

Through the Bible - Isaiah 13-39

Background

- [SLIDE] Isaiah served as prophet during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh (739-685 BCE)
- He was alive during the destruction of Samaria and the exile of the Northern Tribes
- He was alive when the Assyrians defeated the Babylonians, and when they later destroyed Babylon.
- [SLIDE] Here is the world of his day.

Chapter 13

- Day of the Lord
- Medes — did not happen until 539 BCE, 150-200 years later

Chapter 14

- The LORD promises to have compassion on Israel again and settle them in their land again
 - This is the most often repeated prophecy in the Bible.
- Strangers will attach themselves to the Jewish people. This is a common refrain in the prophets, especially in Isaiah.
 - Why?
 - Deuteronomy 4:5-8 — 5 “See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you are to do these things in the land where you are entering to take possession of it. 6 So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ 7 For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him? 8 Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole Law which I am setting before you today?”
- Star of the morning
 - The reference is to Venus, the planet that appears in the early morning sky
 - The Hebrew term here is הֵלֵל, hēlāl, meaning "Shining One"
 - That is translated into Latin as “lucifer” meaning “Shining One”
 - 2 Peter 1:19 — And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.
 - The connection of this text to Satan comes from the Church Father Origen (around 200 CE) and is not found in the scriptures themselves.
 - The plain meaning of the text is a reference to the king of Babylon. Most scholars say Isaiah is referring to the later king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar II, who destroyed the Temple, or to Nabonidus, the king under which Babylon was defeated by the Medes and Persians.
- Judgement on other nations:

- Assyria
 - Isaiah 14:25 — Then his yoke will be removed from them
 - Yoke as a reference to the rule of a king.
 - Where else have we heard that?
 - 1 Kings 12:14 — Jeroboam — “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions!”
 - Matthew 11:28–30 — “Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is comfortable, and My burden is light.”
- Philistia
 - 14:28 — “In the year that King Ahaz died” == 716 BCE
 - Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah

Chapters 15-16

- Continuing the rebuke against the nations at the end of Ahaz’s reign — Moab
- 16:5 — Hezekiah, but also Messiah

Chapter 17

- [SLIDE] Damascus — The Arameans / Aram / Syria

Chapter 18

- Cush — Rashi connects this prophecy to Ezekiel 38:5 and the Battle of Gog and Magog, the battle of the nations against God’s Anointed (the Messiah)
- 18:7 — Gift of tribute — see Zechariah 14, which also talks about the after-effects of the battle against the Messiah

Chapter 19

- Note the irony of Egypt being oppressed and needing a savior.
- 19:20 — Who will be their savior and champion? Yeshua!
- Again, after the battle against Messiah, the nations will live in peace, and “Israel will be... a blessing in the midst of the earth.” (19:24)
 - [READ Genesis 12:1–3]

Chapter 20

- 713 BCE — “In the year that the commander came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him and he fought against Ashdod and captured it,”
- “Commander” is literally “Tartan” תַּרְתָּן — this is an Assyrian title for “commander in chief”

- God told Isaiah to go “naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and symbol against Egypt and Cush”
- That’s commitment!

Chapter 21

- Back to prophesying about the destruction of Babylon by Media and Elam
- Arabia, as well
 - 21:16-17 — Kedar = A northern portion of Arabia, occupied by the nomadic descendants of Ishmael

Chapter 22

- [SLIDE] “The valley of vision.” Jerusalem, the center of all prophecies. (Ibn Ezra, Rashi)
- 22:8 — “house of the forest” is a reference to Solomon’s Palace
 - 1 Kings 7:1–3 — Now Solomon built his own house over the course of thirteen years, and he finished all of his house. 2 He built the house of the timber from Lebanon; its length was a hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits, on four rows of cedar pillars with cedar beams on the pillars. 3 And it was paneled with cedar above the side chambers which were on the forty-five pillars, fifteen in each row.
 - The LORD is angry at the Judahites for relying on the king and his weapons instead of on the LORD of armies
- 22:9 - “waters in the lower pool” - The Pool of Shiloach, which Hezekiah built
- 22:11 — “The old pool” - The rock cut pool where the waters of the Gihon Spring were originally collected.
- All that, and you didn’t rely on the God who made the spring originally.
- Shebna the scribe
 - This prophecy seems to be a bit out of place, possibly supposed to be located after the events in chapter 36, which we will talk about in a bit.
 - Shebna was the scribe under Hezekiah. He apparently used his position to benefit himself, even cutting out a nice tomb for himself and bought “splendid chariots.”
 - God says that he will depose Shebna and replace him with Eliakim.
 - That is Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, who was in charge of the household, who also plays a role in chapter 36.

Chapter 23

- [SLIDE] Judgement on Tyre

Chapter 24

- 24:5 — The earth is also defiled by its inhabitants, for they violated laws, altered statutes, and broke the everlasting covenant.
 - Ibn Ezra (1100 CE) says this is “The laws of God, contained in the natural order of things”

- It is a reference to the commandments and the covenant that God gave to Noah, the representative of all humanity after the Flood.
- We often see the Temple being defiled by the sins of Israel. Here we see the entire earth being defiled because of the sins of humanity.
- We all have laws and statutes to follow, even Gentiles.

Chapter 25

- **[READ 25:6-9]**
- *Yeshuato* — His Salvation

Chapter 26

- A beautiful psalm expressing a desire for God

Chapter 27

- **[SLIDE]** Verse 1 — Rashi connects the three creatures described here to verse 13
 - “And I say that these are three important nations: Egypt, Assyria, and Edom.”
 - leviathan the fleeing serpent = Egypt.
 - leviathan the crooked serpent = Assyria.
 - the dragon that is in the sea: That is Tyre, that is the head of the children of Esau, and it is situated in the heart of the seas, and so Kittim [Cyprus] are called the islands of the sea, and they are the Greeks.
- Verses 12-13 - from <https://ffoz.org/messiah/articles/the-jewish-version-of-the-rapture>
 - Isaiah connected the ingathering of the exiles and their return to the land of Israel with the sounding of a trumpet:
 - **[READ 27:12-13]**
 - Ezekiel connected the ingathering of the exiles with the coming of the Messiah in a passage that speaks of God returning the Jewish people to their land and appointing a Davidic king over the nation. Notice how the prophet used the name “David” as a title for Messiah:
 - Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land ... And one king shall be king over them all ... My servant David shall be king over them. (Ezekiel 37:21–24)
 - Based on these and many other similar prophecies, Jewish eschatology firmly links the ingathering of the exiles with the trumpet of Messiah, the coming of Messiah, and the final redemption. The Messiah will gather up all the scattered children of Israel from the four corners of the earth and return them to the promised land.
 - Yeshua invoked all these messianic expectations and directly alluded to these prophecies when he said that the Son of Man would “send forth His angels with a great trumpet blast, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other” (Matthew 24:31 NASB). His “elect” are not “the

Christians,” as replacement theology assumes, but the chosen people: the people of Israel.

- This is all, once again, connected to the Day of the LORD we talked about before.

Chapter 28

- The captivity of the Northern Kingdom is foretold.
- Judah is warned not to be haughty.
 - Isaiah 28:16 — Behold, I am laying a stone in Zion, a tested stone, A precious cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. The one who believes in it will not be disturbed.
 - Paul connects this stone to Messiah in Romans 9:33

Chapter 29

- Ariel = “lion of God” == a poetic name for Jerusalem
- A prophecy against Jerusalem
- But only the LORD is allowed to bring distress to Jerusalem, not their enemies.

Context

- The next few chapters are all within the context of the Assyrian attacks on Israel during the days of Hezekiah. We’ll talk about it more in chapter 37, but the key is that Sennacherib is leading his army south through Judah, attacking the fortified cities and destroying them. He’s headed to Jerusalem.

Chapter 30

- A warning against alliance with Egypt
- Note the irony — the LORD redeemed the nation of Israel out of Egypt, now they go looking for an alliance with Egypt instead of relying on the LORD.
- Isaiah 30:15 — “In repentance and rest you will be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength.”
 - The same is still true today!
- The focus turns back to the effect of that repentance: The Messianic Age
- **[READ Isaiah 30:18]**
 - Don’t let anyone say that there is no grace in the “Old Testament”!
- Isaiah 30:20–21 — He, your Teacher, will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will see your Teacher. 21 Your ears will hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk in it,” whenever you turn to the right or to the left.
- Verse 26 - The age of Messiah!
 - See also Isaiah 60:20 — “Your sun will no longer set, Nor will your moon wane; For you will have the LORD as an everlasting light, And the days of your mourning will be over.
- Verse 27 through the end of the chapter = The judgement of the LORD on the nations who oppressed Israel

Chapter 31

- Continuing the warning against an alliance with Egypt

Chapter 32

- A picture of the peace of the rule under Hezekiah
 - v. 1 “a king will reign righteously, and officials will rule justly.”
- But also a picture of the future age of Messiah!
- **[READ Isaiah 32:17]**

Chapter 33

- More judgement on the nations that bring destruction on Israel.
- **[READ 33: 14-15]** So true!

Chapter 34

- Even More judgement on the nations that bring destruction on Israel.

Chapter 35

- But the future looks bright! Again, a prophecy about the coming Messianic Kingdom.
- Noticing a pattern yet? The nation of Israel is being struck, but God will bring redemption, and the future is one where the nation is secure in the Land of Israel, the Land God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Chapters 36-37

- This story is also covered in 2 Kings 18-19
- 21 years before, the previous king of Assyria, Sargon, had defeated the Northern Kingdom, destroyed Samaria, and taken the Israelites captive.
- After Sargon died in 705 BCE, Sennacherib came to power. The Babylonians started a rebellion, led by a man named Merodach-Baladan. Merodach visited Jerusalem in 704 BCE, and King Hezekiah gave him the grand tour, even showing him the riches of the kingdom. He apparently thought Merodach was a potential rival to Sennacherib, but the Assyrian King had other plans. He put down the Babylonian rebellion quickly in 703 BCE, then he started to consolidate his rule and hold to account those who had been chummy with the Babylonians, including Judah.
- Sennacherib started marching through Judah, attacking and destroying every fortified city.
- **[SLIDE]** Hezekiah had seen this attack coming, and had been preparing Jerusalem before it started.
 - He blocked off all the springs outside Jerusalem to ensure the invading army would have a hard time finding water.
 - He extended the city to the western hill, and built 7-meter (21 feet!) thick walls and towers around the city to fortify it.

- [SLIDE] He dug a tunnel (now called Hezekiah’s Tunnel) under the City of David to re-route the Gihon spring to a new pool, within the city walls. The tunnel was rediscovered in 1838.
- [SLIDE] This is the inside of the tunnel.
- For many years there were questions about how residents of the Northern part of the city would be able to get water once it was flowing down to the Pool of Shiloach. In 2022 researchers published a paper in Archaeological Discovery describing new evidence they found in the tunnel pointing to the location of a [SLIDE] sluice gate about 232 feet (71 meters) from the exit. In that location, archaeologists found iron bolts that were sunk into the bedrock in a vertical pattern, with traces of petrified wood (probably cedar). The researchers postulate that the bolts were used to secure the frame of a sluice gate, a kind of moveable dam, made out of wood to the walls. The gate would have held back the water in the tunnel to a higher level, allowing residents to collect water more easily from the surface via a vertical shaft found a short distance back in the tunnel, as well as via Warren’s Shaft closer to the beginning of the tunnel. (<https://armstronginstitute.org/724-an-ingenuous-sluice-gate-in-hezekiahs-tunnel-revealed-by-new-research>)
- [SLIDE] Meanwhile, Sennacherib finally reached Lachish, one of the most well-fortified cities in Judah. The siege of Lachish is very well documented, not only in the Bible, but also in the [SLIDE] Lachish reliefs from the Assyrian South-West Palace of Sennacherib in Nineveh
- [SLIDE] Siege engines attacking the city, and sling balls found within the city.
- [SLIDE] Captured Jews building siege ramp and being killed.
- [SLIDE] "Sennacherib, King of the world, King of Assyria, on a throne he sat and the booty of Lachish passed before him."
- v. 1 — “In the 14th year of King Hezekiah” = 701 BCE
- v. 2 — “And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem to King Hezekiah with a large army.”
 - Rabshakeh is not a name. רַב־שָׁקֵה *Rav Shakeh* is a title, one of the highest positions in the Assyrian and Babylonian royal courts. The Rabshakeh Stela, on display at the Biblical Lands Museum in Jerusalem, chronicles another Assyrian official with this title who lived about a century and a half before the Bible’s Rabshakeh (859–825 BCE). (<https://armstronginstitute.org/209-the-rabshakeh-stela>)
 - There is some Talmudic speculation that the Rav Shakeh may have been an Israelite who turned to the dark side (joined the Assyrians) due to his knowledge of Hebrew and of the religious reforms of Hezekiah.
- [SLIDE] The Rav-Shakeh came to the city and stood “by the conduit of the upper pool on the road to the fuller’s field”
 - Not sure exactly where that location was. It’s also mentioned in another context in Isaiah 7.
 - Likely either on the Northern end of the city, or on the eastern side by the Kidron Valley
- Three of Hezekiah’s advisors spoke to the Rav-Shakeh from the walls of the City:
 - Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, who was over the household
 - Shebna the scribe

- Joah the son of Asaph, the secretary
- **[SLIDE]** Two beautifully crafted seal impressions belonging to Eliakim were unearthed in 2014 during renewed excavations at Lachish.
 - Seal impressions (called bullae) are made from clay, much like a wax impression you have seen in the movies. A piece of clay would be placed on the letter and pressed with a seal to indicate that it was valid. These impressions are found fairly often in various excavations, but they can be missed since they are so small.
 - The bulla does not say “Belonging to Eliakim, son of Hilkihah” as you might expect. Instead it says, “Belonging to Eliakim, Yehozarah.”
 - However, another bulla that surfaced on the antiquities market in 1974 reads, “Belonging to Yehozarah, son of Hilkihah, servant of Hezekiah.”
 - So, Hilkihah was actually Eliakim’s grandfather, and we have archaeological evidence of his existence.
- Just a side note, archaeologists have also found seal impressions of both **[SLIDE]** King Hezekiah and **[SLIDE]** the Prophet Isaiah.
- Back to the story!
- Rav-Shakeh starts telling the Jews that they are doomed and they might as well give up.
 - What’s interesting is that he is speaking to them in Hebrew, their native tongue, not Aramaic, the language of the Assyrians and of international trade at that time.
 - He tries every trick in the book. Assyria is bigger and better. Hezekiah made God mad by taking down the high places that the Jews were using and forcing them to only worship in the Temple. (This is a bad argument if you know what God thinks about the high places.) Egypt is not to be trusted, and they are not strong enough to save you. Tell you what, if you want chariots, I’ll give you 2,000 horses, assuming you have that many men who can ride. Oh, and the LORD sent me to destroy this land, so you’re just fighting against God.
- Hezekiah’s advisors told the Rav-Shakeh to stop speaking in Hebrew and talk with them in Aramaic so that the people wouldn’t be able to understand.
- But the Rav-Shakeh uses that to his advantage, and starts talking loudly to all the people who can hear him on the city walls. He tries to convince them not to listen to Hezekiah and to just give up before they are besieged.
- Note the language in verse 16 — "Surrender to me and come out to me, and eat, each one, of his vine and each of his fig tree..."
- But the people of Jerusalem trusted Hezekiah and didn’t respond to the Rav-Shakeh.
- Hezekiah’s advisors reported to him what was going on. Hezekiah tore his clothes in mourning, covered himself with sackcloth, and went to the Temple to cry out to God. He sent the advisors to find Isaiah and ask him to pray, as well.
- God’s response is clear: **[READ 37:6-7]**
- Meanwhile, the siege of Lachish was done, so the Rav-Shakeh left and went to Libnah to meet up with Sennacherib.
- Sennacherib had heard that the king of Cush was on his way to join the battle, so he tried to get Hezekiah to give up again, sending him a letter.
- Hezekiah took the letter into the Temple and placed it down in front of the LORD. God responded through Isaiah, saying: **[READ 37:30-32]**

- The Assyrians never made it back to Jerusalem. The Angel of the LORD killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers, so Sennacherib decided to go back home and lick his wounds.
- He wrote the story of this campaign in his own words on an artifact called the Taylor Prism (a.k.a. Sennacherib's Annals):
 - **[SLIDE]** "As for the king of Judah, Hezekiah, who had not submitted to my authority, I besieged and captured forty-six of his fortified cities, along with many smaller towns, taken in battle with my battering rams. ... I took as plunder 200,150 people, both small and great, male and female, along with a great number of animals including horses, mules, donkeys, camels, oxen, and sheep. As for Hezekiah, I shut him up like a caged bird in his royal city of Jerusalem.
- Isaiah 37:37-38 (and 2 Kings 19:36-37) tells us the story of how Esarhaddon became king:
 - So Sennacherib the king of Assyria departed and returned home and lived in Nineveh. Then it came about, as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword; and they escaped to the land of Ararat. And his son Esarhaddon became king in his place.
- One of the Babylonian Chronicle inscriptions (ABC 1 iii 34-35) tells us the story from the Assyrian viewpoint:
 - On the twentieth day of the month Tevet, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, was killed by his son in a rebellion. For twenty-four years Sennacherib ruled Assyria. After the twentieth day of the month Tevet the rebellion continued in Assyria until the second day of the month Addar. On the eighteenth day of the month Addar Esarhaddon, his son, ascended the throne in Assyria.
 - <https://www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-1-from-nabu-nasir-to-samas-suma-ukin/abc-1.iii/>

Chapter 38

- This chapter tells the story of how Hezekiah became ill and almost died, and how God made the sun go backwards in the sky as a sign that he would recover. This is also covered in 2 Kings 20, and you can hear Mark's telling of this story in the recording from that class.

Chapter 39

- This chapter appears, according to the best timeline I can create, to be out of sequence.
- It tells the story of Merodach-Baladan, and how Hezekiah showed him all of the treasures of Jerusalem.
- The LORD told Hezekiah through Isaiah that because he had done that, the treasures of Jerusalem would eventually be taken by the Babylonians. We'll learn about that soon.

Final Thoughts

- Themes we see in Isaiah:
 - The nations come to fight against Judah and Israel
 - Sometimes that is due to the wickedness of the Israelites, and sometimes it is not.

- [SLIDE] Regardless, throughout the book we see Hashem remind the Jewish people that:
 - 1. They are His chosen people
 - 2. He does not break His covenants.
 - 3. He will always bring them back to their land.
 - 4. The future reign of King Messiah will be a time of peace and prosperity.
 - 5. In that future age, the nations will join with the Jewish People to worship the King.
- Next week, we will look at Micah & Nahum
- Our only class in March will be on March 20, on the book of Zephaniah
- Please sign up for the Passover Experience on March 27.
- Then we'll be back again with classes every week in April.