

# Bible Reading Notes

## Isaiah 13-27

### How to use these Bible reading notes

These Bible reading notes are a resource to help you dig into God's word and allow it to change your life. 'A little and often' is a good motto. If you miss a day (or several!), don't feel guilty or try to catch up; just pick up wherever the notes have got to. Here's a guide to get the most out of these notes:

1. Find a time and place where you can be quiet but awake.
2. Ask God to help you understand.
3. Use the notes to help you think about the passage:
  - *'Read' sections get you thinking for yourself about the verses.*
  - *'Apply' sections suggest how they make a difference to you and how to pray in response.*
4. Pray about what you have read.
5. Look for an opportunity to share with someone what God has told you.

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*These notes are easy to install on most phones or tablets. Install the 'PrayerMate' App and you'll find it under 'subscribe to online feeds' and 'Devotional'. It's called St Philemon's Bible Notes. If you have any problems, email [miriam@stphilemons.co.uk](mailto:miriam@stphilemons.co.uk).*

## **Introduction to Isaiah**

Isaiah writes hundreds of years before Jesus was born. God's people at the time were a nation called Judah, who were rebelling against God and ignoring him.

Isaiah warns them of God's world-changing judgment to come – both in history and final end-of-time judgment. He also explains some of the glorious salvation that Jesus would achieve, and the glories of end-of-time salvation.

# 1

Isaiah gives us a glimpse into what God will do to Babylon, the nation who will attack and exile his people, Judah, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.

## **Read Isaiah 13:1-5**

- Who is God summoning?
- Why is God summoning them? What is God's attitude towards the people they're going to attack?

## **Read Isaiah 13v6-8**

- What will it be like to face this army?
- How do you think knowing that God sent them makes it worse?

## **Apply**

This destruction is going to fall on Babylon (the enemy of God's people) not on God's people. Isaiah is writing as if God's people are watching Babylon's fall from the side-lines.

- What does this show us about how God deals with his enemies?

It's easy to fear God's enemies. But this passage gives us a picture of their fate on the day Jesus returns.

- How does this help us not to be scared of those who oppose God?

# 1

God continues to describe what it will be like on “the day of the Lord” when his judgment falls. The picture has expanded from the nation of Babylon to the whole of the world at the end of time.

## **Read Isaiah 13:9-16**

Darkness is a common picture for God’s anger in the Bible.

- Who is God’s anger against in v9-11? Why?
- What would it be like to face God’s anger?

Verse 10 and 13 did not actually happen but are picture language to describe Babylon’s judgment.

- How do they help us understand how serious the judgment against Babylon was?

Lots of prophecies in Isaiah use picture language to point to both actual events in history and far bigger future events.

- How do v9-16 help us understand what the final “day of the Lord” when Jesus returns will be like?

## **Apply**

- How does this help us understand God’s attitude to evil better?

This is the anger of God that Jesus has saved us from if we trust in him.

- Spend time thanking God for Jesus.

### 3

God describes the downfall of Babylon (Judah's oppressors) and explains why he will destroy them.

#### **Read Isaiah 13:17-14:2**

- The Medes were the nation who would invade and conquer Babylon in 539BC. What will the Medes' invasion be like? (v17-19)
- Isaiah gives us a picture of Babylon's future in v20-22 – what does this show us about their destruction?
- Why did God overthrow Babylon (14v1-2)? What was the result for God's people?
- How do you think God's people would feel reading this?

#### **Apply**

Some of these promises have already been kept but we are still waiting for some;

- The promise that the Medes would invade Babylon was kept in 539BC. How does that give us confidence in the rest of what God promises?

God's judgment on Babylon meant rescue for God's people, Judah, and God's judgment on Jesus means rescue for those who trust him.

- Thank God for saving you through judgment.

## 4

Here we see the response of God's people and the rest of the world to Babylon's destruction.

### **Read Isaiah 14:3-6**

- What has happened to Babylon?
- Why is that good news for God's people?

### **Read 14:7-8**

- How does creation feel about Babylon's downfall? Why?

### **Read 14:9-11**

- How does Babylon's destination compare to that of other nations and their kings?

### **Apply**

- What forces threaten to oppress and destroy God's people today? Maybe think about the church all around the world.

Babylon would have seemed like the most powerful enemy, who could never be defeated.

- How does this passage give you confidence that God will ultimately deliver his people?
- How does that help when you face suffering and trouble for belonging to God now?

## 5

Isaiah helps us understand more why Babylon will be judged.

### **Read Isaiah 14:12-14**

- What was Babylon's attitude?

### **Read 14:15-20**

- How does their situation compare to where they tried to put themselves?
- God compares Babylon to a corpse that doesn't even get a proper burial but is thrown away and trampled on like rubbish. How does that reinforce how bad Babylon's situation is?

### **Read 14:21-23**

- How complete is Babylon's destruction? Why?

### **Apply**

- This passage gives us an insight into what was so bad about Babylon. How bad do you think their proud attitude really is?
- How much does God hate self-promoting pride?

We are not Babylon, but sometimes we are tempted to think a bit like them. Why not take time to say sorry to God for when you are tempted to be proud and promote yourself?

## 6

The Assyrians and Philistines are both enemies of God's people.

### **Read Isaiah 14:24-27**

- What will happen to Assyria? Why is that good news for God's people?
- How certain is God's plan?
- How would this have helped God's people to trust him?

### **Read Isaiah 14:28-32**

Ahaz, the "rod that struck" Philistia, is dead.

- What will God do to the Philistines now?
- Who is that good news for?

### **Apply**

1 Corinthians 15v24-26 says; *"<sup>24</sup> Then the end will come, when [Christ] hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death."*

- When are you tempted to doubt God's promise to defeat his enemies?
- How does today's passage in Isaiah help you to trust he will?



Isaiah's gaze turns to Moab, another historic enemy of God's people. The places named here are towns all over Moab.

### **Read Isaiah 15:1-9**

- What is happening to Moab?
- How thorough is the destruction? (Looking particularly at v1, v6 and v9.)
- How do the Moabites respond? (Shaving your head and wearing sackcloth were associated with being in mourning.)
- In v5, how does Isaiah respond to Moab's destruction? Is that what you would have expected?

### **Apply**

We often don't know how to respond when God talks about judgment.

- How does this passage help you know how to feel about people under God's judgment?
- What stops you feeling like this?
- Pray for those you know who are still under God's judgment.

## 8

God encourages Moabite refugees to flee to Judah, and its capital Zion.

### **Read Isaiah 16:1-5**

- How are God's people to receive the Moabite refugees?
- Why do you think Moabites are encouraged to flee to Zion, the capital city of God's people?
- In v5, why is Zion a safe place to flee? Who guarantees its safety?

### **Apply**

In the middle of promises of judgment, God provides a way for his enemies to be saved.

- What does that show about God's character?
- How can you reflect God's character when people who've hated or ignored him come to take refuge in Jesus?
- Can you think of someone you don't like who has taken refuge in Jesus? Pray that you would welcome and accept them too.

After the promise of safety if Moabite refugees flee to Judah, Isaiah returns to judgment on Moab.

### **Read Isaiah 16:6-14**

- Why are Moab judged – what is their offence? (v6-7)
- What will happen to Moab? (v8-11)
- How does Isaiah feel about it? Is that the response you would expect given Moab and God's people are old enemies?
- Moab turn to their 'gods' for help – how much does that help them? (v12-14)

This is what will happen to those in Moab who are too proud to flee to the safety God offered them in 16:1-5.

### **Apply**

- How does this passage help you feel about people who are too proud to accept God's salvation?

Our hearts are no better than anyone else without Jesus.

- Praise God for helping you flee to Jesus for safety.
- Pray that God would keep you from being proud or self-righteous today.

## 10

Israel and Syria allied to attack and invade Judah. Isaiah already prophesied (in chapters 7-10) that Israel will be reduced to a tiny remnant when God judges them.

### **Read Isaiah 17:1-8**

- What will happen to Syria and their capital city Damascus? (v1-3)
- God compares Israel and Syria's destruction to a harvest in v4-6;
  - What will happen to Syria and Israel's glory?
  - What will be left?
- How has the judgment changed the few who are left (v7-8)?
- Why is that a good thing?

### **Apply**

It can be difficult to read all this judgment in Isaiah. Here we see that one result of judgment is to turn survivors back to God.

- How does this help you to keep believing that God is loving even as he judges?
- Pray that today you would rely on your Maker, rather than the things that you make and do.

# 11

Isaiah foretells more judgment on Israel and any other nations who oppress God's people.

## **Read Isaiah 17:9-14**

- What is Israel's sin that has brought their judgment? (v10)
- In verse 11, Israel think their sin will get them quick benefits. What is its real outcome?
- Imagine the noise described in verses 12-13 – how would you feel facing such enemies?
- How easily will God defeat them?

## **Apply**

- Given how easily God defeats his enemies, why is it so foolish to forget him and not trust him?
- It can feel foolish to trust in God when the rest of the world forgets him. How does this passage help you to be sure that trusting in God is the only wise option?

## 12

### Read Isaiah 18:1-7

- What are these enemies like (v1-2)? How would you feel if they were coming to attack you?

God calls the whole world to watch (v3)!

- In verse 4, how much effort does it take God to deal with these enemies?
- How successful have these enemies been (v5-6)?
- What do these enemies end up doing?
- How would this increase the reasons God's people have to keep trusting him?

### Apply

- How powerful does God seem in this passage:
  - Compared to these enemies?
  - Given how easily he defeats these enemies?
  - If even God's enemies end up bringing him gifts?
- How does this give you confidence in God when you're tempted to doubt his power to save?

**Read Isaiah 19:1-10**

- How will the Lord judge Egypt (v1-4)?

The Nile would have represented both Egypt's source of life and income, and one of their gods.

- How do verses 5-10 reinforce how bad this judgment is?

**Read 19:11-15**

- In verses 11-12, what have Pharaoh and his officials put their confidence in?
- What has happened to Pharaoh and his officials?

**Apply**

*Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-20*

- Being a Christian often looks foolish to the world. When have you been tempted to feel foolish for trusting Jesus?
- How does the world's "wisdom" look from God's perspective? What does Isaiah say will happen to Egypt's "wisdom"?
- How does this help you trust God's wisdom, not the world's?

## 14

In chapters 13-19 we have heard a lot about God overturning the world in judgment. Here we see his grace in the midst of that judgment.

### **Read Isaiah 19:16-22**

- How does Egypt feel about God's judgment? (v16-17)
- How does Egypt respond to God's judgment? (v18-22)
- What will God do for them?
- What does that show us about God's character?

### **Read 19:23-25**

- How does God now view the nations he has just judged (Egypt, Assyria and Israel)?

These are the last nations on earth that God's people in Isaiah's day would have expected to worship God!

### **Apply**

- How does God's grace to the nations help you give thanks for his grace to you?

In Acts 13:23 we read that *"God has brought to Israel the Saviour Jesus, as he promised."*

- Praise God for Jesus – the defender, saviour and rescuer God has sent.



## 15

Yesterday we saw the glorious salvation that comes as God's enemies turn and trust in him. Today we see the alternative.

### **Read Isaiah 20:1-4**

- How do you think Isaiah would have felt having to act this out?
- How does this help us understand how awful it must have been for Egypt and Cush to be conquered by Assyria?

### **Read 20:5-6**

Judah were tempted to look to Egypt for help against Assyria.

- Why did this happen to Egypt and Cush?
- What do you think the lesson for Judah is?

### **Apply**

Judah were facing hard times as Assyria threatened to invade. But they looked for help in all the wrong places.

- When are you tempted to turn to things other than God in difficult times?
- How can this lesson that God taught Judah help us look to God instead?

## 16

It isn't instantly clear who the "desert by the sea" are, but it becomes clear in these verses that Isaiah is talking about Babylon again. Babylon were not only Judah's enemies – at times Judah also looked to them as potential allies.

### **Read Isaiah 21:1-5**

- What will happen to Babylon (v1-2)?
- How does this vision make Isaiah feel (v3-4)?
- How do Babylon's officers react (v5)?

### **Read 21:6-10**

- Why is the response of Babylon's officers foolish?
- How do you think Judah should feel about looking to Babylon for help after reading this?

### **Apply**

God is continuing to warn his people not to be complacent (like Babylon's officers!) and not to put their trust in the wrong places.

- In what areas of your life might you need to hear this warning not to put your trust in things other than God?
- What does it show about God's character that he gives his people multiple warnings?

Isaiah's focus turns to some of Judah's neighbours.

**Read Isaiah 21:11-12**

Seir is in the neighbouring country of Edom. Here we see them asking Isaiah to tell them what will happen.

- Isaiah has been trying to persuade God's people to listen to God. As they see someone from Edom asking to hear from God, how might that persuade them to listen?

Verse 12 gives us a picture of both morning and night coming – both peace and judgment.

**Read 21:13-17**

- Where has the judgment spread to in these verses?
- How bad is it?

Here we see that nowhere is beyond God's judgment.

**Apply**

- What are you tempted to think is beyond God's notice, or tempted to think is beyond his justice?
- How have these chapters and today's verses persuaded you that nowhere/nothing is too big and powerful, or too small, to be beyond God's justice?

Isaiah turns to talk about God's people, Judah.

**Read Isaiah 22:1-8**

- In verses 1-2, how did Judah react when they saw their enemies judged? Why was their reaction foolish?
- How do they compare to those other nations now?
- How does Isaiah feel about this destruction God has sent on them?

**Read 21:9-14**

- What did Judah do/fail to do to deserve this punishment?
- Why was their behaviour so perverse?

**Apply**

God's people end up no better than their enemies if they too ignore God and refuse to repent.

- How does this passage help you to keep turning from your sin and asking for God's forgiveness today?

1 John 1v8-9 says *"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."*

- What can you confess to God today?

## 19

Isaiah prophecies against the leadership of Judah.

### **Read Isaiah 22:15-25**

- What is this leader Shebna doing (v15-19)?
- What does this show us about how he thinks he will die?
- Why is that foolish – what will happen to him instead?
- What will Shebna's replacement Eliakim be like (v20-24)?
- What will Judah's attitude to Eliakim be?
- How much good will this new leader do (v25)?

### **Apply**

God's people think they can avoid judgment by ignoring Isaiah or setting up a better leader. It's a similar attitude many people have to God – that if they ignore their sin, or improve themselves a bit, they'll be fine.

- When do you think your sin can be fixed by ignoring it or trying to improve yourself a bit?
- How does this passage help you to be grateful for Jesus' much more radical solution of taking the judgment for us?

Isaiah turns his attention on the cities of Tyre and Sidon – neighbours of Judah. Tyre was famous for trade.

**Read Isaiah 23:1-9**

- What were Tyre and Sidon like before?
- What will happen to them now?
- In verses 7-9, why is God judging them?
- In verses 7-8, why might Tyre have thought they would be safe from judgment? What are they putting their trust in?

**Apply**

Some nations trusted in their military might to protect them, some their wealth and alliances.

- How much help are those things against God's purposes?

It can be easy to think that money or powerful friends can give us security. But only God can give us eternal security in the face of judgment.

*Read Matthew 6:19-21*

- How does this passage in Isaiah grow your confidence that treasure in heaven is much more valuable than treasure on earth?

## 21

Isaiah continues to prophesy the downfall of Tyre.

### **Read Isaiah 23:10-14**

Tyre was famous for trade, the 'market-place of the nations' (23v3).

- What impact has God's judgment had on Tyre?

### **Read 23:15-18**

- How long will Tyre's judgment last?
- What will happen to them after that?
- What is their relationship to the Lord like by the end?

After judgement, God promises to restore Tyre to her former trading role among the nations; everything she does (like a prostitute) will be done to earn money, but God says that her earnings and wealth will belong to him and his people.

### **Apply**

*Read 1 Timothy 6v17-18*

- When are you tempted to put your hope in money?
- Why is that foolish?
- How can you use your wealth to glorify God and do good to other people?

**Read Isaiah 24:1-3**

- Who is judged here?

**Read 24:4-6**

- Why is everyone under God's judgment?
- What effect has humanity's behaviour had on the earth itself?

**Read 24:7-13**

- What will this day of judgment be like?
- How thorough is this judgment? (v6,13)

God's judgment is not just something that fell on nations in Isaiah's day. One day he will judge the whole earth. But there is a glimmer of hope as a few are left... (more on this tomorrow)

**Apply**

- How do you feel reading about the judgment that God will bring on the whole earth?

It's easy to slip into thinking that salvation is mostly about me and God, or about making life better here and now.

- How will this passage help you have a bigger view of salvation today?
- Spend time thanking God that Jesus can rescue from this judgment.



## 23

Isaiah has been describing God's devastating world-wide judgment. But we saw hints yesterday of a remnant, a few who escaped God's judgment...

### **Read Isaiah 24:13-16**

- How do the 'gleanings', those left after this global judgment, respond?
- How do they feel about God?

### **Read 24:17-23**

Isaiah returns to thinking about the devastation that is coming.

- What makes Isaiah cry "woe is me"?
- How bad is the judgment?
- What is seen about God when he judges in verse 23?

### **Apply**

Here Isaiah shows us God being glorified, both through his judgment of the earth, and by a faithful remnant who are left. Jesus' death means that God can righteously rescue those who turn to him.

- How powerful do you think Jesus' death is, to save from this judgment?
- How grateful are you for Jesus' death?

**Read Isaiah 25:1-5**

- What does Isaiah see about God's character in v1?
- What is his response to this?
- How has God been faithful in verse 2?
  - What is the response (v3)?
- How has God been faithful in verses 4-5?
- What do the pictures in v4-5 make you feel about having God as a refuge?

**Apply**

- Why is it good that God always keeps his promises, both to judge and to save?
- God is a refuge for those who are poor and needy – is that how you see yourself?
- How do these verses make you want to run to Jesus today?

## 25

Isaiah carries on describing the salvation God's people will enjoy when judgment is done.

### **Read Isaiah 25:6-8**

- What will this salvation be like? How is it described?
- In verse 8, what won't be there?

### **Read 25:9**

- Who has achieved this salvation?
- How do God's people respond?

### **Apply**

This is the salvation Jesus achieves for us – this is what eternity with God will be like!

- What are you most looking forward to about it from these verses?
- Spend some time praising God for the salvation he has given you in Jesus.

## 26

Isaiah describes the response of God's people on the day of salvation.

### **Read Isaiah 26:1-6**

- What makes God's people safe and secure?
- Who makes it to this place of safety?
- What is their relationship with God like?
- What has happened to those who thought they were "high" and "lofty" without God?

### **Apply**

This is what awaits those who have been made righteous by faith in Jesus. It is for those who know they are poor and needy before God, not those who think they are strong or good enough to save themselves.

- What makes this future so good?
- What will it be like to experience this salvation?
- Give thanks to God that this is the future he has prepared for you in Jesus and ask him to help you to trust in the 'Rock eternal' today.

As he sees this vision of future salvation, Isaiah describes his response now.

**Read Isaiah 26:7-9**

- How does Isaiah wait for this salvation?
- What does he desire?

**Read 26:9-11**

- Why does God need to bring judgment?

**Read 26:12-15**

- What is the outcome of judgment for God's people?

**Apply**

Christians don't face God's judgment personally. But Jesus bore God's judgment to achieve our salvation. And at the cross, Jesus triumphed over the evil powers of this world, setting us free (see Colossians 2:15)

- Why is it such good news that Jesus faced judgment?
- From the passage, how should we relate to God while we wait for the final day of salvation?

Pray God would help you relate to him like that.

Isaiah contrasts Judah's attempts to save themselves with God's salvation.

**Read Isaiah 26:16-19**

- What did Judah's situation feel like?
- How successful were their attempts to bring about salvation?
- When they turn to God, what does his salvation achieve?

**Read 26:20-21**

- What should God's people do when he judges?

**Apply**

Instead of trying to save themselves when God judges, God's people should hide themselves in Jesus.

- When are you tempted to think that you can save yourself? Or that you need to?
- How does this passage persuade you that it's ridiculous to try to save yourself?
- How does this passage persuade you that it is good to take refuge in Jesus?
  - How can you do that today?

God describes how he feels about his saved people.

**Read Isaiah 27:1**

Leviathan and the monster of the sea are mythical creatures, probably representing ancient forces of evil – maybe representing Satan here.

- What does God do to these ancient enemies?

**Read 27:2-6**

- God uses a picture of a vineyard to represent his people. How does he feel about them?
- How does he care for them?
- What would he do to anyone who threatened them?
- What happens to God's people under his care in verse 6?

**Apply**

- What does this passage teach you about God's attitude towards you?

God already feels like this about his people, but we don't yet fully experience that final salvation.

- What do you think it will be like when you finally fully experience this?

Isaiah closes this section by addressing Judah's current situation.

**Read Isaiah 27:7-8**

- How is God judging Judah?
- How does that compare to their enemies, who God has promised complete destruction for?

**Read 27:9-13**

Asherah poles were used to worship idols

- Why is God judging his people?
- What is the effect of the judgment?
- What will God do for his people after he has judged them?

**Apply**

God judged his people because they had no understanding of his promises and kept worshipping idols.

- How bad was it for Judah to keep ignoring God?
- How does that encourage you to listen to all that God has been saying through Isaiah?

Even for rebellious, idolatrous Judah, who kept ignoring God, there was hope of restoration and forgiveness. What a gracious God we have!