the foolish idea of men revealed in Isaiah 40:27 (Hebrews 4:11-13)?

8. How can even the weak and weary be made to soar on eagles' wings?

9. How did God appear to Isaiah (6:1-13)? What did the coal signify when it touched the man's lips?

10. What question did God raise? What did he have in mind? How did Isaiah respond? When should we live by that statement?

11. What did the prophecy reveal about Israel's future?

12. Not only is God Creator and Revealer, but He is also Judge and Destroyer. On what did Israel blame her troubles (8:11-18)?

13. What did God promise to be for Isaiah if he was faithful? What did God promise to be for the impenitent Jews?

14. Name the four kings who ruled during Isaiah's tenure (1:1).

Lesson 11: *Jesus Will Deliver*

Couched in prophetic terms and language, the promise of Isaiah was still firm and clear. The Messiah was coming to rescue his people and institute the kingdom of God. Still, the people did not know when to expect him, nor did they understand the scope of his ministry and authority.

1. How is Christ's mouth like a sharp sword (Isaiah 49:1-2; Hebrews 4:11-13)?

2. It was always difficult to convince the Jews that God could bless and save the Gentiles as well (49:5-7). They were incredulous or unwilling to share their God and space in his kingdom. How did Peter describe God's attitude toward all men at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:34-35)?

3. Isaiah pointed to the Messiah's mission regarding salvation (49:8-13). Paul quoted him in Second Corinthians 6:1-2. When did the apostle claim was the day of salvation? What did he mean?

4. With what did Jesus redeem men (49:25-26; Colossians 1:14, Hebrews 9:12)?

5. At what level of physical maturity would the Messiah come from heaven (53:1-3)? What other prediction did Isaiah make about the Messiah's physical appearance? How would he then compare to Saul and David?

6. What government is upon the shoulders of Christ (9:6-7; Colossians 1:13, Ephesians 1:22-23, Matthew 28:18-20)?

7. Verse 6 lists some descriptions of Christ's name. List them.

8. When did Jesus assume the throne of David (Acts 2:22-33)?

9. Who was Jesse (11:1-5)? Where is he listed among Christ's human ancestors?

10. What did Jesus teach in John 7:24 that bears a great resemblance to this prophecy?

11. The kingdom of God under the family of David had always been limited to Jews (11:10). Will this be the case with the kingdom of God under the prophesied Son of David?

12. Who fulfilled the prophesy regarding one crying in the wilderness (40:1-11; John 1:23)? How was he related to Jesus?

13. To what occupation did Isaiah compare Jesus? How did Jesus describe his part in this analogy (John 10:1-18)?

Lesson 3: *Consequences of Heartless Worship*

There is nothing more nauseating to God than heartless, insincere worship. If one's praise is not both in spirit and in truth, it is offensive to God. The Israelites had struggled with worship so long that it had become a matter of going through the motions, with no consideration of its meaning.

1. To what did God compare his relationship with Israel (1:2-4)? How was Israel worse even than dumb animals?

2. What is another word for "turning away backward"?

3. What had God hoped to accomplish by striking Israel in the past (1:5-9)? Why was He reluctant to strike her again now?

4. What kept Israel from becoming just like Sodom and Gomorrah?

5. Why was God displeased with Israel's sacrifices (1:10-15)? According to verse 13, what two acts did not belong at the end of the same hand?

6. How did God react to their observance of feast days and new moon observances? Why? How did their hypocritical lifestyle affect their prayer privilege?

7. List the seven parts of his commanded remedy for their hypocrisy (1:16-17). (The first two are repeated in verse 16 and only count once.)

8. Should they repent, what could God do with their sinful account (1:18-20)? Should they refuse, what would God do?

9. How did Isaiah describe the spiritual zeal of Israel (29:9-10)?

10. With what did Israel draw near to God? With what did they draw away (29:11-14)? Explain what this means.

11. How did Jesus apply this rebuke to the Pharisees of his day (Matthew 15:1-20)?

12. How does it apply in our day?

Lesson 10: *Jesus Is Coming*

The book of Isaiah is one of the best sources of predictions concerning the coming of Jesus Christ. Because it is an incontrovertible fact that the Scriptures were translated from Hebrew to Greek 200 years before Christ, it is possible to establish beyond doubt that Isaiah predicted things about Jesus of Nazareth long before he was born.

1. What sign did Isaiah predict God would provide to Israel (7:14-17)? How and when did God accomplish this significant prediction (Matthew 1:18-25)?

2. What is the translation of the name “Immanuel”? What significance did Jesus attach to this name in John 8:54-59?

3. What claim relating to Isaiah’s prediction disturbed the Pharisees (John 5:16-18)?

4. Curds and honey were on the diet of kings? List a passage or event that calls Jesus a king.

5. How did Jesus fulfill this prophecy before preaching the sermon on the mount (9:1-2)?

6. How did God take care of Jerusalem (37:36-38)?

7. What challenge faced Hezekiah next (38:1-8)? How did Hezekiah overcome even this? What was the sign that God would do these things?

8. Hezekiah promised to sing with stringed instruments all the days of his life and some take this as authority for instrumental music in the worship of Christ's church (38:9-20). Why is this faulty reasoning?

9. What shows that relations with Babylon had improved somewhat since Sennacherib's death (39:1-8)? What mistake did Hezekiah make? How was he punished?

10. How did Hezekiah respond to this prophecy?

Lesson 4: *Woes*

Jesus took a page out of Isaiah's book when he pronounced woe after woe upon the Pharisees and other infidels. Actually, Isaiah took the words from Jesus first, for the Lord existed before the prophet. The woes of Isaiah are bold, sharp and perfectly aimed. Beware lest one of us drift into their path by a similar act of iniquity.

1. Who received the first woe (5:8-10)?

2. Who received the second woe (5:11-17)? What were these people neglecting in the midst of their feasts?

3. Why were God's people going into captivity? What caused this condition?

4. What people receive the third woe (5:18-19)? What did they demand to see?

5. What is the fourth woe (5:20)?

6. How is this woe applicable in our day?

7. Why is it woeful to be wise and prudent in your own sight (5:21)?

8. Give a New Testament passage that teaches against self-indulgence (5:22-23).

9. Who were the victims of injustice at the hands of the Jewish rulers (10:1-4)? What would become of the oppressors?

10. How should we treat such people (James 1:27-2:9)?

11. What did it mean to trust in Egypt for help (31:1-3)? Why was this deserving of woe?

12. What would become of Israel and Egypt?

13. What would happen to the nation that plundered Judah (33:1)?

14. How had the woes changed the hearts of some in Israel (33:2-16)?

Lesson 9: *King Hezekiah*

Although Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, only the last of these four monarchs receives much attention in his record. Hezekiah is remembered as being a good king, although his pride gets him in trouble on more than one occasion.

1. Why was Hezekiah so upset (37:1-7; cf. 36:13-20)? Where did he go? Where did he send his ministers?

2. What did Hezekiah ask of the prophet? What report did the prophet return to the king?

3. What did Hezekiah do when he received a letter from the king of Assyria (37:8-20)?

4. What report from God did Isaiah return to Hezekiah (37:21-29)?

5. How would God treat Jerusalem (37:33-35)? Why?

6. What did Isaiah mean by predicting that God would cut off Babylon's name, remnant, offspring and posterity (14:16-23)?

7. How did the prediction of verse five compare to the last night of Babylon's last ruler, Belshazzar (Isaiah 21:1-5, Daniel 5:1-4)? What happened to Belshazzar that night (Daniel 5:30-31)?

8. What did the watchman see (21:6-10)? What did it mean?

9. To what did Isaiah compare the downfall of the Babylonians (47:1-7)? What had she said that proved she did not take God's warning seriously (verse 7)?

10. In what had Babylon trusted (47:8-15)? Who was the military leader of Babylon that overthrew Judah (Second Chronicles 36:5-14)? What did he do to Solomon's temple (Second Chronicles 36:15-21)?

11. Who overthrew the Babylonians?

Lesson 5: *Peril of Idols and Eastern Ways*

God commanded Israel to destroy the nations and idols that inhabited the Promised Land. Unfortunately, Israel lacked the will to follow God's command and let some of the people and their heathen gods survive. Before long, many Hebrews grew fascinated with these bizarre religions and were joining in. Today, many Americans are just as fascinated with Islam and with psychics, horoscopes and other pursuits that the Bible condemns.

1. What did Isaiah give as the reason God was forsaking Israel (2:5-11)? Isaiah describes about five of these offensive habits here. List them.

2. What did Isaiah say the idolaters worship? How is this phrase applicable to our day?

3. With religious diversity spreading today, many are claiming that multiple gods rule the universe and that each is equally justified. Will Jehovah allow for this polytheism (2:12-18)?

4. What recommendation did God give regarding association with idolaters and followers of Eastern ways (2:19-22)? How would Paul's remarks in First Corinthians 15:33 and Second Corinthians 6:14-18 apply to this matter in any age?

5. What two occupations did God condemn in Isaiah 8:19-22? What did he recommend instead?

6. A fascination with the supernatural grips many people today. Psychic hotlines, horoscopes, astrology and séances are responsible for separating foolish people from their money and giving them false hope and absolution. These things, however, are not from God. How did he describe the contrast between spiritism and spirituality in this passage? What should be our attitude toward such things that God condemns (Ephesians 5:11-12)?

7. In Isaiah 41:1-7, God makes his case against Babylon's idols. When the Chaldeans' struggle comes, they will still be looking to their statues for comfort and guidance. But, who had done all the things that Isaiah records as questions?

8. What did God hope to attain by blessing mankind with natural provision (41:17-20, cf. Romans 1:18-23)?

9. What evidence did Jehovah ask for from these idols (41:21-24)? What is true of one that chooses idols over Jehovah?

10. What did God call their molded images (41:25-29)? What did this mean?

11. In claiming to be the only God, to what did Jehovah compares himself (44:6-20)? Isaiah exposes the foolishness of building idols as he traces the use of a felled tree. How is the tree used?

12. Against what metaphor did Isaiah describe the people's idolatry (57:3-14)? What did God promise those who forsook idols and Eastern ways and put their trust in him?

Lesson 8: *Babylon Will Fall*

It is tragically ironic that Judah's destroyer emerged from the ashes of Israel's. Babylon is the city-state that survived the downfall of Assyria to trouble the Jews, who, like their brethren, sought Egyptian aid and failed. Still, like Assyria, God promised to overthrow Babylon as well.

1. The phrase "day of the Lord" is sometimes lifted from its context to apply exclusively to the end of the world. To what event did Isaiah apply it (13:1-8)?

2. Some argue against the validity of Hell and the concept that God could punish anyone there (13:9-16). How did this passage reinforce the truth of God's justice toward the wicked? What symbols used in this passage reappear in the book of Revelation (there are at least three)?

3. What nation was predicted to be the Babylonians' enemy (13:17-22)? How did the book of Daniel show this to be fulfilled? To what former destruction did Isaiah compare Babylon's fate?

4. Against whom would this proverb be directed (14:1-8)?

5. About whom is this prediction in Isaiah 14:12-15? What was his crime?

7. What instruction did God give Isaiah (20:1-6)? What was this to illustrate?

8. How were God's people offending him (30:1-5)?

9. What accusation is made against God's rebellious people (30:6-11)? How did the New Testament prophesy concerning this attitude among saints (Second Timothy 4:1-5, Second Thessalonians 2:11-12)? How should the preacher handle this pressure?

10. How will God "sift the nations with the sieve of futility" (30:27-28)?

11. With what would Assyria be beaten down (30:29-33)?

12. Who invaded Judah (36:1-12)? To what did Rabshakeh compare Egypt's power? What did Rabshakeh predict for Judah's prospects in war with Assyria?

13. What potential message from Hezekiah did Rabshakeh warn against (36:13-22)?

14. How did things turn out when Assyria besieged Jerusalem (Second Chronicles 32:1-23)?

Lesson 6: *Judah's Leaders Are Evil Sowers*

Jesus once complained that the blind were leading the blind into a ditch as he witnessed the teaching of the Pharisees among the common Jews of his day. Few things are as destructive as false teachers and selfish leaders. Israel and Judah were burdened with them throughout their histories.

1. God had protected Jerusalem from an invading army and to celebrate, Israel conducted an orgy of self-congratulation (22:1-7). Why did the prophet weep instead?

2. How had Israel's leaders been neglectful of the things that matter most (22:8-11)?

3. What was the motto of the misled? What was God's sentence (22:12-14)?

4. Shebna was somewhat like today's Prime Minister in some countries. What was his fate (22:15-24)?

5. How did Isaiah describe the glorious beauty of Ephraim's leaders (28:1-6)? Explain. What was a particular weakness of these men?

6. Isaiah indicates that God's judgment on such leaders will bring two gifts to Israel that these men had failed to deliver (verse 6). What are they?

7. Name the two classes of leader that had erred through intoxicants (28:7-13). How would intoxicants impair such men in the dispensation of their duties? What would become of people able only to learn as infants?

8. Where did the leaders seek refuge and a covenant for peace (28:14-15)?

9. What did God reveal to be the measuring line and plumb line (28:16-22)? Would the leaders' covenant truly protect them from God's judgment?

10. What great universal principle is Isaiah teaching (28:23-29; see also Galatians 6:7-10)?

11. What form would God's judgment on Jerusalem take (29:1-8)?

12. What was the attitude of the false counselors (29:15-16)?

13. Four oppressed groups would be avenged (29:17-21). Name them.

14. How did Isaiah describe God's neglectful watchmen (56:9-12)? How much concern did they have about the prospect of God's judgment?

15. How are elders of local churches to watch (First Peter 5:1-4, Hebrews 13:17)? How can elders become dumb dogs?

Lesson 7: *Egypt and Assyria*

Two of the greatest world powers 700 years before Christ were Egypt and Assyria. Egypt had been the nemesis of Israel since before Moses led the exodus through the Red Sea. Assyria was busy brutalizing the world in a lust for conquest and bloodshed. When Assyria knocked on Israel's door, God's people hoped that Egypt might form an alliance with them and be their deliverer.

1. What slight note of hope existed for Israel as the Assyrians invaded (14:24-27)?

2. How did Isaiah describe God's arrival to judge Egypt (19:1-4)? What kind of unrest would result in Egypt?

3. What type of despair is symbolized in drying up the Nile (19:5-10)?

4. What did God think of the wisdom and ability of Egypt that was so alluring to Israel (19:11-15)?

5. Instead of Israel begging Egypt for help, what did Isaiah foresee (19:16-22)?

6. God foresees a time when he will have children in each of the three nations (19:23-25). How did he describe each in particular?