

# Daily Reading Guide to Isaiah



**Day 1: Isaiah 1-4** | Welcome to the book of Isaiah. The opening chapters summarise the general tone and content of the whole book. It plays out a bit like a court-room drama: Judah is in the dock, and God is the prosecutor presenting a case against them using powerful rhetoric and imagery. Their crime? Breaking the covenant in many ways. The appropriate punishment? The removal of God's protection and presence leading to exile and destruction. But God's judgement here leads to restoration: the redemption of the people, the renewal of the covenant and, ultimately, the reconciling of the whole world to a place of peace. *Where do you see the themes of love and justice in these chapters? How do you understand the relationship between the two?*

**Day 2: Isaiah 5** | God looks for “good government and decision-making and a proper exercise of power” but sees only “bloodshed and oppression”, and for people “to be faithful and do right by God and other people” but sees only “unfair treatment and anguish”. In each pair, the second term is spelt almost the same as the first. It is that easy for the good to go bad. The rest of the chapter gives examples. *Where might a modern Isaiah see examples in our lives and the world today?*

**Day 3: Isaiah 6** | Isaiah is confronted with both God's holiness and Judah's impurity. He volunteers to do something about this problem and is tasked with warning the people of God's judgement. Notice the timing: King Uzziah has just died. A period of peace and prosperity was ending. The future was uncertain. But Uzziah's throne is not empty; God sits on it, and rules over the situation. *How would you describe Isaiah's prophetic mission? In what ways is it a tragic one?*



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**Day 4: Isaiah 7:1-9:7** | This narrative shows the political turmoil Judah faced. Neighbouring Israel (sometimes called Ephraim) and Aram want Judah to help them fight Assyria. When King Ahaz resists their pressure, they threaten to invade. Ahaz is offered a sign (the birth of a child) to reassure him of God's presence. However, Ahaz rejects this and turns instead to witchcraft to help him with this conspiracy. As a result, exile is prophesied. But restoration is also promised alongside; a new child will eventually be born who will represent God's renewed favour.

**Day 5: Isaiah 9:8-10:34** | Isaiah tells Judah to learn from Israel's experience. They rejected the covenant, became arrogant and unjust, and allied themselves with other nations. Consequently, God was using Assyria as a 'club' against them. Isaiah suggests this was redemptive; designed to encourage Israel to lean on God once more. If Judah could trust God for help against Assyria, they will be saved from a similar fate. *Yahweh is known as a God who is 'slow to anger' - how do you see that characteristic in this passage?*

**Day 6: Isaiah 11-12** | Isaiah prophesies the redemption and restoration of both Israel and Judah. It will be like a second Exodus. A righteous leader will be raised up, peace and prosperity will flourish, and the nations will recognise and worship Yahweh. This is a future well worth singing about.

**Day 7: Isaiah 13-16** | Over the next few chapters, Isaiah begins to describe God's sovereignty over foreign nations. Despite the apparent might of Babylon, Assyria, Philistia and Moab, God is actually still in control of their fates. Therefore, Judah should trust in God. *What do you notice about those who are warned and those who are comforted in these chapters?*

**Day 8: Isaiah 17-21** | Now God's sovereignty over Damascus, Ethiopia, Egypt, Babylon, Edom and Arabia is in the spotlight. Note, though, that God's desire is not to destroy these foreign nations, but to redeem them; to adopt them as children alongside Israel and Judah. *How do you think the people of Judah would have responded to this idea?*

**Day 9: Isaiah 22-24** | God's sovereignty over Jerusalem is explored. Judgement is pronounced over Judah's failure to trust God, upon certain arrogant and self-seeking officials, and upon poorly chosen allies (Tyre). Isaiah summarises his prophesies about the nations by concluding that all of creation has become corrupted. Echoing the story of Noah he pronounces judgement over the whole of heaven and earth.

**Day 10: Isaiah 25-27** | The gloomy description of the world being 'utterly broken' is suddenly replaced by a vision of a world made new. First Judah, then Israel, and finally all people will be renewed. God's judgement will be revealed as a tool of salvation: a means of saving the world from the powers of chaos and darkness, depicted as the sea monster Leviathan. There are lots of allusions here to key stories, ideas and images in Genesis 1-3. *Which ones can you identify?*

**Day 11: Isaiah 28-29** | The process of restorative judgement in the previous chapters is now described as destruction and exile. Notice that this is brought on by the religious and political rulers' rejection of God; scheming, lying, even making deals with death! Despite their unfaithfulness, God desires to bring about justice, righteousness and renewal.

**Day 12: Isaiah 30-31** | This prophecy relates to a point in time when Egypt is trying to persuade Judah's new King, Hezekiah, to ally with them against Assyria. Isaiah repeats his central message once again: God is sovereign, not any of the nations - trust Yahweh, not Pharaoh!

**Day 13: Isaiah 32-33** | The Assyrian drama is forgotten briefly here. Instead, Isaiah offers a more universal message about the fate of the wicked and righteous. Importantly, forgiveness from iniquity is promised for the first time in the book. Redemption is also described as coming with the outpouring of 'a spirit from on high'. These themes will become increasingly significant in later chapters. These chapters relate to Psalm 1. *How many echoes can you identify?*

**Day 14: Isaiah 34-35** | Isaiah's universal message continues. Several patterns of reversal are used to express God's sovereignty: the strongholds of the world will be destroyed whilst God's Holy City will be renewed. Edom (the land of the 'unchosen') will become a wasteland, whilst God's chosen shall be rescued out of that wilderness. The blind will see, the lame dance, and the mute sing. This prophecy was all intended as 'good news' for Judah but how do you read it? *Which bits seem like good news and which like bad?*

**Day 15: Isaiah 36-39** | Here, chapters 1-39 reach their climax. The moment has come: Assyria is knocking on Jerusalem's gates. Hezekiah is told to surrender or perish. What will he do? Amazingly, he listens to Isaiah and trusts in God. In response, as promised, God is sovereign and saves them; not a single Assyrian arrow is fired, instead the army retreats and their king is soon dead. Unfortunately, despite trusting in God here for rescue, and later for his own healing, Hezekiah grows arrogant. He shows off to the Babylonians who, ironically, will later operate as God's new tool of judgement against Hezekiah's unfaithful successors.



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**Day 16 Isaiah 40-41** | Around 150 eventful years pass between chapters 39 and 40. The Babylonian army has sacked Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and taken many of the elite Jewish leaders into exile in Babylon. The tone of voice changes: the repeated first words, 'comfort, comfort,' portray an insistent assurance that God will bring his people home; both literally for the original exiled audience, and metaphorically for all people.

**Day 17 Isaiah 42-43** | The new hope is based on an unnamed figure, the 'Faithful Servant.' At the time they probably had Cyrus, the King of Persia in mind, or maybe it was a metaphor for the renewed nation of Israel. Later, Christians would see Jesus in these words. The restoration is for the creation too; the author seems to have a fondness for jackals and ostriches. *What other creation motifs can you see in the text?*

**Day 18 Isaiah 44-46** | In a world of many supernatural powers often called gods, who is the only one who deserves to be designated God? Israel knows that it is Yahweh, who creates the universe and fashions them into God's servant. Others are idols, created and carried by human beings, whereas Yahweh creates and carries them even though they do not deserve it. But God also works through others, even if unacknowledged. The pagan king Cyrus is called God's anointed - the same word as messiah! *Why is Cyrus described as the anointed one?*



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**Day 19 Isaiah 47** | If we are feasting on the book of Isaiah this month, this chapter might be a bit of gristle that we need to spit out. It was a common thing back then to imagine a city as a woman - a bit like we do for ships today. This chapter is a poem of spiteful revenge against the city of Babylon, which is unhelpfully written as a poem about sexual violence towards a woman. God is rarely mentioned in the poem, and the Hebrew text looks like these were added later. *What we do with texts like this? Is God really like that, or has the author fundamentally misunderstood God's nature?*

**Day 20 Isaiah 48** | This section is full of references back to the Exodus; God's liberation of people from slavery. The commands to 'go out' and 'flee' are the same as in Exodus 12. *What other Exodus references can you spot in this section?*

**Day 21 Isaiah 49-50** | In vv. 1-6 the Faithful Servant speaks; they will restore not just the tribes of Judah, but will also be a light and salvation for all of the nations. *The bodily nature of the Servant is emphasised - what body parts can you see in the text?*

**Day 22 Isaiah 51** | This poem has three well balanced stanzas of encouragement, followed by three prayers asking God to wake up and help (the third merges into chapter 52) them once more, like in the old days. Rahab (v.9) is another name for Leviathan, the sea monster from chapter 27 that symbolised chaos and destruction. When Jesus commanded the stormy sea to be quiet it was a new chapter of the struggle with Rahab. *What other images of rescue from chaos are used here?*

**Day 23 Isaiah 52-53** | God's people are being oppressed. In their suffering they have forgotten God, but God will not forget them. Isaiah portrays himself as a messenger of peace and hope, the 'Suffering Servant.' He suffers not on behalf of the people, but with them, even though he does not need to do so. He is God with them, showing them what God is like. That is what in retrospect enabled the early Christians to see what God was doing in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. *Which aspects of the Suffering Servant texts have been also applied to Jesus?*

**Day 24 Isaiah 54** | In previous chapters creation has been commanded to sing for joy. And now Jerusalem, the sacked city, symbolised as an infertile woman, is invited to sing too. A bigger tent will be needed, things are looking up. *What other signs of redemption can you see in the text?*

**Day 25 Isaiah 55** | This chapter has a different literary style, very similar in feel and content to Proverbs 9.1-6, where God is depicted as the woman Wisdom (*Hokma* in Hebrew, *Sophia* in Greek) who invites people to a feast. Grace is freely given. *Can you see the connections with the text in Proverbs - and the way that Jesus uses this language?*

**Day 26 Isaiah 56-57** | The third and final major section of Isaiah begins here. The Persians, led by Cyrus, have defeated the Babylonians and some of the Jewish people have returned from their exile. But now that they are home and can begin rebuilding, they are immediately commanded to be gracious towards outsiders. *Can you see the demands for inclusivity in the text?*

**Day 27 Isaiah 58-59** | It is too easy to call people hypocrites. It is possible to seek God genuinely through worship, prayer and fasting but still get things wrong. People hear God's promises and expect God to honour them through a proper exercise of power and by being faithful and doing right by them (see chapter 5). But they do not behave in that way themselves. When even religious people are like that, we are all trapped, groping in darkness. But God will act, and will sustain the prophetic voice in every generation. *Where are we called to be God's mouthpiece today?*

**Day 28 Isaiah 60-62** | God will act to restore God's people who have been scattered, to bring them home. In chapter 61 Isaiah describes his message and ministry, proclaiming good news. In Luke 4, Jesus quotes these verses as a summary and foretaste of his ministry, but he cuts short what we now denote as verse 2. *Why do you think he stops the quotation where he does? Was he allowed to do that?*

**Day 29 Isaiah 63-64** | This is a long psalm of lament and penitence that may have been written to be used as worship liturgy in the Jerusalem temple as it is slowly rebuilt, an honest recognition that things have been terrible. *Can you see any evidence for this Temple worship setting in the text?*

**Day 30 Isaiah 65-66** | The book ends with a beautiful vision of a new heaven and a new earth. Isaiah extends the scope of the rescue from exile once again; not just for his contemporaries in Babylon, but for all people and all of creation. *Can you see the connections with Revelation 21-22?*



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