



The Books of the Prophets



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3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118-3968
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Illustrations by Dede Putra

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Manufactured in China

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Title: The Books of the Prophets: guiding word.

Description: Saint Louis : Concordia Publishing House, 2024- | Series: The guiding word ; volume 4 | Summary: "This six-volume series will take readers through each book of the Bible, showing the unified narrative of God's plan of salvation. Using this resource, readers will (1) understand the history of God's people and His promise; (2) gain a basic grasp of each book of the Bible; (3) see Jesus' saving mission in each book of the Bible; and (4) develop fundamental Bible reading and interpretation skills"-- Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022060172 (print) | LCCN 2022060173 (ebook) | ISBN 9780758671943 (v. 4 ; paperback) | ISBN 9780758671950 (v. 4 ; ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Bible Old Testament--Introductions.

Classification: LCC BS1140.3 .B66 2024 (print) | LCC BS1140.3 (ebook) | DDC 221.6--dc23/eng/20230621

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022060172>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022060173>

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Welcome

Welcome to *Guiding Word*. This six-volume collection will help you better read and understand the Bible, the most important book ever written. In it, we read and hear God’s Word, which is written so that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that by believing we may have eternal life in His name (John 20:31).

Why have another Bible resource? First, the Bible is a complex library of books, and it is often intimidating for people to read on their own. Second, while there are many resources designed to help you read and understand the Bible, each has its own format and style and may not be suitable for every learner. We hope this resource will fill a gap and be useful for you.

Think of this series of books as a travel guide to the Bible. Just as a travel guide helps you prepare for and better enjoy a trip, this resource will enable you to better understand and appreciate the Bible as you journey through it. The sections have been designed to help you prepare for reading and understanding difficult passages, to explain the overall course of the Scriptures, to prompt you to reflect on the text as you read, to point out important milestones and events, and to guide you to Jesus’ presence throughout the Bible.

If you are already familiar with the organization of the Bible, feel free to skip ahead to the section titled “What’s in *Guiding Word*?”

What’s in the Bible?

The Bible is all about God’s plan to restore fallen humanity and His broken creation by sending His Son. But what’s in the Bible? How do we look at it? How do we use it? Though we call the Bible a book, it’s actually a collection of sixty-six books. These were written over a period of 1,500 years by many authors.

The Bible has two divisions: the Old Testament and the New Testament. We don’t use the word *testament* too often today. It’s related to words like *covenant* and *contract*.

The Old Testament includes the first thirty-nine books of the Bible. These are the books written about the events that happened before Jesus was born. They all point us toward Jesus. The name *Old Testament* is a little misleading because sometimes we think of old things as not important or out of style. Instead, these books can be thought of as the first covenant or promise that God made to His people to send the Savior, Jesus. And as you will see, Jesus is present throughout the Old Testament. The New Testament includes the last twenty-seven books of the Bible, which record Jesus’ life and mission, as well as the life of Jesus’ early followers in the church. These books point us back to Jesus and how He fulfilled all of God’s promises made for us in the Old Testament. Again, these are all about Jesus.

The books of the Bible are organized in a way that may seem confusing at first but makes sense when you know the system. How are the books in a library organized? In libraries,

books are organized by their type. Fiction is in one section, and nonfiction is in another; magazines are in one spot and children’s books in another. The same goes for the Bible. Instead of the books being ordered by the date they were written or by their authors, the books of the Bible are put in categories, or genres; then the books are generally organized by date written within that genre.

NAVIGATING THE LIBRARY

The first five books of the Old Testament—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—are called the Books of Moses, or the Torah, meaning “Law of God.” They were written down by Moses and are covered in the first volume of this series.

The next books in the Old Testament are called the Books of History. These tell the history of God’s people from the time of Moses up to the time of Jesus and are covered in the second volume.

Next are the Books of Wisdom and Poetry. These poetical books were written at different times during the Old Testament history, mostly by kings David and Solomon. These are covered in the third volume.

The last group of Old Testament books are the Books of the Prophets. These books record God’s special messages to His Old Testament people, mostly during the second half of their history. They are discussed in the fourth volume.

The New Testament has five genres. The first four books—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—are called the Gospels. Each Gospel tells of the life and mission of Jesus from a different writer and perspective. These accounts make up the heart of the Bible and are covered in the fifth *Guiding Word* volume.

Next is the book of the Acts of the Apostles (also known simply as Acts). This historical book records events from the early years of the Christian Church and the lives of the first Christians after Jesus ascended into heaven. The next books are called the Pauline Epistles (*epistle* means “letter”). These are letters that the apostle Paul wrote to the early Christians. Near the end of the New Testament are the General Epistles. These are letters that other people besides Paul wrote to the early Christians. The final book of the Bible is the only book of prophecy in the New Testament, the book of Revelation. This shows the vision Jesus revealed to the apostle John about life in the end times (that is, the time between Christ’s first and second coming) and the restoration of God’s creation. The books of Acts through Revelation are covered in the sixth and final volume of *Guiding Word*.

66 BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

OLD TESTAMENT	GENESIS	
	EXODUS	
	LEVITICUS	
	NUMBERS	
	DEUTERONOMY	
BOOKS OF MOSES (Torah)	JOSHUA	
	JUDGES	
	RUTH	
	1 SAMUEL	
	2 SAMUEL	
	1 KINGS	
	2 KINGS	
	1 CHRONICLES	
	2 CHRONICLES	
	EZRA	
HISTORY	NEHEMIAH	
	ESTHER	
	JOB	
	PSALMS	
	PROVERBS	
	ECCLESIASTES	
	SONG OF SOLOMON	
	ISAIAH	
	JEREMIAH	
	LAMENTATIONS	
WISDOM & POETRY	EZEKIEL	
	DANIEL	
	HOSEA	
	JOEL	
	AMOS	
	OBADIAH	
	JONAH	
	MICAH	
	NAHUM	
	HABAKKUK	
PROPHETS	ZEPHANIAH	
	HAGGAI	
	ZECHARIAH	
	MALACHI	
	MATTHEW	
	NEW TESTAMENT	MARK
		LUKE
		JOHN
		ACTS
	GOSPELS	ROMANS
1 CORINTHIANS		
2 CORINTHIANS		
GALATIANS		
HISTORY	EPHESIANS	
	PHILIPPIANS	
	COLOSSIANS	
	1 THESSALONIANS	
	2 THESSALONIANS	
	1 TIMOTHY	
	2 TIMOTHY	
	TITUS	
	PHILEMON	
	PAULINE EPISTLES (Letters)	HEBREWS
JAMES		
1 PETER		
2 PETER		
1 JOHN		
2 JOHN		
3 JOHN		
JUDE		
GENERAL EPISTLES		REVELATION
		END TIMES

NAVIGATING THE BIBLE

When you open up a Bible, you'll see chapter and verse numbers scattered throughout the pages. Did you know that those numbers were not originally there? As people used the Bible more and more and made copies, later scholars eventually put in these numbers to help people quickly find sections or passages. We call these Bible references.

UNDERSTANDING BIBLE REFERENCES
The following diagram illustrates how a common Bible reference to **John 3:16** breaks down.

Book Title	Chapter Number	Verse Number
John	3:	16

Using the Bible's table of contents, look up the book of John. Then find chapter 3 and finally verse 16.

What's in *Guiding Word*?

Each volume of *Guiding Word* is laid out in a similar fashion. After this series introduction is an introduction for that specific volume. Then, each book of the Bible has its own introduction, which will help you better understand and dig into that particular book.

Each book of the Bible follows an outline, which breaks the book into major divisions and then each division into sections. The section heads were not included in the original biblical text but were added later to help clarify how the text flows from narrative to narrative or idea to idea. In *Guiding Word*, these correspond to the subheadings in the ESV translation of the Bible. From here on out, we will refer to these subhead sections as “passages.”

Following the pattern of a travel guide, *Guiding Word* includes some features to help you read through, better understand, and reflect on each passage of the Bible. These features include the following:

(1) Orientation. This is a short summary of each passage. Just as a travel guide gives you a glimpse of where you will be going on your journey before you arrive, the summary will help orient you to where you are in the Bible and where you are going. After reading the summary for each passage, read the text itself in your Bible. Alternatively, if you are skimming a book of the Bible, previewing the book, or only want to understand the high points before reading deeper, these summaries are a good place to start.

(2) Observation Points. In the side margins, you will find open-ended questions. Use these reflection questions to help you slow down, observe, and reflect on the passage. There is room in the side margin for recording reflections, thoughts, and notes as you go. Just as a travel guide will prompt you to look out for specific things on your way, the reflection questions will help you better observe what's going on in the text.

(3) **Landmarks.** These special features, interspersed in the text, will help you appreciate the overall journey through God’s Word. In any journey, you will encounter landmarks of all types that pop out to you, may interest you, or may even make you scratch your head. Landmarks in *Guiding Word* are identified by icons and colored bars, and can be read before or after you read the corresponding passage. Landmarks include the following categories:

 **VISUALIZE**

This feature includes maps, diagrams, pictures, or infographics to help you visualize scenes, locations, and concepts in a passage.

 **PICTURE OF THE SAVIOR**

This Old Testament feature highlights people, places, or events that set the stage for the coming of Jesus and help reveal His work of salvation.

 **LINK BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS**

In the Old Testament, this highlights people or events that Jesus or His apostles will discuss, explain, or fulfill in the New Testament. In the New Testament, this feature points the reader back to the Old Testament person or event that set the stage for the New Testament passage.

 **CLEAR THE CONFUSION**

This Landmark clarifies passages that are likely to leave the reader confused and fills the gaps—providing backstories, describing future developments, or discussing the significance of the event.

 **SET THE SCENE**

This feature explains important cultural or historical themes that help you better understand the context of the passage.

 **WAYPOINT**

This feature is designed to be a longer stopping point. When you travel, you will likely stop at notable locations for an extended period of time to really experience the destination. Waypoints in *Guiding Word* function like stopping points that are worth investigating along the journey through God’s Word. Each Waypoint has a three-part structure:

- What does this text show us?
- What does this text reveal about God’s plan of salvation?
- What does this text uncover about our identity and calling as God’s people today?

Each Waypoint also has reflection questions associated with it. The Waypoints can be considered on your own or in a group study. However you choose to use the Waypoints is up to you, but use the summaries and reflection prompts to help guide you through a deeper reading of the text.

How to Use *Guiding Word*

You can use this resource in multiple ways:

- Read through the Bible on your own, passage by passage. The summary of each passage will help orient you to where the narrative is taking you, and the reflection questions are observation prompts that will help you pay closer attention to what you’re reading. The interspersed Landmark features will help you visualize important images or concepts, or understand and connect key themes to the overall story of Scripture.
- Read through the Bible in a small group or Bible study setting. The guided summaries and reflection questions make good prompts if you are reading through the Scriptures as a group, providing some reflections along the way. The Waypoint sections also serve as great places to stop and reflect on key narratives.
- Read a good thirty-thousand-foot summary of the Bible. *Guiding Word* includes summaries of passages, and if you have never read certain books of the Bible or are intimidated by their length, you can take a few minutes to get introduced or oriented to them via summaries and graphics.

Whether or not you’ve read through all or parts of the Bible before, *Guiding Word* will serve as your companion and guide through the journey.

The Books of the Prophets

The seventeen Old Testament books covered in this fourth volume of *Guiding Word* confront the disobedience of God’s people, calling them to repent and return to God before devastating punishment falls. The prophets also point to the coming Messiah and the day of the Lord, when Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead, restore God’s creation, and bring us to live in God’s glorious presence forever.

JOURNEYING THROUGH THE BOOKS OF THE PROPHETS

Isaiah was written around seven hundred years before Jesus’ birth. Isaiah shows us the mission of the Messiah, from His conception and birth to His death and resurrection.

Jeremiah was written about one hundred years after Isaiah. This prophet recounts the disobedience of Judah and its leaders, the devastating destruction of Jerusalem, and the exile of God's people to Babylon.

Lamentations was written after Jerusalem's destruction. In the midst of the desolation, Jeremiah points to God's steadfast love and promise of the Messiah, giving His people hope, comfort, and consolation.

Ezekiel wrote to Judah's exiles living in captivity in Babylon. He first attacks the idea that the exiles would soon return to Jerusalem. After the temple is destroyed, Ezekiel promises God will bring them home.

Daniel powerfully shows that God rules all the nations of the earth for the benefit of His people. God does this even with rulers who neither know nor acknowledge Him.

Hosea uses the metaphor of marriage to expose Israel's unfaithfulness and highlight God's love. Through Hosea, we see the length God is willing to go to confront His people in their sin and to call them back to Him in tender love.

Joel uses an invasion of locusts to warn Judah to repent of their sins before God brings an invading army to punish them.

Amos strongly condemns the prominent people of Israel for oppressing the poor and vulnerable. He calls them to repent before disaster strikes.

Obadiah condemns Edom, a nation that victimized the people of Judah when Babylon attacked. He promises the restoration of Israel, the return from exile, and the coming of God's messianic kingdom.

Jonah is a reluctant prophet who resists God's command to warn Nineveh of God's impending judgment for their cruelty and violence.

Micah warns both Judah and Israel of God's impending judgment because of their wayward practices and sin. He mixes in visions of God's kingdom to come and glimpses of the promised messianic King.

Nahum depicts the sacking of Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, 150 years after they had repented at Jonah's preaching. Nahum condemns Nineveh for its cruel mistreatment of the prisoners of Israel.

Habakkuk records a dialogue between the prophet and the Lord. The prophet asks where God is when evil people oppress the righteous. The Lord teaches Habakkuk to live by faith and not by sight.

Zephaniah prophesies during the rule of righteous King Josiah. While Josiah restores the temple and proper worship for Judah, Zephaniah calls for spiritual renewal and true repentance.

Haggai works with Zechariah to encourage the returned exiles to trust God and resume rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem.

Zechariah joins Haggai to encourage the rebuilding of the temple. Then he goes on to prophesy many of the messianic events of Holy Week.

Malachi writes ninety years after Haggai and Zechariah to restore the priests and people of Judah who have drifted from proper service at the temple. He also predicts the coming of John the Baptist and Jesus.

THE BOOKS OF THE PROPHETS, WITH THEIR GENERAL DIVISIONS

- **Isaiah**
 - Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem (1:1–12:6)
 - Oracles About the Nations (13:1–23:18)
 - Cosmic Judgment (24:1–27:13)
 - Ephraim (Samaria) and Jerusalem (28:1–32:20)
 - The Hinge of the Book (33:1–35:10)
 - Isaiah and Hezekiah (36:1–39:8)
 - Comfort for the Lord’s Weary People (40:1–31)
 - The Lord Chooses Israel, His Servant (41:1–42:17)
 - The Redemption of Israel (42:18–44:20)
 - Freedom from Babylon (44:21–48:22)
 - The Suffering Servant and Redeemed Israel (49:1–55:13)
 - Understanding Divine Character (56:1–66:24)
- **Jeremiah**
 - The Call of Jeremiah (1:1–19)
 - Prophecy Against Judah (2:1–35:19)
 - Jeremiah’s Suffering and Persecution (36:1–38:28)
 - The Fall of Jerusalem (39:1–45:5)
 - Judgment Against the Nations (46:1–51:64)
 - Historical Appendix (52:1–34)
- **Lamentations**
 - The Misery of Jerusalem (1:1–22)
 - The Lord’s Anger (2:1–22)
 - The Lord’s Discipline and Mercy (3:1–66)
 - Zion’s Punishment (4:1–22)
 - A Plea to the Lord (5:1–22)
- **Ezekiel**
 - Ezekiel’s Call (1:1–7:27)
 - God’s Glory Abandons the Jerusalem Temple (8:1–11:25)
 - Oracles of Judgment on Israel (12:1–24:27)
 - Oracles Against Other Nations (25:1–32:32)
 - Oracles and Visions of Israel’s Restoration (33:1–48:35)
- **Daniel**
 - Judeans Steadfast in Practicing Their Faith (1:1–21)
 - Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream (2:1–49)
 - God’s Faithful Servants Rescued from Death (3:1–30)
 - Nebuchadnezzar Judged for His Arrogance Against God (4:1–37)
 - Belshazzar Judged for His Arrogance Against God (5:1–31)
 - God’s Faithful Servant Rescued from Death (6:1–28)
 - Daniel’s Visions (7:1–12:13)

- **Hosea**
 - Hosea's Personal Issues as Prophecies (1:1–3:5)
 - Various Oracles (4:1–14:9)
- **Joel**
 - Catastrophes, Current and Coming (1:1–2:17)
 - The Lord's Response (2:18–3:21)
- **Amos**
 - Proclamation of Judgment (1:1–2:16)
 - Israel's Sins and Refusal to Repent (3:1–6:14)
 - Visions (7:1–9:15)
- **Obadiah**
 - The First Proclamation Against Edom: Humiliation (vv. 1–4)
 - The Second Proclamation Against Edom: Displacement (vv. 5–7)
 - The Third Proclamation Against Edom: Destruction (vv. 8–18)
 - Israel's Restoration and the Kingship of Yahweh (vv. 19–21)
- **Jonah**
 - Jonah Flees the Lord's Calling (1:1–2:10)
 - Jonah Preaches God's Warning and Laments Its Effects (3:1–4:11)
- **Micah**
 - Prophecies of Doom Against Various Cities (1:1–3:12)
 - The Coming of God's Salvation and His Rescue (4:1–5:15)
 - Renewed Prophecies of Doom, Ending with Restoration (6:1–7:20)
- **Nahum**
 - Reminder of the Covenant (1:1–15)
 - The Destruction and Humiliation of Nineveh (2:1–3:19)
- **Habakkuk**
 - The Debate Between Habakkuk and God (1:1–2:5)
 - Woes to the Arrogant (2:6–20)
 - Habakkuk's Psalm of Submission (3:1–19)
- **Zephaniah**
 - Impending Judgment (1:1–3:8)
 - Deliverance, Restoration, and Exaltation of the Righteous (3:9–20)
- **Haggai**
 - The Command to Rebuild the Temple (1:1–15)
 - The Coming Glory of the Temple (2:1–23)

- **Zechariah**
 - Introductory Oracle and “Night Visions” (1:1–6:8)
 - The Coming Peace and Prosperity (6:9–10:12)
 - Holy Week Prophecies (11:1–13:9)
 - Varied Pictures of the Last Day (14:1–21)
- **Malachi**
 - Correction for the Priests (1:1–2:9)
 - The People Must Be Faithful Through Proper Marriage Practice (2:10–3:5)
 - A Call to Return to the Lord in Repentance (3:6–4:6)

ISAIAH

Welcome to Isaiah

Isaiah speaks God’s Word to four kings of Judah over a span of fifty years. He prophesies the rise and fall of nations and empires. Many of Isaiah’s prophecies focus intensely on the coming Messiah, who would come to Judah some seven hundred years later. In fact, Isaiah’s many prophecies about the Messiah have led to the book often being called the “Fifth Gospel.” As you read Isaiah, watch him prophesy the breadth of Jesus’ life and saving ministry.



As you begin reading this book, what do you already know about Isaiah?

Isaiah at a Glance

- **Start:** Isaiah begins with God uncovering the wickedness of the people of Judah but offering to cleanse and purify them.
- **End:** Isaiah ends with a view of eternal life in the new heavens and new earth.
- **Theme:** Isaiah writes to comfort God’s people with the good news of their redemption.
- **Author and Date:** The great prophet Isaiah wrote the prophecies of this book between 740 and 681 BC.
- **Places Visited:** Jerusalem, Israel, Syria, Assyria, and other nations
- **Journey Time:** Isaiah’s sixty-six chapters can be read in under four hours.
- **Outline:**
 - Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem (1:1–12:6)
 - Oracles About the Nations (13:1–23:18)
 - Cosmic Judgment (24:1–27:13)
 - Ephraim (Samaria) and Jerusalem (28:1–32:20)
 - The Hinge of the Book (33:1–35:10)
 - Isaiah and Hezekiah (36:1–39:8)
 - Comfort for the Lord’s Weary People (40:1–31)
 - The Lord Chooses Israel, His Servant (41:1–42:17)

- The Redemption of Israel (42:18–44:20)
- Freedom from Babylon (44:21–48:22)
- The Suffering Servant and Redeemed Israel (49:1–55:13)
- Understanding Divine Character (56:1–66:24)

Five Top Sights and Spectacles of Isaiah

Isaiah’s Temple Vision and Commissioning (6:1–13) Feel the temple foundations shake as the seraphim call out above the Lord’s throne.

Immanuel and His Reign (7:14; 9:2–7) Listen to Isaiah speak of Jesus’ conception and reign among us as our mighty God and Savior.

The Feast (25:6–9) Come and sample the feast of rich food God is preparing on the mountain where He will swallow up death forever.

The Suffering Servant (52:13–53:12) Stand at the foot of the cross as Isaiah explains how Jesus’ sufferings have taken away our sins.

The New Heavens and New Earth (65:17–25) Look upon the new heavens and new earth, which God will create on the Last Day.

Seeing Jesus in Isaiah

Nowhere in the Old Testament is Jesus’ picture more clearly drawn than in Isaiah. Through prophecies about His birth and person, His godhood, His public ministry, and His sacrifice as the Suffering Servant, the message of the Messiah is woven throughout Isaiah.

Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem (1:1–12:6)

Chapters 1–5 outline God’s judgment against Judah’s repeated sins. After Chapter 6, when Isaiah recounts God’s call to him, chapters 7–12 prophesy attacks from Israel, Syria, and Assyria.

INTRODUCTION (1:1)

Isaiah lists the kings who ruled Judah during his prophetic ministry.

THE WICKEDNESS OF JUDAH (1:2–20)

God accuses Judah of sin and rebellion. The people go through the motions when they offer sacrifices but mistreat their neighbors. Those who repent will be saved, while those who reject God will be destroyed.

THE UNFAITHFUL CITY (1:21–31)

Jerusalem has become the center of unfaithfulness by trusting in foreign powers and gods rather than the true God. Yet God declares that one day He will restore Jerusalem and it will be called the faithful city.

THE MOUNTAIN OF THE LORD (2:1–5)

Isaiah foresees the New Testament church reaching out to all nations with the Gospel, and he ultimately sees the faithful believers of all times and places gathered in the new creation at Christ's return.



CLEAR THE CONFUSION

What are the “latter days” (v. 2)?

In Old Testament prophecy, the “latter days” referred to the time after the Messiah's first coming to earth, the New Testament era. The “former days” described the Old Testament era, before Christ's first coming.

THE DAY OF THE LORD (2:6–22)

God describes His impending wrath against evildoers. This “day of the Lord” points both to temporal wrath against Judah and eternal wrath against all sin on Judgment Day, when Christ returns.

JUDGMENT ON JUDAH AND JERUSALEM (3:1–4:1)

Judah will face scarcity of food, goods, and men due to the violence and oppression they commit against vulnerable fellow Judeans.

THE BRANCH OF THE LORD GLORIFIED (4:2–6)

Even though God will punish His people's unfaithfulness, He will send the long-promised Messiah. This Branch, Jesus, will arise in history after Judah collapses. This prophecy also points to Christ's final return.



PICTURE OF THE SAVIOR

The Branch of the Lord

Isaiah sometimes used the image of a branch to refer to the Messiah. When Babylon captured and exiled Judah, David’s kingly line was cut down like a tree. Yet, from the stump of David’s house, the Christ would sprout like a branch.



Like Isaiah, Jesus drew spiritual meaning from earthly objects such as vineyards, sheep, and mustard seeds. Which of Jesus’ parables do you find most memorable?

THE VINEYARD OF THE LORD DESTROYED (5:1-7)

God had provided everything Israel needed to be just and holy. But when the people are unjust and evil, God has no choice but to lay waste to them like to a vineyard that bears bad grapes.



VISUALIZE



LINK BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

The Vineyard of the Lord → The Parable of the Tenants (Isaiah 5:1–7 → Matthew 21:33–41)

Isaiah and Jesus both used vineyard imagery to show God’s disappointment when His people became more wicked and oppressive than the nations around them. As a result, God gave His vineyard to the nations to loot and plunder.

WOE TO THE WICKED (5:8–30)

Isaiah continues to describe the various desolations that will come upon the people of Judah because of their wickedness. The Assyrians will ransack their cities and bring darkness and distress.

ISAIAH’S VISION OF THE LORD (6:1–7)

WAYPOINT

What does this text show us?

In a vision in the temple, Isaiah sees God sitting on His throne, surrounded by six-winged angels who call out “Holy, holy, holy.” When Isaiah trembles at his unworthiness, God sends an angel to touch his lips with a coal from the altar.

What does this text reveal about God’s plan of salvation?

God is with believers, even if our eyes cannot see Him. Just as the angel purified Isaiah’s lips, making him fit to speak God’s word, Christ forgives all who believe in Him. This purifies us to share His holiness with others.

What does this text uncover about our identity and calling as God’s people today?

God desires that we receive the forgiveness He won for us in Christ. This is the great calling we have as redeemed children of Christ as we receive God’s gifts through the means of grace—the Word and Sacraments.



How might you see worship in your church differently as a result of this vision?



How do we see elements of this passage echoed in worship today?



What are some ways you can honor God more faithfully in your own life?

ISAIAH’S COMMISSION FROM THE LORD (6:8–13)

Isaiah volunteers when the Lord asks, “Whom shall I send?” God sends him with a message the people will reject, resulting in their defeat and exile. But God promises the Christ will come from Judah.



CLEAR THE CONFUSION

Did God really want His people's hearts to be dull (v. 10) so they would not repent?

God desires to save, not destroy. He was preparing Isaiah for the Judeans' reaction to his message. Judah would suffer defeat and exile before a remnant would repent and be ready to hear the Gospel of the coming Messiah.

ISAIAH SENT TO KING AHAZ (7:1–9)

King Ahaz is terrified of Israel and Syria. When he refuses to join their alliance, Israel and Syria threaten to attack Jerusalem and replace him. God sends Isaiah to urge Ahaz to trust the Lord and stand firm in faith.

THE SIGN OF IMMANUEL (7:10–25)

God promises to deliver Ahaz and offers a miraculous sign to reassure him. Ahaz rejects the Lord, so Isaiah promises a sign anyway. The virgin will conceive, and Israel and Syria will fall to Assyria.



PICTURE OF THE SAVIOR

Immanuel

The Hebrew word *Immanuel* means “God with us.” Matthew 1:22–23 quotes this prophecy and identifies Jesus as Immanuel and Mary as the virgin. Jesus is the Son of God in human flesh, who fulfilled the Lord's promise of redemption.



What kinds of people or things are we tempted to put our hope and confidence in during this life?

THE COMING ASSYRIAN INVASION (8:1–10)

God commands Isaiah to make a sign publicly proclaiming that the capitals of Israel and Syria will be destroyed by the Assyrians. He even has Isaiah use this proclamation as the name of his next son.



CLEAR THE CONFUSION

What are the gentle waters of Shiloah and the waters of the River, mighty and many (vv. 6–8)?

Shiloah symbolizes God's promise to protect Judah and restore the nation. The River refers to Assyria. Since Ahaz rejected God's protection and sought Assyria's help, Assyria destroyed Syria and Israel, then swept through Judah.

FEAR GOD, WAIT FOR THE LORD (8:11–22)

After King Ahaz allies Judah with Assyria, Isaiah warns that Assyria will soon turn on Judah and bring about much destruction. Isaiah calls on God's people to trust in His Word and recall His promises.



LINK BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

The Rock of Offense and Stumbling (Isaiah 8:14–17 → Matthew 21:42–44; Romans 9:30–33)

God is both a sanctuary and a rock of stumbling. For believers, the rock or mountain serves as a stronghold and sanctuary. For unbelievers, He is the rock that causes stumbling; those who fall are broken upon it. Jesus used this image to warn the Jewish rulers against rejecting Him.



The birth of any child is joyous because of the hope it brings into the world. What hope did Jesus' birth bring to the world?

FOR TO US A CHILD IS BORN (9:1–7)

The lands of Israel's northernmost tribes will be the first to fall to the Assyrians, yet the Messiah will arise from this place, Galilee of the nations, and His reign will last forever.

JUDGMENT ON ARROGANCE AND OPPRESSION (9:8–10:4)

Israel will be destroyed because they have failed to repent and are a godless and evil people. False prophets have led them astray. They consume each other, so God will pour out His wrath through Assyria.

JUDGMENT ON ARROGANT ASSYRIA (10:5–19)

The Lord will destroy Assyria for its arrogance. Like a saw or an axe, Assyria is simply the instrument God has chosen. After He accomplishes His purposes against Israel and Judah, He will judge Assyria.



SET THE SCENE

Assyria's War Crimes and Atrocities

Assyria brutally mistreated its enemies and reveled in torture. Archaeologists have found many ancient inscriptions, carvings, and annals celebrating this wanton violence.



Where else in the Bible do we see this transition between God's words of warning and promises of restoration?

THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL WILL RETURN (10:20–34)

Though God's people will suffer many things, He will restore a remnant. This restoration to the land will take place in the distant future, when a remnant will return to Judah from Babylonian exile.

THE RIGHTEOUS REIGN OF THE BRANCH (11:1–16)

When God returns His exiled people to their land, He will raise up a Branch from the family line of Jesse (King David's father). This righteous King will not only bring peace but also restore creation.

THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH AND MY SONG (12:1–6)

God's people will sing a new song when they return from exile. We will sing it in the new creation at Christ's second coming, and in the meantime, we praise God for His wonderful acts toward us in Christ.

Oracles About the Nations (13:1–23:18)

Isaiah continues with eleven oracles, or prophecies, against surrounding foreign nations. This section warns of the day of the Lord, which is ultimately Christ returning on the Last Day to judge the whole world.

THE JUDGMENT OF BABYLON (13:1–22)

VISUALIZE



WAYPOINT

What does this text show us?

Just as God had used Assyria to punish Israel's sins, He will use Babylon to punish wicked Assyria and Jerusalem. Isaiah further prophesies that Babylon will also be destroyed one day and laid desolate by the Medes (or Persians).



How could those who believed Isaiah's message find comfort in the promised destruction of Babylon?



Babylon came to represent all of Satan's evil rule in this world. How does Jesus' death and resurrection assure the downfall of Satan's kingdom?



Looking into your different vocations or places of responsibility in life, how can you share the hope of the Gospel to people in your life right now?



What are some things our society holds up as Day Stars for us—that is, things that promise to provide everything we will ever need?

What does this text reveal about God's plan of salvation?

In the centuries to come, one empire will replace another. Yet God makes all these events advance His plan of salvation. During this rise and fall of empires, the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem and bring about God's kingdom.

What does this text uncover about our identity and calling as God's people today?

All who refuse to confess their sin and who die apart from faith in Christ will experience the eternal torment of hell. This message spurs us on to share the Gospel with everyone God has placed in our lives.

THE RESTORATION OF JACOB (14:1–2)

Despite the pain and destruction that the Babylonians will cause, God promises to bring His exiles back to their land and restore their fortunes, giving them a position of privilege above their enemies.

ISRAEL'S REMNANT TAUNTS BABYLON (14:3–23)

After Assyria and Babylon fall, all their arrogant boasts about their gods' power over the true God will be revealed as folly.



CLEAR THE CONFUSION

Why did Isaiah refer to the king of Babylon as the Day Star (v. 12)?

The Day Star is the planet Venus, which is seen at early dawn at certain times of the year. Before reaching its summit, the sun rises and Venus's glory disappears. Likewise, the king of Babylon would never replace the true God.

AN ORACLE CONCERNING ASSYRIA (14:24–27)

This oracle is against Assyria, whom God will bring low after using them to serve only His epic purposes.

AN ORACLE CONCERNING PHILISTIA (14:28–32)

This prophecy confronts the Philistines for rejoicing at the apparent downfall of Judah under the onslaught of the Assyrians. God will defend Judah, but the Philistines will be destroyed by Assyria's advance.

AN ORACLE CONCERNING MOAB (15:1–16:14)

The Moabites will suffer God's punishment within three years of this prophecy. Yet, in this oracle, God promises the Messiah, who will come one day for all who believe in God's promises (16:5).

AN ORACLE CONCERNING DAMASCUS (17:1–14)

Because Syria has allied itself with the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Assyria will destroy Damascus and Samaria, the capitals of both nations. Yet a remnant of Gentile Syrians will remain to await the coming Messiah.

AN ORACLE CONCERNING CUSH (18:1–7)

Cush, south of Egypt, will not need to fight the Assyrians because Israel's God will cut down the invaders Himself. One day, the people of Cush will bring tribute to Zion, showing God's promise is for all nations.

AN ORACLE CONCERNING EGYPT (19:1–15)

Egypt attempts to stand up against the Assyrian invasion. Yet Egypt's hope is foolish because they trust in their false gods. Though they offer resistance against the Assyrians, they cannot stand against God.

EGYPT, ASSYRIA, ISRAEL BLESSED (19:16–25)

Isaiah prophesies a future age when God will discipline the Egyptians and they will worship Him alone. Even more, so will the Assyrians, and God's peace will be on all these currently warring nations.

A SIGN AGAINST EGYPT AND CUSH (20:1–6)

Judah looks to Egypt and Cush for protection from Assyria. Isaiah prophesies that they will be captured and led into exile by the Assyrians. God's people must look to Him alone for rescue from their enemies.



Why was Egypt a vain hope for Judah? What are some vain hopes people rely on today?



CLEAR THE CONFUSION

Why did Isaiah walk naked and barefoot for three years?

This sign warned Judah that they would also be stripped naked, beaten, and led into captivity by the Assyrians if they did not trust God for rescue. Blessedly, King Hezekiah heeded Isaiah's message and God saved them from Assyria.



PICTURE OF THE SAVIOR

Nakedness: Isaiah and Jesus

The Gospels do not state that Jesus was naked on the cross, but that was common practice in Roman crucifixions. This is clearly implied in John 19:23–24, when the soldiers divided Jesus' garments and cast lots for His tunic.



Why would the exiles of Judah be happy when they heard the news “Fallen is Babylon!”? Think of a time God delivered you from great peril.

FALLEN, FALLEN IS BABYLON (21:1–17)

The prophecies continue with oracles against Babylon, Dumah (Edom), and Arabia. The Babylonian prophecy speaks to the more distant future, while the prophecies against Edom and Arabia are more imminent.

AN ORACLE CONCERNING JERUSALEM (22:1–25)

After many prophecies against foreign nations, God turns to His people in Jerusalem. God calls out their past and present sins, showing they, too, will suffer His judgment.



SET THE SCENE

Hezekiah's Tunnel

Isaiah mentions a water system Hezekiah built during the siege for Jerusalem. Archaeologists uncovered a system of springs and reservoirs into Jerusalem. This famous “Hezekiah's Tunnel” is a popular tourist destination to this day.

AN ORACLE CONCERNING TYRE AND SIDON (23:1–18)

These northern neighbors of Israel had often been political allies of God's people, but they worshiped false gods and often led God's people astray. Their great trade wealth is compared to prostitution.

Cosmic Judgment (24:1–27:13)

This next section shows both God's ultimate judgment on the whole earth and the redemption of God's people in the person and work of Christ. This section offers us a unique and poignant view of our messianic hope!

JUDGMENT ON THE WHOLE EARTH (24:1–23)

The scene shifts to the final judgment. Isaiah makes it clear that no unbeliever will escape God's wrath. The sins of the world will be punished, and God will reveal His ultimate glory at the end of the age.

LINK BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

The End Times (Isaiah 24 → Matthew 25:31–46)

Isaiah and Jesus both talked of a final end-times judgment brought about by God's angel armies. All people deserve punishment for our sins. But Jesus bore our punishment on the cross, so God will not punish us as we deserve.

GOD WILL SWALLOW UP DEATH FOREVER (25:1–12)

God reveals His righteous salvation for His people. Those who trust God's promises of salvation and rescue by faith will ultimately be saved from His wrath on the Last Day and freed from eternal death.



How did God swallow up death forever on Mount Calvary through Jesus' cross and empty tomb?

YOU KEEP HIM IN PERFECT PEACE (26:1–21)

God removes His people's enemies and gives the world peace. God's people, claimed by Christ, will rise to new, eternal life in the new creation, and those who oppose God will be no more.

THE REDEMPTION OF ISRAEL (27:1-13)

 VISUALIZE

