

READ The BIBLE Together



ISAIAH 28-39

23rd October – 24th December 2016

**SHALOM CHURCH, SINGAPORE
(Upholding the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith)**

Day 1-7 Read **ISAIAH 28**

Recall that from **ISAIAH 1:1**, *Isaiah's* main audience was the southern nation of Judah.

Recall also from **ISAIAH 7** that *Ahaz* the king of Judah was seeking help from Assyria in order to repel the Syro-Ephramite threats. *Isaiah* was then preaching against this course of action, seeking to show *Ahaz* and Judah just how foolish it was!

In **ISAIAH 28-33**, *Isaiah* continued his theme of the foolishness of trusting the nations instead of the LORD. Historically, it would appear that Assyria had just defeated the northern kingdom of Israel (capital: Samaria), and had begun to turn its attention on Judah. During this time, Judah's foreign policy makers were turning more and more toward alliance with Egypt to thwart the Assyrian ambition. To *Isaiah*, this alliance was just as foolish as the earlier attempt to seek help from Assyria. Egypt will not attempt to swallow up Judah, but Egypt was fickle and unreliable! Why anyone would want to trust a fickle Egypt instead of the LORD who had proven Himself again and again, it was simply incredible!

What were the reasons why Judah would refuse to trust the LORD? Why would they rather turn to Egypt, or human-help? **ISAIAH 28** begins to answer these questions. Furthermore the prophet warned that if Judah persists in this course of action, then only one event awaits them: *their funeral!*

1. Focusing on **verses 1-6** . . .

- (a) From **verses 1 & 3**, it is clear that *Isaiah* was referring to Ephraim (northern kingdom Israel) in these 6 verses. What was the problem (sin) of Israel that led to their destruction? Was it pride or drunkenness? Explain.

- (b) **Verse 2** describes the enemy who will come to destroy Israel. What can be said about the enemy? (Use your own words)

- (c) The second part of **verse 4** is a simile (*'like . . .'*). What is the simile and what is the message?

- (d) Ephraim was described using words like “*crown*” and “*glorious beauty*”, as well as “*fading flower*”. What was *Isaiah* seeking to convey using these words?
- (e) What is the message of **verses 5-6**? (Note that **verses 5-6** are meant to form a contrast to **verses 1-4**)
- (f) After you have reviewed your answers to (a)-(d) above, answer: *What is the message of these 6 verses?*

2. Focusing on **verses 7-22** . . .

From **verse 7** onwards, the attention is shifted to the southern nation of Judah. “*But they . . .*” (**verse 7**) is a reference to Judah. It is generally expected that Judah would be morally and spiritually better compared to Israel, since Judah had the temple in Jerusalem where the priests and the law are found. However, as we shall see, Judah was just as bad, if not worse than Israel!

- (a) Who in Judah were specially singled out in **verses 7-8**, and what was their problem?
- (b) How serious was the spiritual rot in Judah? (Get your answer from **verses 7-8**)
- (c) Note that **verses 9-10** are placed within inverted commas, meaning they were actually the words of some people. We will take them to be the words of Judah’s religious leaders as they mocked *Isaiah’s* ministry. In other words, the “*he*” of **verse 9** is referring to *Isaiah*.

What were they saying about *Isaiah’s* ministry?

(d) **Verses 11-13** are the LORD's response to their mockery of *Isaiah's* ministry. What was His message to them?

(e) These people claimed to have made a covenant with death (**verse 15**). What do you think this means?

(f) In **verse 18**, God declared that their covenant with death would be null and void; their man-made refuge will be seen to be useless.

Instead, God will provide the one and true refuge. What is this refuge? (**Verse 16**)

What have "*justice*" and "*righteousness*" (**verse 17**) to do with this refuge?

(g) "*Mount Perazim*" and "*Valley of Gibeon*" were mentioned in **verse 21**. They referred to two battles in Israel's past when God fought for them: against the Philistines on Mount Perazim (**II SAMUEL 5:18-21**) and against the Amorites in the Valley of Gibeon (**JOSHUA 10:1-11**).

The verse says that God will arise to fight, like those two past events. Against whom will He fight, and what is the significance of this?

(h) In **verse 22**, the LORD God gave an appeal to the religious leaders of Judah, and through them to the nation of Judah.

What was the appeal? And what would be the consequence if they reject His appeal? (Read the NASB and the ESV; it may help you get the answer)

- (i) After you have reviewed your answers to (a)-(h) above, answer: *What is the message of these 16 verses?*

3. Focusing on **verses 23-29** . . .

In these 7 verses, *Isaiah* used two farming analogies: *plowing* (**verses 24-25**) and *threshing* (**verses 27-28**).

- (a) What is the message of the *plowing* analogy?

- (b) What is the message of the *threshing* analogy?

- (c) In **verse 26** and **verse 29**, *Isaiah* said that the farmer knows when to plow and how to thresh because God is the One who taught him.

Since God is the One who taught the farmer, this means that God Himself knows when to plow and how to thresh!

Why do you think *Isaiah* is directing our attention to this fact?

- (d) After you have reviewed your answers to (a)-(c) above, answer: *What is the message of these 7 verses?*

4. What is the most important lesson you have learnt from **ISAIAH 28**, and how has your life changed as a result?

Day 1-7 Read **ISAIAH 29**

1. Focusing on **verses 1-8** . . .

As the title of these 8 verses given by our NKJV suggests, the subject of this portion of Scripture is “*Woe to Jerusalem*”. Why is Jerusalem called ‘*Ariel*’?

It is commonly understood today that ‘*Ariel*’ means ‘*altar, hearth*’. Jerusalem prides itself as being God’s altar-hearth, the very heart of the only appointed place of worship on earth, the very place where God is pleased. YET as we shall see, God is *NOT* pleased!

Another description of Jerusalem is ‘*the city where David dwelt*’. It is yet another aspect of Jerusalem’s pride, in that it is the only city so closely linked to David, the ideal man of God. YET as we shall see, past historical links to saints mean nothing if present submission to God is missing!

(a) It is clear from **verse 3** that enemy forces surrounded Jerusalem then. Who was Jerusalem’s ultimate enemy?

(b) What was Jerusalem’s response to this crisis? (**Verse 1**)

(c) What shall be the outcome of this crisis? (**Verse 4**)

(d) **Verses 5-8** put the attention on the human foes of Jerusalem. What will be their final end?

(e) What is the message of the analogy in **verse 8**?

(f) Using a short paragraph, and using your own words, write down the main message of these 8 verses:

2. Focusing on **verses 9-16** . . .

(a) What is the message of **verses 9-10**?

(b) What do you think the illustration of the literate and illiterate man in **verses 11-12** is seeking to convey?

(c) What were the people guilty of?

Verse 13:

Verses 15-16:

(d) What will be the LORD's response to their sins? (**Verse 14**)

(e) Using a short paragraph, and using your own words, write down the main message of these 8 verses:

3. Focusing on **verses 17-24** . . .

These 8 verses elaborate on the "*marvelous work*" (**verse 14**) that God promised to do.

(a) **Verses 18-19** give us one perspective of God's marvelous work. What is it?

(b) **Verses 20-21** give us another perspective of God's marvelous work, namely He will judge those who do wickedly.

Three kinds of sinners are identified in these two verses. Who are they?

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(c) **Verses 22-23** give us a third perspective of God's marvelous work. What is it?

(d) **Verse 24** gives us a final perspective of God's marvelous work. What is it?

(e) Do you think God has already carried out this marvelous work? Explain and discuss your answer with your RTBT group.

4. What is the most important lesson you have learnt from **ISAIAH 29**, and how has your life changed as a result?

Week 3

[6th -12th November 2016]

Day 1

Read **ISAIAH 30:1-7**

1. In **verse 1**, the LORD called Judah '*rebellious children*'. The word '*rebellious*' here means '*to be resistant to authority*', '*to be stubborn*'. How were they stubborn? (**Verses 1-2**)

2. What consequence would Judah suffer as a result of their stubbornness? (**Verses 3-6**)

3. In **verses 6-8**, *Isaiah* mocked Judah's efforts to seek help from Egypt.
 - (a) How much effort was expended to enlist Egypt's help?

 - (b) How much help will Egypt render?

Day 2-3 Read **ISAIAH 30:8-18**

1. (a) What was the problem of that generation of Judahites? (**Verses 9-11**)
 - (b) Do you think that problem was peculiar to just that generation of Judahite? In other words, do you think it can be our problem as well? Elaborate.

2. What is the message of **verses 12-14**?

3. (a) What did God offer Judah, and what was Judah's response? (**Verse 15**)

(b) As a result, what will happen to Judah? (**Verses 16-17**)

(c) What will the LORD do? (**Verse 18**)

Day 4-5 Read **ISAIAH 30:18-26**

Verse 18 says, *“Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him.”*

Verses 19-26 give us details of how God will be gracious to those who wait for Him.

1. **Verse 19** mentions that people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem. How is this an act of grace towards Judah?
2. **Verse 19** states another blessing from God. What is it?
3. What is the blessing that is being outlined in **verses 20-21**?
4. How is **verse 22** an act of God’s grace?
5. What is the blessing that is being outlined in **verses 23-25**?

6. What is the message of **verses 26**?

7. Why do you think these gracious acts of God are being stated here?

Day 6-7 Read **ISAIAH 30:27-33**

1. These 7 verses speak of the coming destruction of Assyria. In your own words, summarize how Assyria will be destroyed.

2. (a) How is this prophecy of Assyria's destruction a comfort to Judah?

(b) **Verse 29** is a description of Judah's response upon hearing/witnessing Assyria's destruction. What is it?

3. Take **ISAIAH 30** as a whole.

(a) What is the overall message of this chapter?

(b) Ponder over your answer in 3(a), then name one area in your life that must change in light of the overall message of **ISAIAH 30**:

Day 1-2 Read **ISAIAH 31:1-9**

“Chapter 31 duplicates, in shorter form, the structure and content of chapter 30. It begins by exposing the folly of dependence upon Egypt (vv. 1-3). Not only will Egypt not be able to help, but going to her necessarily involves rejection of God. Thus Judah has not merely chosen a poorer option; she has, in fact, rejected the true in order to choose the false (cf. 30:1-18).

The second emphasis (as in 30:19-33) is that the Lord will fight for Jerusalem and will destroy Assyria (vv. 4-9). Thus, with a recurrence of causal statements the prophet attempts to draw his people back to God. Negatively, he abolishes the false hope, and positively, he depicts the grace of God in such a way as to attract the people to God.

It is especially the exclusion of dependence upon God which makes the Egyptian alliance so despicable to Isaiah. As Calvin sagely observes, a believer may use many intermediate means to benefit or defend himself or herself that do not conflict with a prior dependence upon God. But some means, by their very nature, involve abandonment of trust in Him. Theft would be a simple example, and adultery another. Trust in Egypt is one of these, in part because it was a denial of the efficacy of the Exodus. As a result, Judah would be flying in God’s face and would experience the terrible consequences of His reality.”

John N. Oswalt

1. Why was Judah going to Egypt for help, and what would be the final outcome of this action? (**Verses 1-3**)

2. God is likened to a lion (**verse 4**) and a bird (**verse 5**). Both imageries convey the same message. What is the message?

3. When Judah returns to God (**verse 6**), what will Judah be doing? (**Verse 7**)

4. **Verses 8-9** talk about how Assyria will experience the hand of God’s wrath.
 - (a) Do you think Assyria experiencing God’s wrath is tied to what Judah will do in **verses 6 & 7**? Elaborate.

(b) **Verse 8** talks about a superhuman sword. What is *Isaiah* seeking to convey?

(c) “*The LORD whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem*” (**verse 9**) – what does this mean?

5. What is the most important lesson you have learnt from **ISAIAH 31**, and how has your life changed as a result?

Day 3-4 Read **ISAIAH 32:1-8**

The king and princes of Judah had been a huge disappointment thus far. Hence **32:1** gives God’s people great hope when it says, “*Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice.*”

Our NKJV calls this “**A Reign Of Righteousness**”. How would life be like, living under the rule of such a king? **Verses 2-8** provide us the answer.

1. According to **verse 2**, to live under the reign of such a king is very blessed. How is that so?

2. What is the message of **verse 3-4**?

3. Recall **ISAIAH 5:20**. It is a curse to live in such a warped society as depicted there.

However, the exact reverse takes place here when this righteous king sits on the throne. How can this be seen from **verses 5-8**?

Day 5-7 Read **ISAIAH 32:9-20**

Verses 9-14

1. Who is being addressed?
2. What are they called to do? Why?
3. What will happen to the land and houses?

Verses 15-20

1. What is the picture depicted in these 6 verses?
2. The picture here stands in sharp contrast to what we saw in **verses 9-14**. How can we account for this sharp difference?
3. What truths have you learnt about God from **ISAIAH 32**, and how have they impacted your life?

Week 5

[20th – 26th November 2016]

Day 1-2 Read **ISAIAH 33:1-6**

These 6 verses can be taken as an introduction to the rest of the chapter. They accurately summarize the contents of what follows: God will arise, destroy the destroyer, and transform Zion.

1. **Verse 1** begins with the word “*woe*”. In contrast to previous woes (**28:1; 29:1, 15; 30:1; 31:1**), this “*woe*” is not addressed to Judah. *What is the reason for this change?*

2. (a) Who do you think the “*you*” in **verse 1** refers to?

(b) What will happen to “*you*”? (**Verse 1**)

3. What is Judah asking God to do in **verse 2**?

4. What will be the result when God acts? (**Verse 3**)

5. What is the message of **verses 5-6**?

Day 3-4 Read **ISAIAH 33:7-16**

1. What is the situation depicted in **verse 7-9**?

2. **Verses 10-13** describe God’s response to the situation in **verses 7-9**, and the final outcome.
 - (a) What will God do?

- (b) What will be the final outcome?
3. The question asked in **verse 14** is basically, “*Who can dwell with God?*”
- (a) What is the answer? (**Verse 15**)
- (b) What else can we say about such a person? (**Verse 16**)
- (c) How can a sinner become the person described in **verse 15**?

Day 5-7 Read **ISAIAH 33:17-24**

1. Who is the king mentioned in **verse 17**?
2. What is the message of **verses 18-19**?
3. What is the picture depicted in **verses 20-24**?
4. Review your answers to the 3 questions above, then write down the overall message of these 8 verses.

Day 1-3 Read **ISAIAH 34:1-17**

In a way that reminds us of **1:2**, *Isaiah* calls for the whole world to gather round and hear its judgment pronounced (**34:1**). However, this is not a call to be witnesses, but to be sentenced.

1. **Verses 2-4** give us three snapshots of this judgment. What are they?

Verse 2:

Verse 3:

Verse 4: *Not only the earth is affected in this judgment, but also the stars in the heavens! The heavens and the earth will be shaken!*

Taken together, what is the overall message from these 3 verses concerning this coming judgment?

2. Edom is being singled out here (**verses 5, 6**).

(a) What will happen to Edom? (**Verses 5-7**)

(b) Why do you think this nation is being singled out? Do you think Edom was to be taken literally or symbolically?

(c) According to **verse 8**, what is the reason for this judgment?

3. **Verses 9-15** describe the result of Edom (by implication, any other nations) experiencing this judgment.

What can be said about . . .

(a) The land

(b) The people/leaders

How long would this devastation last?

4. How certain are we that this will come to pass? (**Verses 16-17**)

Day 4-7 Read **ISAIAH 35:1-10**

While in **ISAIAH 34** the luxuriant land of Edom was being turned into a desert, here in **ISAIAH 35** we shall find a desert being transformed into a garden!

1. What is the picture portrayed in **verses 1-2**?

2. What is the cause of this transformation? (**Verse 2, 4**)

3. (a) What encouragement is given to the weak, feeble and fearful? (**Verses 3-4**)

(b) How can this be an encouragement to us today?

4. **Verses 5-7** give us two figures of salvation.

(a) What are they?

(b) What is the message?

5. What is the picture given in **verses 8-10**, and what is the message?

6. As noted above, **ISAIAH 34** forms a sharp contrast with **ISAIAH 35**. The purpose is to convey a clear message to Judah then, and to us today.

What is the message, and how should it change our life today?

Week 7

[4th – 10th December 2016]

Day 1-7 Read **ISAIAH 36:1-22**

1. Take some time to read John N. Oswalt's introduction to **ISAIAH 36-39**:

Chapters 36-39 conclude the section relating to Assyria and the question of trust which that nation's presence on Judah's borders posed. They demonstrate that it is not necessary to revoke one's dependence on God and turn to human powers in order to survive. In this way they constitute a lived-out example of the truths taught in chapters 13-35. The nations of mankind are under God's hand; He is their ruler and those who trust in Him need not, indeed, must not, bow down to those nations.

The section appears to be divided into three segments: chapters 36-37; 38; 39. In the first, Hezekiah reduced to helplessness before Assyria, turns to God and finds relief. In the second, Hezekiah is again helpless, this time before illness. He again turns to God and is restored. In the third segment, Hezekiah has the opportunity to give glory to God in the presence of Babylon, but instead falls prey to the temptation to parade his own glory, with the result that the coming captivity to Babylon is announced.

2. What king came to the fortified cities of Judah and took them? (**Verse 1**)

3. (a) Who did this king send to Jerusalem with a great army (**Verse 2**)

(b) Where was this Assyrian emissary standing as he addressed Judah? (**Verse 2**)
What is the significance of this?

4. What two entities did this Assyrian emissary warn Jerusalem not to trust? (**Verses 6-7**)

5. What did he call upon Jerusalem to do instead? (**Verse 8**)

6. (a) Who did he claim had sent him to destroy the land? (**Verse 10**)

(b) Do you think he is speaking the truth here? Discuss your answer with your RTBT group.

7. (a) What did he warn Jerusalem not to do? (**Verses 14-15**)

(b) What promise did the Assyrian king make to Jerusalem in **verses 16-17**?

- (c) What blasphemy did the Assyrian emissary utter as he concluded his message? (**Verse 20**)
8. (a) What was Jerusalem's response to all that the Assyrian emissary had said? (**Verses 21-22**)
- (b) What do you think of their response? Good or bad? Wise or foolish? Discuss your answer with your RTBT group.
- (c) If you were living in Jerusalem then, what would be your response? Share your answer with your RTBT group.

Week 8

[11th – 17th December 2016]

Day 1-7 Read **ISAIAH 37:1-38**

1. When Hezekiah heard of what the Assyrian emissary said, what was his response? (**Verses 1-5**)
2. (a) What did *Isaiah* say to the king's servants? (**Verses 6-7**)
- (b) If you were one of the king's servants, what would be your response to *Isaiah's* words?
3. (a) What prompted the Assyrian king to threaten *Hezekiah* again? (**Verse 9**)

(b) In essence, what was his message to *Hezekiah*? (**Verses 10-13**)

4. What was *Hezekiah's* response? (**Verses 14-20**)
5. What did the LORD tell *Hezekiah*? (**Verses 21-35**)
6. How did this whole episode end? (**Verses 36-38**)
7. What lessons can we learn from **ISAIAH 36-37**?
8. Where do you see the providence of God in **ISAIAH 36-37**?

Week 9

[18th – 24th December 2016]

Day 1-6 Read **ISAIAH 38:1-39:8**

1. What happened to *Hezekiah*? (**38:1**)
2. What did *Hezekiah* do, and what was the result? (**38:2-6**)
3. What sign was given to *Hezekiah* that he would be well? (**38:7-8**)

4. What did *Hezekiah* do when he recovered from his sickness? (**38:9-20**)

5. What medicinal remedy did *Isaiah* prescribe for *Hezekiah* in his sickness? (**38:21**)

6. Who came to visit *Hezekiah* after he recovered from his sickness? (**39:1**)

7. What did *Hezekiah* show them? (**39:2**)

8. What did *Isaiah* tell *Hezekiah* would happen as a result? (**39:5-7**)

9. What was *Hezekiah's* response to *Isaiah's* words? (**39:8**)

10. **ISAIAH 36-37** tells us how *Hezekiah* trusted in God in hard times.

ISAIAH 38 tells us, once again, how *Hezekiah* trusted in God in hard times.

ISAIAH 39 tells us how *Hezekiah* failed to honor God after receiving His blessings.

Taken together, what is the message from these four chapters?

1. What is the most important truth concerning God that you have learnt from **ISAIAH 28-39**?
2. What is the most important truth concerning the Christian Life that you have learnt from **ISAIAH 28-39**?
3. How has **ISAIAH 28-39** changed your life? Share one change:

Acknowledgement

Whatever the weaknesses of this Read-The-Bible-Together guide, they would have been far greater without the kind help of SOH Jyue Theng and NEO Chun Choon. They gave their time and energy to review the entire guide, asking questions all the way and giving many valuable suggestions. Thank you!

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another! (Proverbs 27:17, ESV)

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Questions or comments concerning this RTBT guide?
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