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Rapid Survey of Isaiah 1 - 23



Isaiah: A Topical Look At Isaiah - Steve Gregg

In this rapid survey, Steve Gregg explores the first 23 chapters of Isaiah, focusing on key themes and prophecies. He emphasizes that God's correction and judgment of Israel's sinful ways does not imply a hatred of sacrifice or worship, but rather a call to cease evil and learn good. Moreover, he discusses various prophecies of a coming messiah and a second golden age, as well as the removal of corrupt leaders and the renewal of God's people.

Transcript

Today we're going to do what we have not done with any book of the Bible so far in this school, what we almost never do. In fact, I don't think I've ever done this before, what I'm about to do. As you know, we're constrained by time to take the book of Isaiah more quickly than I would generally prefer, and for that reason, we're going to largely be taking it by a topical arrangement, which we have done before.

This is not the first time that we've done that. The advantage of taking it by a topical arrangement is that all the material that is repetitious gets covered only once, instead of, as we go through it verse by verse, chapter by chapter, and hit that material again and again and again and again, much of which is almost identical. At least I am not wise enough to avoid the temptation to comment and explain the meaning of the material every time we hit it.

So if we just take one time to explain all the occasions when it hits, we save time that way, and that's my reasoning. I will say this, though. While my preference would be to take Isaiah laboriously, slowly, arduously, thickly, rather than dashing through or using only a few sessions, I do think there is some advantage in taking it rather quickly.

There is a different kind of advantage in taking it slowly, and that is that you can get real deep into it. But the book is such that I think it's so long that if you take a very long time going through it, it does become repetitious, it does become so unwieldy large, it just seems like so much material, that it seems to cause us to despair of ever really mastering it. Whereas if we go through it rather rapidly and somewhat thoroughly, that

way, I think it becomes encouraging that we can basically grasp it, it just doesn't seem like quite so burdensome and large a book to master.

Now, what I said I'm going to do today, I didn't tell you what it is, but I did say I've never done it before, and that is a fact. I intend in today's lecture, possibly today and tomorrow, in two lectures, to survey the entire book, just to go through it, and rather than comment verse by verse, in fact, rather than even comment on every paragraph, in fact, rather than even read the verses, I'd like to just kind of go through chapter by chapter and give you an outline of what they contain with very few clarifying comments, because everything in the book, or virtually everything in the book, will be expounded on under topical headings in the course of these lectures. Therefore, as we pass lightly over some very major stuff, I hope you won't think, boy, I wish you'd spent more time on that, because I will later on.

It'll come up in due time as we take the various topics. It'll be evident today that we'll be moving over some very deep waters, only skimming the surface. And that is so you can get the big picture, so that you don't miss the forest for the trees.

So bear with me as I move more rapidly than I myself feel comfortable doing. There are in every chapter many subjects that I would like to dwell on. In fact, I think in years past, I've easily spent a whole session on chapter one of Isaiah, because there's so much there that invites tangents.

But I'm going to try to avoid those kinds of tangents and just survey the thing bit by bit, tell you what's in it in the vaguest of terms, so that you get a brief overview of it. Now, I've never, as I say, never done this before, so I don't know how long it takes. Obviously, it could take a very long time, or it could take a short time, depending on how I do it.

And that's what I have not previously experimented with, to see how much time I can allow myself per point or per chapter. It has occurred to me that it'd be no disaster if I covered it all in one session, but it would probably be more realistic to hope to cover it in two sessions. And possibly we'd cover the first 39 chapters, survey that in this session, and then the Book of Comfort, chapters 40 through 66 in our next session.

At this point, I'm only speculating. I don't know what we will accomplish in this session. But I figure that we can, if I'm careful and self-disciplined, we can kind of scan the book in that much time.

After all, we have a 90-minute session, now 80 left. And there are 66 chapters, so we should have in excess of one minute per chapter on average, which is amazing. OK.

The Reader's Digest version of Isaiah. OK. Now, in Isaiah chapter 1, then, I want you to be aware that in the first several chapters of Isaiah, there is a pattern that we will see.

It's not entirely a matter of symmetry, but there is a bouncing back and forth from giving

Jehovah's complaint and threats against Judah, which is Isaiah's own country, and then giving a promise, an invitation, a guarantee of something better. He will complain, and then he will make an offer. As in verse 18, Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.

This is an offer of hope. And then he'll go back to talk about how bad the city is, how bad Jerusalem is. And then he'll also mention, you know, that he's going to fix the situation, things will be better.

And so we go back and forth, back and forth, from positive, negative, positive, negative. It actually starts out negative and then goes positive. It's as if there's, for six chapters here, a continuous complaint of Jehovah with threats of judgment and violence against them, punctuated with messages of hope, and in some cases, even descriptions of the Messianic ultimate salvation.

This shifting back and forth happens a few times even in the first chapter. But chapter one is part of what I identified yesterday in our lecture as the first section of the first segment of Isaiah. The first segment of Isaiah being chapters one through thirty-nine.

I pointed out that that segment divides into seven sections, and the first of those is chapters one through six, which are prophecies against Judah, Isaiah's own nation. So it says in verse two, Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, that would be manger where it eats. But Israel does not know, my people do not consider. This unfavorable comparison of the people of Israel with animals, with dumb animals, is not unique to this passage.

Jeremiah does the same thing in Jeremiah eight and verse seven, where he says, Even the stork in the heavens knows her appointed times, and the turtle dove, the swift and the swallow, observe the time of their coming. But my people do not know the judgment of the Lord. That's Jeremiah eight, seven.

Sounds very much like Isaiah one, three. Different animals are mentioned, but the same thought is given. These dumb animals seem more intelligent than the people of Israel.

Now, of course, it's not entirely a fair comparison because the animals are programmed. The swift and the swallow migrate on schedule because it's built in by God that they should do so. They don't have free will.

But on the other hand, though people do have free will, there's no reason why they must necessarily choose to rebel against God. They could choose to be as obedient as the animals are. And he points out that even oxen and donkeys, which most people would be insulted to be compared with, even if they're compared with them as equals.

But God says that oxen and donkey actually are more commendable in one sense than the people of Israel because the ox and the donkey, at least they know where home is and who their owner is. Israel doesn't seem to know that. Now, he says Israel, which generally speaking is, during the days of the divided kingdom, a reference to the northern kingdom rather than the southern.

But the details of the majority of this chapter point out that he's talking about Zion, Jerusalem, specifically so stated in verse 8, and therefore this is part of his prophecy against Judah. Although in saying Israel here, he may mean both kingdoms since they both comprise the twelve tribes of Israel. He says in verse 4 that the people are a sinful nation, they're laden with iniquity.

And then in verse 5 he moves to a metaphor which we would do well to take note of because it'll be something from which allusions will be drawn elsewhere throughout the book. He says in verse 5 and 6, why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more, the whole head is sick. The whole heart thinks, from the sole of the foot, even to the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, they have not been closed or bound up or soothed with ointment.

This reference to the nation as stricken and sick and full of ulcerous and open untreated wounds is an unpleasant one. It's intended to be rather ugly. This person with running sores, of course he's not talking about a literal person, he's talking about the nation of Israel.

It is a people that he's talking about. He says in verse 4, a people laden with iniquity. That is a nation of people.

Now, this sickness is obviously figurative. The nation was sick, wounded, but unrelieved and unhealed. The sickness, since it is figurative, we would have to decide what kind of sickness is in mind here, and on the one hand we might just see it as the sickness of sin, because he has said in verse 4, they're a sinful nation laden with iniquity.

This could well indicate that their sickness, their grief and their misery is simply the misery of being sinful. But, his reference to being stricken in verse 5, and in later passages in the same chapter, would suggest that their woundedness is at the hand of God himself. That God has disciplined them again and again and again.

He's laid stripes upon them to correct them. Their sins are bad, and he has made efforts to correct them by bringing disaster upon them, by allowing enemies to ransack their cities and their villages, but this has brought no correction. This has not fixed anything.

They're laying there wounded from the strokes of God's chastisement, but no one is there to fix it because they haven't repented, and God's not going to pour out his healing balm unless they turn to him. Now, therefore, it is possible to see the sickness of the

nation either as sin itself, or as God's judgment upon them, the pains and griefs of the afflictions that have come upon them because of their sins. Either one would probably take up part of the actual intended meaning.

And later on, as we go through the book of Isaiah, we'll find other references are made to the nation being sick and needing healing. Ultimately, in chapter 53, we'll read of the Messiah, that by his stripes we are healed. Using the same image, referring to the spiritual malady of the nation, Jesus comes to heal.

And we'll look more at that, of course, at the appropriate time. Moving along, in verse 70, it says, Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire. Now, this may have already happened at the time this was written, or it may be what we call the prophetic perfect tense, a description of something as if it has happened because the prophet sees it so graphically in vision, though it is yet future.

This happens all the time in the prophets. They're continuously talking in the past tense when they're describing things that they're really predicting. It is all, though, possible that this was written at a time when the cities had been burned with fire.

We know that Isaiah lived at a time when the Assyrians did come and burn the cities of Judah, and only Jerusalem remained untouched. Now, if Isaiah was writing during that time, then he's simply describing what was going on at the time of writing. If he was not writing at that time, he certainly was writing about that time.

The condition he's describing is of Judah being desolate because the cities and villages had been burned, but Jerusalem being alone left. Only the city of Jerusalem has survived this invasion, and we know that that occurred under Sennacherib when, in 701 B.C., he came and he basically conquered and destroyed the cities and villages of Judah, but was unable to conquer the capital city. This may have been written years before that, and as I say, in vision, he speaks as if it's past tense, though he's predicting something.

In any case, what it is he's describing is not hard to identify because he talks about your country is desolate, your cities are burned in fire. Verse 8 says, So the daughter of Zion, which is Jerusalem, is left as a booth in a vineyard. It's the only structure standing.

Vineyards don't have a lot of buildings in them, but there are booths for the servants to rest in or whatever, and it's like the only building in a vast bit of acreage. Jerusalem is the only thing left standing. Like a hut in a garden of cucumbers is a besieged city.

Unless the Lord of Hosts had left us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom and we would have been like Gomorrah. Now, we don't know, as I said, when these chapters were written. Some of the chapters in Isaiah have factors that tell us when they were written.

In chapter 6, it says, In the year that King Uzziah died, this vision came to Isaiah. But in

chapters 1 through 5, we don't have any dates given. It is generally assumed that they were given before chapter 6, and therefore during the reign of Uzziah, before Uzziah died in chapter 6, verse 1. However, the chapters may not be arranged chronologically.

This may be a prophecy from later in Isaiah's ministry, which was placed here as part of an introduction to the book in the final arrangement. We don't know. It doesn't much matter.

All we can say is the fulfillment of this is the invasion of the Assyrians upon Judah under Sennacherib. Now, he said, If God had not left us a remnant, in verse 9, then we would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah, and that means wiped out. At that point, he's not likening the moral climate of Judah to Sodom and Gomorrah, though he does immediately afterwards.

At this point, what he's saying about Sodom and Gomorrah is that they were wiped out. God didn't leave one person alive. And we would have been like that if God hadn't left a few of us alive.

He's practically eliminated the population of Judah, except this remnant here in Jerusalem that has survived. And if Jerusalem were taken as well, then we, Israel, Judah, would be like Sodom and Gomorrah. Extinct, in other words.

So, that's what he's getting at. Now, having said that, having compared them to Sodom and Gomorrah in that sense, he actually says, Well, you know, the comparison is not inapt. It is a very apt comparison because spiritually and morally, we're not much better.

So, he says to Jerusalem in verse 10, Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom, and give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah. So, he actually, Sodom and Gomorrah had been wiped out 1,300 years before this. So, he's not talking to literal Sodom and Gomorrah, but he's talking to Jerusalem.

In fact, if you look at Revelation 11 and verse 8, In Revelation 11 and 8, it says, speaking of the two witnesses after they're put to death by the beast that rises out of the bottomless pit, Revelation 11 and verse 8 says, Their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Well, there's no question where our Lord was crucified. That's Jerusalem.

But that Jerusalem is here called that great city which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt. And no doubt, in saying so, John is referring back to Isaiah chapter 1, verse 10, where Jerusalem is called Sodom. Though, as far as being spiritually called Egypt, we'll have to look elsewhere for a cross-reference on that.

But that's not important at this point. So, Jerusalem is here compared with Sodom. Now, down from this point, verse 11 through verse 15, God is basically saying, I'm sick of your sacrifices.

I'm sick of your holy days. Your new moons and your Sabbaths are detestable to me. Your prayers stink before me.

If you lift up your hands to pray to me, I'll ignore you. In fact, I'll even judge you for it. Now, I heard somebody on a radio talk show, a Christian radio talk show the other day, mistakenly say that God was here saying that he hated the sacrificial system.

That is not what he's saying here. What he is saying is he hates the hypocritical worship of these people, who are not in the least interested in pleasing God in their ordinary lives, but they do not neglect their ritual duties of worship. And this problem, of course, exists in virtually all religions, Islam, Judaism, and Christendom, and Christianity as well.

There are people who go to church every Sunday. They sing the songs. They pay their tithes.

They're in the choir. But throughout the week, and even then when they're at church, their motives are bad. They're not living for God.

He's not saying that he hates people to sing or to worship or to give tithes or whatever. He's just, in this case, to offer sacrifices or keep new moons or Sabbaths. He's not saying that that whole system of worship is an abomination to him.

He's saying that their worship is an abomination to him, because they are rebels against God. They've rebelled against him. He said back in verse 2, and yet they have maintained the semblance of piety in forms of ritual worship, and this he finds disgusting, and he's not the only prophet to say so.

Micah says the same thing. Hosea says the same thing. Isaiah himself says it again another way in chapter 58.

And so it's kind of a theme of the more enlightened prophets of the Old Testament that God, though he did require ritual worship, and he didn't despise ritual worship per se, yet he despised it when it was not offered out of love for him and out of a heart that was really his. It says in Proverbs 15, 8, the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to God. Not that sacrifices were an abomination to God.

The sacrifices of godly people were his delight, but to a wicked person offering us a ritual sacrifice of worship, that was an abomination to God. And this is simply because God is not a religious God. He's not interested in our religion.

He's interested in our relationship with him, and if our relationship is zilch, but we're maintaining the forms of religion, it's just hypocrisy, and he hates it. And that's what he's saying in verses 11 through 15. Now, he does hold out an invitation then, verse 16, wash yourselves and make yourselves clean, put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, reprove the oppressor, defend the

fatherless, plead for the widow.

Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat of the good of the land.

We can see that verses 16 through 19 then are what we could say a punctuating of this dismal scene with a message of hope. Wash up, turn around, do justice, do what you're supposed to do, be reasonable. Come let us reason together.

Let's just be reasonable. You're hurting yourself by this kind of behavior, and if you'll just stop it, then you'll eat of the good of the land. I'll even forgive your sins.

Even if they're red like crimson, I'll clean you up. I'll forgive you. But he says in verse 20, but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Now, verse 21, he says, how has the faithful city, meaning Jerusalem, become a harlot? It was full of justice, probably meaning in David's day, in the better years. Righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers. Your silver has become dross.

Your wine mixed with water, etc., etc. That is, the spiritual value of your heart, which was like silver, has become like dross. That which was sweet like wine to God is now just water.

It's no good. Your princes are rebellious. They don't defend the fatherless, he says at the end of verse 23.

They don't listen to the cause of the widow. This is one of the complaints that God frequently had, is that the widows and the fatherless, the people who didn't have much money and couldn't bribe the judges, usually didn't get much justice in the courts, because often people who could bribe the judges, even though they were unjust, could have their way in exploiting and oppressing the poor who couldn't bribe the corrupt judges. Now, in verse 24, we have sort of a promising thing, although threatening at the same time.

Therefore the Lord says, the Lord of hosts, the mighty one of Israel, I will rid myself of my adversaries and take vengeance on my enemies. I will turn my hand against you and thoroughly purge away your dross and take away your alloy. Then I will restore judges, as at the first, your counselors, as at the beginning.

Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with justice and her penitents, that is those who repent, with righteousness. That would be the remnant.

This is one of the many references in Isaiah to the remnant. The prophets always assumed that no matter how bad things have become in the nation of Israel or Judah, God always has a remnant. There's always a few.

It might be a very small remnant. In Elijah's day, he knew of none other than himself. He thought he was the whole remnant himself.

And God corrected him and said, No, I've reserved 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal. But they were so few that they might not ever know each other. In a nation with some millions of people, if there's only 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal, they might never have contact with each other.

Elijah knew of none but himself. And it can be that sparse sometimes. The remnant is often small.

But God says that remnant, the penitents, the ones who repent, are the ones that God will redeem. And I believe that this has its fulfillment in the New Testament era, when the faithless city that became a harlot, the old Jerusalem, is replaced with a new Jerusalem, the spiritual city, the church, at this present time, is my understanding of it. Okay, now, let's skip down to chapter 2, verses 1 through 4, a very famous kingdom passage.

We will not go into it right now simply because it would detain us too long. We'll get into it in detail under another heading later. But it is the first of a bunch of passages of its type where it leaps from the time of Isaiah, from the time of the present judgment and disaster and crisis, to the ultimate deliverance.

This, no doubt, because he has talked about purging Israel at this point, of getting rid of the dross, getting rid of the bad judges and the bad princes and setting things right. And from this, he gets the vision of the ultimate righteous kingdom under the Messiah. Now, the Messiah is not specifically mentioned in chapter 2, verses 1 through 4, but his reign on earth is mentioned.

Many people understand this passage to be about the millennial age when Jesus returns. Others, myself being one of them, believe it's a reference to what Jesus actually established at his first coming and that under which we now live. The problem, of course, being that you have to take a lot of material symbolically.

He talks about the mountain of the Lord's house being exalted above all the hills in the world, all the nations flowing into it like a river of people flowing uphill to the mountain of the Lord. And they're going there to learn the ways of God, to be disciplined in the commandments of the Lord. And one thing in particular that many people feel must refer to the millennium and can't refer to the present time is verse 4. He shall judge between the nations and rebuke many people.

They shall beat their swords into plowshares, their spears into pruning hooks. Nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. People say, well, how could that possibly refer to now? There's plenty of wars going on.

Yes, but not among those who have flowed into Mount Zion and have been taught by the Lord and learned his ways. That's the point. It's not a description of necessarily a universal peace throughout the world, but rather the nations, the Gentiles who flow into the mountain of the Lord and learn and are retrained and instructed in the teachings of Christ.

These people lay down their swords. They lay down their spears. They replace the vocation of fighting with the vocation of farming.

You see, the kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom now. It's sown by the sowing of seeds. Jesus said, A sower went out to sow.

That's the word of the kingdom. And as it took root, the kingdom grew. And whereas earthly kingdoms are advanced by the sword and by the spear, spiritual kingdom is through the cultivation of the seed of the word.

And so those who are instructed in the ways of the Lord, they replace their weapons of war with the peaceful implements of cultivation and farming. That's what I understand to be the case. We'll have time to go into this more later.

That's just a brief statement of my position on that. Obviously, that may not be very convincing to those of you who haven't heard all my reading. OK, now, verse 5 then gets back to God's complaint.

God has been saying some hopeful things, but now in chapter 2, verse 5, and I would say up all the way through chapter 3 and into chapter 4, verse 1, all of that length, most of chapter 2, all of chapter 3, and one verse of chapter 4 is largely an unrelenting condemnation of the sins of Judah. Now, there are certain things that are repeated a number of times. For example, in verse 10, it says, Enter into the rock and hide in the dust from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty.

This expression, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty is repeated also in verse 19. They should go into the holes of the rocks, into the caves of the earth, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty when He arises to shake the earth, or it could be translated, the land, mightily. And verse 21 also, Go into the clefts of the rocks, into the crags of the rugged rocks, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty when He arises to shake the earth, or land, mightily.

I understand this to be probably a reference to the Assyrians coming in as invading it. However, we know that in the ultimate destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, Josephus tells us that the last resort of the Jews when the Romans broke through the wall was to go

into the caves and dens under the city. There were caverns they sought to hide in, although they were found there too.

Jesus said they will seek to hide in the caves and the dens of the earth and call on the rocks to cover them and so forth. In chapter 3, well, no, I should say in chapter 2 also, there is another refrain in verse 11 and in verse 17. It says, The lofty looks of man shall be humbled.

The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. Likewise, in verse 17, The loftiness of man shall be bowed down. The haughtiness of men shall be brought low and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

Identical refrain indicating that one of God's principal complaints against these people is their arrogance and their loftiness. Though some of his other complaints against them are found in verse 7. They are materialistic. Their land is so full of silver and gold.

There is no end to their treasures. Also, they are militaristic. It says their land is full of horses, which is a reference to military apparatus and chariots.

And then in verse 8, their land is also full of idols. Okay, so they are idolatrous, they are militaristic, they are materialistic. Not too many things different from our own society.

Now, in chapter 3, he continues to talk about how desperate things will be when he brings his judgment upon them. He mentions in verse 4, I will give children to be their princes and babes shall rule over them. And then in verse 12, it says, as for my people, children are their oppressors and women rule over them.

Now, both places talk about children being their rulers. And the second instance refers to women ruling them. All of these statements are intended to say this is how bad things will become.

This is how far the nation has fallen under God's judgment that they be ruled over by children and women. Now, the statements could be figurative in the sense that it's not so much that the actual kings are children or that there's queens, but rather that in society in general, the children are disrespectful of authority, the women rule the rules and wear the pants of the family and so forth. Verse 5 might incline us to that view in chapter 3. It says, the people will be oppressed and everyone by another, everyone by his neighbor, the child will be insolent toward the elder and the base toward the honorable.

However, in the case of Judah, it was the case that their recent kings prior to this, many of them had been children and one had been a woman. Athaliah was a woman who usurped authority by killing all her grandchildren who were the seed royal. And she ruled.

She was a tyrant shortly before this time. So they did have a woman ruler. And then

Joash, who was their next king, was seven years old when he became king.

After him, Amaziah was 25 years old and then Uzziah was 16 years old. So they literally had women and children ruling over them. And Isaiah could be pointing out that this is, hey, get a clue, man.

God can't be on your side. God is judging you. He lets you be ruled over by a seven-year-old kid and by a woman.

Wake up and smell the coffee. This is the judgment of God. Now, the latter part of chapter 3 is about how God is going to humble the haughty women of Jerusalem.

Verse 16, because the daughters of Zion are haughty. He's going to judge them. Now, he already said about the same thing about men.

In chapter 2, verses 11 and 17, the loftiness of man will be brought down. The haughtiness of men will be brought down. But in chapter 3, verse 16, he applies it to women.

Because the daughters of Zion are haughty. And they walk without stretched necks and wanton eyes and walk with mincing as they go, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. He gives a long description of the clothing they wore.

Some of it sounds funny to us, but basically he's saying that he's going to shave their heads with mourning for their dead husbands and sons, and he's going to replace their veils and their fancy clothes with the mourner's garments. He's going to bring judgment on Jerusalem, and this will cause the women who are so proud and arrogant and haughty now to be mourning and humbled. It says in verse 24, instead of a sweet smell, there will be stench.

Instead of a sash, a rope. Instead of well-set hair, baldness. Instead of a rich robe, a girding of sackcloth.

And branding instead of beauty. Your men shall fall by the sword and you're mighty in the war. Now, chapter 4, verse 1, is the closing statement of this particular judgment.

It says, In that day, seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel. Only let us be called by your name and take away our reproach. I've heard many preachers try to spiritualize this.

They say seven women will take hold of one man. That means... Actually, I can't even remember all the esoteric things they've come up with. Some people think this is talking about the last days and so forth.

No, the chapter division is artificial. This is an unfortunate chapter division. Whoever put the chapter division there should have put it one verse later, because the next verse,

through the end of chapter 4, is another messianic passage about the kingdom age.

And chapter 4, verse 1, is simply the conclusion of the judgment passage of the previous chapter. You see, the reason it says that seven women will take hold of one man and say, Listen, marry us and we'll provide our own homes and food and clothing and so forth. We just don't want to be widows anymore.

Don't leave us as widows without someone to bear the name of. In those days, for a woman to have no husband was a reproach. And therefore, what it's saying, it's a follow-up of chapter 3, verse 25, Your men shall fall by the sword and you're mighty in war.

Because there will be such a decimation of the male population because of the war, the women who are left as widows will outnumber men seven to one. Now, that's probably not intended as an actual statistic. Seven is a number used frequently in Scripture simply to mean a complete number.

And we can find many cases in Scripture where seven is used not statistically, but simply as a number to suggest a disproportionate, in this case. There's one man for every seven women. Because of the war, it's just talking about the reduction, drastic reduction of the male population and their widows saying, Whoa, where do we go now for a husband? Well, listen, we got this inheritance from our husband.

We got food, we got clothing, but we don't have a husband. And so all seven women will grab onto one man saying, Well, we'll share you, if necessary, because we've got no better options than that. Now, in chapter 4, verses 2 through 6, we have another kingdom passage.

It talks about the branch of the Lord being beautiful and glorious. Well, the branch is a Messianic title. So here we do have a reference to the Messiah himself.

But also there's a reference to the remnant that survived the ultimate judgment here. The remnant who were left, those who were left in Zion, in verse 3. And it talks about how they will be holy people. And it talks about how God will have washed away the filth of Zion and purged it by the war that he's described.

Which, first, frankly, this could refer to the Babylonian captivity. However, not everything that is said here is true of that. If it is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., which was the ultimate humbling of Jerusalem permanently, then it would follow that the upshot of that is that the remnant, the church that has survived it, the spiritual Jerusalem, are holy people and they now live in the spiritual Mount Zion.

Again, I'll have to take another time when we go through the topics to explain why I understand Mount Zion spiritually in some of these instances. Sometimes I believe the passage requires it. But suffice it to say, the verses we're reading at this point, verses 2 through 6, are the second Messianic Golden Age kingdom passage in the book.

Chapter 2, verses 1 through 4, being the first. So we've run into two of them in four chapters. Now, chapter 5 begins with the parable, which is another way of God giving his complaint and his threat of judgment upon Jerusalem.

It's a parable about a vineyard. He compares Jerusalem and the men of Judah to a vineyard which was given every advantage for fruitfulness. It was planted a choice hill, the rocks were removed, a choice vine was given, a hedge was put about it to protect it from marauding animals and so forth, and a watchtower.

Everything that could be done to guarantee a good crop of grapes was done for this vineyard. But he says, when I actually came looking for the grapes at harvest time, at vintage time, I should say, what I found there was oppression and what I found was sour grapes, wild grapes, he says in verse 4. Now, he tells in verse 7 what the meaning of the parable is. The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel.

The men of Judah are his pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, what he found instead was oppression. So the grapes he was looking for was justice, but the wild grapes he found instead, the fruit of the nation, was oppression.

He looked for righteousness, but behold, weeping. That is the weeping of those who were oppressed and crushed by the wicked. Now, what he's saying is, I gave this country, Jerusalem, Judah, every advantage to produce the fruit I'm looking for, which is justice and righteousness.

Well, what advantages did they have? Well, first of all, he eradicated a piece of land for them of all pagan influence. He gave them the best laws any nation ever had. He allowed his presence to go among them.

He disciplined them when they went wrong. He gave them a good king in David, initially. He gave them good judges.

He gave them good leaders from time to time. But he gave them everything a nation could hope for to guarantee that it would be a just and righteous nation. That's the fruit he was looking for.

But they didn't produce it. He says, what more could I have done? He says that in, what does he say? Verse 4. What more could have been done to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Now, by the way, this kind of argues against the Calvinist view that God has something called irresistible grace, and whoever he wants, he just draws them irresistibly. He indicates that he did everything he could.

But it wasn't enough. He didn't have any more tricks up his sleeve. He wanted this nation to produce good fruit, but it didn't.

And he did everything he knew to do. He implies, what more could I have done than

what I did? Now, if in fact, God had something called irresistible grace, all he has to do is aim it like a tractor beam at whoever he wants to come, and they come irresistibly, then there is an answer to his rhetorical question. What more could I have done? Well, how about use your irresistible grace? Maybe that would have done it.

You know? But God seems to imply that he exhausted his options short of violating the free will of his people. He could do nothing more to give them the advantages that should have guaranteed their righteousness and their justice, but they didn't. They resisted him.

Now, the rest of chapter 5, well, almost the rest of it, up through verse 23, verses 8 through 23, is a poem in six stanzas, which begin with the word, Woe. Verse 8, Woe to those who join house to house. Verse 11, Woe to those who rise early in the morning.

18, Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanting. I'm not reading the whole statement, so you wonder why it's woe. Why is it bad to join house to house if you rise early in the morning? Well, they join house to house in order to fortify themselves against enemies so they can trust in each other rather than in the Lord.

They rise early in the morning to get drunk. In verse 11. In verse 18, they draw sin after them as sin follows them as surely as if it was pulled with a cart rope behind them.

Verse 20, Woe to those who call evil good and good evil. 21, Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes. Again, the pride problem.

Prudent in their own sight. 22, Woe to men who are mighty at drinking wine. Woe to men who are valiant for mixing intoxicating drink.

Obviously, their alcoholism, their drunkenness, I should say, is one of his principal complaints. He mentions it twice here. It comes up again later also.

Apparently, the people were quite excessive in their drinking. Verse 24. It says, Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble and the flame the chaff, so their root will be as rottenness.

And so he goes on and describes the judgment that they will receive, which we don't have time to go into in detail. Now, it does say in verses 26 through 30 that there will be a foreign nation that will be brought against them. And this nation is spoken of figuratively as if they're indestructible, you know, high-tech robots that are invincible from all weaponry.

It says, No one will be weary or stumble among them. No one will slumber or sleep. Nor will the belt of their loins be loose nor the strap of their sandals.

Their arrows are sharp and all their bows are bent. Their horses' hooves seem like flint.

In other words, they never split their hooves even when running on rock.

Their wheels are like a whirlwind. Their roars will be like a lion. This is basically saying that they're like superhuman forces.

Probably the Assyrians are in mind here since that's what Jerusalem in that generation of Isaiah's experience was the invasion of the Assyrians, though ultimately it could refer to the Babylonians who came and destroyed Jerusalem about a hundred years later than Isaiah's time. Now, chapter 6 is about Isaiah's call to be a prophet. It's a well-known chapter.

It was the year that King Uzziah died. Isaiah was apparently in the temple, maybe only in vision, however. He saw the Lord in a vision.

According to John, chapter 12, what Isaiah saw on this occasion was the glory of Jesus. Excuse me. And he saw the Lord high and lifted up.

He heard the seraphim singing about it. In verse 3, they were singing, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory. The place was shaken.

Isaiah's first response was to recognize how unworthy he was to be in the presence of God, the holy, holy, holy God. He said in verse 5, Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips. And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King and the Lord of hosts.

And so, one of the seraphim took a call from the author and touched the lips of Isaiah with it as a symbolic gesture for saying, Well, I'm now making your lips acceptable. I'm purifying it from this uncleanness of which you speak, so that you can be my prophet. And he said, Behold, in verse 7, this has touched your lips, your iniquity has taken away, your sin is purged.

Then God says, apparently from the throne, Whom shall I send and who will go for us? The plural us recalls many of the statements that God makes in Genesis. Let us make man our image and let us go down and see this thing. Possibly a reference to the Trinity.

Then I said, Here am I, send me. He didn't feel worthy to go before God purged him. He knew himself to be sinful and unworthy to speak for God, but now that God has supernaturally declared him to be purged, he has no such inadequacy complex.

See, now, it's very important for us to realize that when it comes to self-image, we have no grounds for a positive self-image. We are sinners. We are men of unclean lips.

But once purged, we cannot justly complain that we can't serve God. Once God has equipped us and cleansed us and so forth, then we can't say to God, God, I can't do this. I'm unworthy or I'm unable.

Both are true in the flesh, but once God has stepped in and said, now I've made you adequate, then the only thing left to say is send me. I'm ready. Okay? Now, God commissioned him in verse 9 and say, go and tell this people, keep on hearing, but do not understand.

Keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull, the ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed. Now, this is quoted several times in the New Testament.

Jesus himself quoted it in three or four of the Gospels. John quotes it also in John chapter 12. Paul quotes it in the closing verses of Acts 28.

Not the very closing verses, but near the end of Acts 28. And so, it comes up a lot. And apparently, although it applied to Isaiah's own time, the people were dull of hearing, and the preaching was only going to make them more dull.

Now, why? Did God want them more dull? No. It's just that when people are resistant to light, you give them more light and they shut their eyes tighter. If people have become acclimatized to the darkness, and you turn on a bright light, they're not going to say, Oh, wonderful.

They're going to wince. They're going to close their eyes. Especially if they hate light.

So, by the very preaching and bringing light and truth to them, those who are indisposed to receive the truth would stop their ears, they'd hide their eyes. The very preaching itself was the catalyst that caused them to recede into deeper darkness and deafness. And Jesus himself, when he quoted this in Matthew 13, actually quoted it, their ears they have stopped, their eyes they have closed, lest they should see and hear.

He quotes it a little differently than here, but he's quoting the same passage. And he kind of puts the spin on it that they're the ones closing their eyes and stopping their ears. Yeah, you're doing the preaching, but their response is to make themselves the more blind and deaf.

That's in Jesus' quote of this verse in Matthew chapter 13, verse... I'm looking here in the cross references. Verse 4. Then, Isaiah said, Well, how long are these people going to be blind like this? And the answer is given in verse 11, Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitants, the houses are without a man, and the land is utterly desolate. And the Lord has removed men far away and forsaken the places.

Excuse me, the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. He says, however, there will be a tenth left in it, which just means a remnant. Not necessarily a statistical tenth, but just a remnant.

A small number will be left in the land after this desolation. And it'll be like a tree that's been cut down, but which is capable of having green shoots arise later out of it. That is to say, He doesn't totally uproot, root and branch, destroy the people of Israel.

He'll decimate them, so there's only one tenth left, I mean, just a remnant, a very small remnant. But they will be like the stump of a tree that's been cut down, but which has some life still in it, which can later spring forth and send up new shoots and new life, which it would do. This either is a reference to after the Babylonian exile, God would bring back life to the nation 70 years later, or it could be a reference to the more ultimate destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, where out of that has come a spiritual remnant also.

The Christian Jews, who then became the evangelists for the Gentiles to be saved, that could be the remnant that brings forth more life. Now, that brings us to chapter 7, which is a turning point. It introduces the second section of the first segment of the book of Isaiah, the second of the seven.

And these chapters, from chapter 7 through 12, are about Israel, the northern kingdom. Now, that may not seem altogether clear as you read it, but there are references that make it absolutely necessary to see that. Now, that doesn't mean that it's without any references at all to Jerusalem.

It's principally, it begins by telling a story where Israel, the northern kingdom, along with Syria, they were postured against Jerusalem. And God declared that He would deliver Jerusalem, and it would be at the expense of Israel and Syria. Both of them would lose their kings within a very short time.

And then He goes off on an extended prophecy, especially in chapters 9 and 10, about how the Assyrians are going to wipe out the northern kingdom of Israel. Now, chapter 7 has a very famous prophecy in it about the Virgin. The Virgin will conceive and bear a son, and you should call His name Emmanuel.

That's Isaiah 7.14. We know this to be a prophecy about Jesus. It's the only prophecy in the Bible that mentions the Virgin birth. It is quoted in Matthew chapter 1 and verse 23, I think it is, where it says that Jesus' virgin birth fulfilled this prophecy, so we have no doubt that it refers to Jesus.

But in the context, there are some problems to raise, and let me just real quickly deal with it, because we'll deal with it in more detail another time, I expect. But the context is this. King Ahaz of Jerusalem is threatened by the report that Israel and Syria are mobilized to attack Jerusalem, his city.

And while both Israel and Judah are small nations combined, that is, Israel and Syria are small nations combined, they can outclass Jerusalem. And so he is in danger. He is

outclassed by a superior force.

Now, the reason they want to do this is mentioned in verse 6. They want to go up against Judah and replace Ahaz with a king of their own appointing. And the reason they want to do this, I mentioned in our historical background of the book, is because they themselves, Israel and Syria, were threatened by the growth and advancement of Assyria. And they figured that the two of them together could not resist Assyria, but if they got Judah on their side, possibly three nations combined could withstand Assyria.

But Judah did not want to do that. Ahaz was afraid that if he joined with them that that would only bring the wrath of Assyria upon him and that they could not withstand him, so he wanted nothing to do with this confederacy. And therefore, Israel and Syria decided that they would force their intentions on Judah.

They would go make a breach in the wall, break through, remove Ahaz, and put on the throne instead of him somebody who is known to us only from one verse. We know nothing more about the man. Obviously someone sympathetic to their intentions, but in verse 6 he is mentioned as the son of Tabial.

They wanted to say, let us go up against Judah and trouble it, and let us make a gap in the wall for ourselves and set a king over them, the son of Tabial. That's the intentions of the enemy against Judah. Now, Isaiah makes it clear in verse 7 that this plot will not succeed.

This council will not stand. It won't come to pass. He says, the head of Syria is Damascus.

That is the capital of it. And the head of Damascus is Rezan. Rezan was actually the king of Syria at this time.

And he says in verse 8, within 65 years, Ephraim, that's Israel, the northern kingdom, will be broken, that it will not be a people. Now, he did say, however, at the end of verse 9, to Ahaz, if you will not believe, surely you shall not be established. He didn't believe.

Nonetheless, prophecy given to him that, for one thing, one thing it said is that within 65 years, Ephraim will be broken. That's the northern kingdom. 65 years after this would be about 670.

Now, excuse me, I'm sorry. Yeah, 670 BC was about 65 years after this. And at that time, Esarhaddon, the Assyrian, had repopulated and devastated the northern region of Israel with the Gentiles who intermarried with Israelites, creating the Samaritan race, that the people of Israel ceased to be a people within 65 years of the time this prophecy was given.

Because Esarhaddon, the Assyrian, conquered, well, Sennacherib conquered the

northern kingdom, but Esarhaddon repopulated the region with Gentiles and the Jews who lived there intermingled and became the Samaritan race so that Ephraim ceased to be a people within the time that was mentioned, predicted. Now, more importantly, verses 10 through 16 is the prophecy about the child, Emmanuel. And basically, Isaiah realized that the king didn't believe this encouraging promise from God.

He says, God tells you, ask for a sign, and God will give you the sign. Ask for any sign you want, and God will give it to you. And Ahaz says, oh, I wouldn't dare ask for a sign from God.

I don't want to test the Lord. And Isaiah said, you're testing the Lord by not doing what He said. He said to ask for a sign, and if you won't ask for one, He'll give you one anyway.

And the prophecy is in verse 14. Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel.

Now, if that verse stood all by itself, we could say, oh, that's an easy reference to Christ. However, it reads on. Curds and honey shall he, that is the child, eat.

The fact that he is capitalized in the New King James should be ignored. It's just the translators who've done that because of their opinions about it in the Hebrew, it's not capitalized. That he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good, for before the child, same thing with the word child, shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land which you dread will be forsaken by both her kings.

Now, what this means is that a child is going to be born, and before this child knows to choose good or evil, that is, before the child reaches something we would call the age of accountability, both kings that are threatening Ahaz will have been removed. As a matter of fact, within about three years of this time, in 732 B.C., Pekah, who was the king of Israel at the time, was assassinated. That was in the third or fourth year of Ahaz.

So it was within only, you know, three years or so of the time the prophecy was given. Also in the same year, Damascus, the capital of Syria, was crushed by Assyria. So, in other words, Isaiah said this child is going to be born, and before this child reaches an age capable of knowing good or bad, these two kings are going to be no longer a problem.

And within three years of the prophecy being given, both kings were dead. And Assyria had crushed Syria, and the king of Israel had been assassinated, though that country had not yet been conquered. Now, this raises interesting questions.

We'll come back to it in a moment. The rest of chapter 7, verses 18 through 25, is about the Assyrians coming against Israel, the northern kingdom. It is a prophecy against the northern kingdom being devastated by the Assyrians.

One of the things that will happen in connection to that, it says in verse 21 and 22, is it shall be in that day that a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep, so it shall be from the abundance of milk they give that he will eat curds, for curds and honey everyone will eat who is left in the land. Now, curds and honey shall he eat, is something that was said of the child that was going to be born, in verse 15. And now it says everybody is going to be eating curds and honey.

Why? Because they won't be able to farm. The land will be desolated. The armies of the Assyrians will have burned everything.

There will be no crops. So people will just have to eat, basically, dairy products that they get from the little bit of livestock that has survived, which can forage. I mean, basically, it's subsistence dairy farming it's describing here.

Curds is something they can get from their cow or their goat or their sheep, and honey they can get from wild beehives. And that's about all they'll be living, you know, they'll be foraging and living off the few little livestock animals that have survived. It's talking about a great time of famine and devastation.

It's described here. Now this raises the question, the child in question, is that child going to live through that time? Because it says the child also will eat curds and honey. And that's what the whole nation is going to be eating during this Assyrian invasion.

Now, chapter 8, I think, gives us some more light on this prophecy in chapter 7. In chapter 8, Isaiah is told that he's going to have a new prophecy about Meher Shalal Heshbaz, which was to be a child born in chapter 8, Isaiah's own child. It was a second child of Isaiah because, I didn't mention this earlier, but back in chapter 7, verse 3, Isaiah already is said to have had a child named Shir Jashub. In Isaiah 7, 3, it mentions that Shir Jashub accompanied him to go confront Ahaz and give him this message.

Shir Jashub means, the remnant shall return. The second child of Isaiah, mentioned in 8.1, is Meher Shalal Heshbaz. That means something like swift to the spoil, hastened to the booty.

So the name Meher Shalal Heshbaz is a prophecy about the Assyrians coming in and hastening to the booty and spoiling Israel. Now, therefore, Isaiah's two sons had symbolic names, both of which had something to do with Isaiah's principal messages. One of destruction, one of the salvation of the remnant.

Shir Jashub means, the remnant shall return. Meher Shalal Heshbaz means, swift to the spoil, hastened to the booty. A message of destruction.

Now, from verse 2, or further on down, verse 3 of chapter 8, it tells how Meher Shalal Heshbaz was born. Isaiah went into a woman who is described only as the prophetess. And she conceived and bore a son.

Then the Lord said to me, call his name Meher Shalal Heshbaz. Verse 4, for before the child shall have knowledge to cry, my father and my mother. The riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be taken away before the king of Assyria.

Now, there's an interesting thing there. There's a prediction in chapter 7, in verses 14 through 16, about the birth of a child. It says in chapter 7, verses 14 through 16, that that child, before it reaches a certain age, as it turned out it was within about three years, before the child could reach some age capable of knowing the difference between good and bad, the kings of Israel and of Syria would be history.

That is within a few years of the time that Isaiah was talking about, apparently. Now we read of this child of Isaiah, whose name is given, and it says in verse 4, before that child shall have the knowledge to cry, my father and my mother. In other words, before it's about, what, two years old, three years old? What? The same thing.

The riches of Damascus, that's Syria, and of Samaria, that's Israel, will be taken away. The same prophecy, basically. There's a child predicted in chapter 7, there's a child born in chapter 8. The significance of these children's births is said to be this sign, basically, that before the child born reaches a very advanced age, only a couple of years or three, it'll be the end of the kings of Israel and of Syria, which were the present threat to Judah at the time.

Now, that sounds very strongly as if this child of Isaiah might be the child referred to in chapter 7. Furthermore, in chapter 8, verses 6 through 8, at the birth of the child, Isaiah's child, it says the Assyrians, verses 6 and 7, talk about the king of Assyria will come and he'll wipe out the kings of Israel and Syria. But verse 8 says, and go over his banks and will pass through Judah. Remember, the Assyrians also came to Judah, but didn't destroy Jerusalem.

But after wiping out Israel and Syria, eventually the Assyrians came down and overflowed the banks of their flood to pass through Judah, and will overflow in Passover, and will reach up to the neck. That's a picture of Jerusalem that was the head. Only the head was above water, as it were.

The armies of Assyria are likened to an overflowing river coming in, washing over the whole country. And the whole nation of Judah was wiped out except for the head. It was neck deep in invaders, but the head never succumbed, never submerged.

Jerusalem didn't fall. And it says, and the stretching out of the wings of his... He will reach up to the neck, and the stretching out of his wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Emmanuel. Now, Emmanuel is the name of the child in Isaiah 7.14. But this prophecy is given, as it would appear, to the child.

Just like when Zechariah's son, John the Baptist, was born, he made a prophecy to John

the Baptist. You, O child, shall go before the Lord to prepare His way. I mean, it was a symbolic thing to prophesy to a baby who couldn't even understand you.

But it would appear that Isaiah's child had all the significance of the child predicted in Isaiah 7.14. And was even called Emmanuel, which is called that. Now, what do we make of this? Well, let's look back at the prophecy of 7.14, now that we have this information. Is there anything that forbids us seeing Isaiah 7.14 as being about Meher, Shelel, Hashpaz? Well, as I said, there's many things to connect it.

Both are called Emmanuel, which means God with us, or God is with us. Both of them, it is said, while they're still in their infancy, the kings of Israel and Syria will be destroyed. Sounds like the same guy, but there are problems.

One of which, of course, is that we know that the prophecy is applied to Jesus. In Matthew 1.23, it's applied to Jesus. Now, should we consider the possibility that maybe there's a double fulfillment? Short term in the child of Isaiah, and ultimate spiritual fulfillment in Christ Himself.

This is what I think is probable. That the actual fulfillment, the initial fulfillment, was in the birth of Isaiah's own child. And the birth of Jesus is simply a second fulfillment, a more literal fulfillment, in a sense.

Now, let me tell you what are some of the considerations, as quickly as I can, because we're moving way too slow, but who cares. It says in verse 14 that this child born, 7.14, is to be assigned to King Ahaz. It says that specifically when you consider verses 13 and 14.

He said, Hear now, O house of David, which is the reference to the king Ahaz, Is it a small thing that you weary men, but will you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Now, see, he had asked Ahaz to ask for a sign. Ahaz said, I won't ask for a sign.

He said, well, then the Lord will give you a sign, Ahaz, O house of David. Now, the child then, one would expect that the fulfillment of the prophecy would happen within the lifetime of Ahaz, so it could be assigned to him, which is what it was intended to be. Isaiah's son, who is apparently conceived immediately after this, would be within the lifetime of Ahaz, whose reign was not all that long, and that would seem to fit.

But there's two problems. At least some people find two problems. One is they say the word virgin there precludes it.

The virgin shall conceive. And Isaiah's wife clearly was not a virgin. It specifically says that Isaiah went into her and she conceived.

It's not, I mean, she didn't, she wasn't a virgin conceiving, whereas Mary was, and

therefore some would say there's no double fulfillment here. It just has to be Jesus because he's the only virgin-born son of anyone. However, the rest of the passage, you know, what makes us wonder? Now, there are two ways in which the statement about the virgin conceiving could apply to Isaiah's wife.

One, many scholars, I'm not necessarily among them, many scholars feel that the word virgin can be translated as just a young girl at times. A young, you know, a young girl. An unmarried girl.

In which case, Isaiah's wife, who may have been unmarried at the time that he gave the prophecy and then he married her to have this child, would be, would fit. But there are some who say no, virgin can't mean a young girl. It has to mean a virgin in the sense of a woman who's had no sexual relations.

And there seems to be support for that. When Mary was, you know, Mary specifically said she has not known a man. I mean, that's the kind of virgin she was.

Furthermore, the Hebrew word that is here translated virgin, when the Septuagint was translated 300 years before Christ, almost, the Jewish translators in Alexandria who translated this passage into Greek, into the Septuagint, chose a word, parthenos, in the Greek for virgin, which only means a woman who's had no sex. There are people who would argue that the Hebrew word here can mean a young woman merely, regardless of whether she's really what we call a virgin or not. But the Greek translation made by Jews 300 years prior to the birth of Christ chose a word which means a virgin in the strictest sense of the word, parthenos, and therefore they obviously understood it that way.

Now, let me suggest to you how this reference to a virgin conceiving and bearing a child could apply both to Isaiah's wife and to Mary. Mary was a virgin and had never known a man. Isaiah's wife, however, when she conceived, had known a man.

But possibly at the time the prophecy was given, she had not yet married. It's possible that he married her in order to have this child. That she was in fact a virgin at the time the prophecy was made.

So that the prophecy would mean essentially a woman who is a virgin at this moment will conceive, but not necessarily that she will be still a virgin when she conceives. But she is at this moment a virgin, but I'm going to go into her right after this and then she's not going to be a virgin anymore and she's going to conceive. So he'd be saying essentially a young woman in Israel will conceive and her son, when born, will have this significance.

It will mark only a very short time before the extinction of those kings who are threatening you right now. This will be assigned to you. Now here's a second reason that some people have problems with this being applied to Isaiah's son.

It's because it said it'd be a sign. I'll give you a sign. And people say, well that wouldn't be any kind of a sign.

There's nothing miraculous about this conception. There is about Jesus' conception because the woman was a virgin when she conceived there. But how could this be a sign? And the problem here arises from people assuming that a sign must be a miracle.

A sign doesn't have to be a miracle. A sign just means something that is giving a message. It could be an acted parable or whatever.

If you look later in this verse, in Isaiah 8 and verse 18, Isaiah says in Isaiah 8, 18, Here I am and the children whom the Lord has given me, we are for signs and wonders in Israel. In other words, Isaiah and his sons are specifically said to be signs. So that too connects back with 714.

Now there's one other thing I'd like to consider. And that is that in Isaiah 714 it doesn't say a virgin. It says the virgin shall conceive.

The virgin shall conceive. An alternate way of understanding the meaning that is to my mind an interesting alternative is that the virgin might be a reference to Jerusalem itself or the people of Judah themselves. This would seem to find some support.

In Isaiah chapter 37 and verse 22, where Isaiah tells King Hezekiah to send the message to the besieging Sennacherib. Isaiah 37, 22, This is the word which the Lord has spoken concerning him. The virgin, the daughter of Zion, which means Jerusalem, has despised you and left you to scorn.

Notice the virgin, the daughter of Zion, a reference to the people of Jerusalem. Now, if the people of Jerusalem were symbolically called the virgin, then when Isaiah said the virgin will conceive and bring forth a son, it could simply refer to the birth of a son in Jerusalem or of the people of Judah. And both Jesus and Isaiah's son were children of the virgin in that sense because both were of the tribe of Judah.

Now, that in no way cancels out or precludes or minimizes the literal virgin birth of Christ because, like I said, the passage can have a double meaning. What I'm saying is the language does not preclude Isaiah's own son being the first fulfillment of this. The sign to Ahaz was the birth of this child and the principal significance of it was that before this child reached the age of two or three years old, the kings that were at that moment menacing Judah would be gone.

And that that is the principal meaning. Okay, so that's how I understand that the secondary meaning, and more important to us, is that it refers to the actual virgin birth of Christ. But this is one of the few cases in the Bible that I can actually point to where there seems to be a clear double fulfillment of a prophecy, a fulfillment in history and a fulfillment in Christ.

And, you know, we already saw something like that in the Davidic covenant given in 2 Samuel chapter 7, where David was told that when he dies, a son that would come from his bowels would sit on his throne and build a house unto God's name. Fulfilled, it seems, partially in Solomon, but it went on saying, I'll establish his kingdom forever and all that, and obviously a reference to Christ. In fact, quoted in the New Testament as a reference to Christ.

So there's at least two passages, two prophecies I know of in the Old Testament, that have a fulfillment in the generation of the children, of the persons being addressed or doing the addressing, and then a secondary fulfillment in Christ himself. Now, going on to chapter 9, I'm passing over some good stuff, but we don't have any choice. Chapter 9 also contains a passage of the kingdom of the Messiah.

It says in verses 1 and 2, Nevertheless, the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed. Actually, this reading in the New King James is difficult to understand. Let me read to you how the New American Standard and the NIV render it.

Not because I like the NIV, but it just clarifies what's being said here. In the New American Standard Bible, verses 1 and 2 say, But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish. This is after it's given a description of the anguish of the people of Israel, the northern kingdom, when the Assyrians wiped them out.

But now it talks about a hope coming to the people of the northern kingdom, which was later Galilee. It says in the New American Standard, But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish. That is, the people of the northern kingdom.

In earlier times, he treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt. That is, when the Assyrians wiped them out. But later he shall make it glorious.

And then, verse 2, The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them light has shined. It turns out that this is quoted in Matthew 4, verses 12 through 17, as having its fulfillment when Jesus preached in Galilee.

Matthew 4, verses 12 through 17, quote these verses. And say, this was fulfilled when Jesus began his ministry in Galilee. In other words, the prophecy is saying that even though God is treating the northern kingdom, the northern tribes with contempt in the days of the Assyrians and of Isaiah, yet later he had a glorious future, a glorious blessing for them.

Namely, Jesus would conduct his major ministry in that area. His salvation and his kingdom would be offered there first. His principal ministry was in Galilee.

And that's what Matthew understands these verses to mean. In the NIV, these same verses in Isaiah 9 say, In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of

Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles by the way of the sea along the Jordan. In other words, God treated them badly in the days of Isaiah, but he'd later glorify them in the days of Jesus.

So we have here a prophecy about Jesus. And there's no question as to its application in verse 6 and 7, where it says, For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. The government will be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government, that is his kingdom and peace, there will be no end. Upon the throne of David and over his kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and justice from this time forward even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

And that's the end of the kingdom passage here. So verses 1 through 7 in this case are about the Messianic age. And we know that that applies to Jesus' first coming, not his second coming.

I mean, a child is born. He's not going to be born at the end of the world. He's already been born.

Furthermore, the ministry of Jesus on earth in his first coming is described in verses 1 and 2 according to Matthew. So we have a time indicator for the kingdom age in this case and in all cases. But we'll look at them all in detail at another time.

Let's move along. The remainder of chapter 9 after verse 7 and all the way up through chapter 10, verse 4. So we're talking about chapter 9, verse 8 through chapter 10, verse 4. Again, a chapter division is a little awkward. Could have been made four verses, could have been moved back four verses more reasonably.

We have a prophecy of judgment upon Israel in four stanzas, each of which ends with the same refrain. There are four stanzas. It's poetic.

It's like a song, a dirge against them. And each of the four stanzas ends with the same refrain. That refrain is found, for example, in verse 12.

For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. The second stanza ends at verse 17, where the last words are, For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. The third stanza ends at verse 21.

For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. And in chapter 10, verses 1 through 4 is the fourth stanza of the last verse saying, For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. Now, to say God's anger, what it does is it lifts all the horrible things that are going to happen.

It says, And even then, his anger is not fully extinguished. He hasn't ventilated all of his wrath yet. His hand is still stretched out.

Now, when I was younger and I read that, I used to think his hand was stretched out like, Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavily laden, and I'll give you rest. You know, like a real generous offer. He's holding out his hand to you, an offer of mercy.

But the expression, his hand is stretched out still, actually refers to his hand of judgment. All these things have happened, but he's still holding out his hand, dispensing more judgments yet. He has not exhausted or ventilated all of his wrath.

We know that means that because, in chapter 5, back in chapter 5, verse 25, you'll notice it says, in Isaiah 5, 25, Therefore the anger of the Lord is aroused against his people. He has stretched out his hand against them and stricken them, and the hills trembled. Their carcasses were as refuse in the midst of the streets.

For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. The same refrain, but it only occurs once in chapter 5. It recurs four times in rapid succession in chapters 9 and 10. But notice the context in Isaiah 5, 25.

He has stretched out his hand against them and stricken them. So his stretched out hand is a hand of chastening, of smiting. And so his hand is still stretched out, which means he's still striking them.

All these things are described of what he's done, but he's not done yet. You ain't seen nothing yet. His hand is stretched out still.

And so that prophecy in four stanzas occupies chapter 9, verse 8, through chapter 10, verse 4. After that, chapter 10 sort of shifts to a more positive thing, in a way. Not entirely positive at first, but it gets more positive all the way through chapter 12. It just kind of gets brighter and brighter until the perfect day.

In chapter 11, verse 5, it's a woe on Assyria. Now, all this judgment on Israel that's been described in the previous verses is executed by the hand of the Assyrians. The Assyrians are the weapon that God has been using to punish and to strike Israel.

But he points out that after he's done with that, he's going to beat up Assyria, because they don't have good motives for what they're doing. They happen to be a tool, a hapless tool in the hand of the sovereign God, to punish the people who deserve it, but they deserve it too. And therefore, they're going to get it.

So it's a woe to Assyria, the rod of my anger, and the staff in whose hand is my indignation. I will send him, that is Assyria, against an ungodly nation, that is Israel. And against the people of my wrath, I will give him a charge.

But it says in verse 7, yet he does not mean so, nor does his heart think so. But it's in his heart just to destroy and to cut off a bunch of nations. In other words, I'm using Assyria, but Assyria doesn't see itself as a tool in my hand.

It doesn't honor me. Assyria is just an aggressive nation, trying to wipe out people. Therefore, even though I've used Assyria, I'm going to judge Assyria, because they're wicked too.

And he goes on throughout, all the way up through verse 19, along this vein, about how Assyria deserves to be punished, because even though they are used by God, they are bold and they boast and they arrogate themselves against God. And they give themselves the credit for their victories instead of God. And he says in verse 15, shall the axe boast itself against him who chops with it? Or shall the saw magnify itself against him who saws with it? As if a rod could wield itself against those who lift it up, or as if the staff could lift up as if it were not wood.

In other words, he's saying that Assyria is like a saw or an axe in the hand of God. It's a tool that God is using to accomplish his purposes through his sovereign ordering of things in the world. But it takes credit for its own actions, as if a saw could saw by itself, or an axe could chop wood by itself.

And so, because of this arrogance, God is angry at Assyria and will wipe them out too. Now, the latter verses of chapter 10, verses 20 through 34, have to do with the remnant of Israel again. I personally believe that this looks forward ultimately to the remnant that was saved in the days of Christ.

The disciples of Jesus, the Jews who came to Christ, and in the day of Pentecost, in the early days of Acts, which later, of course, were joined by the Gentiles, and that conglomerate was called what we call the Church. We'll have time to look at that another time, I trust, but it's cast in the setting of the Assyrians wiping things out. He says, for example, and he talks to Judah in this way, in verse 24, Therefore, thus says the Lord God of hosts, O my people who dwell in Zion, that's Jerusalem, do not be afraid of the Assyrian.

He shall strike you with a rod and lift up his staff against you, in the manner that Egypt did, for yet a little while, and my indignation will cease and my anger in their destruction, as I'll wipe out Assyria and this judgment upon you. And the Lord of hosts will stir up a scourge for him like the slaughter of Midian. So he goes on to talk about the judgment of Assyria and the vindication of his remnant people.

But look at chapter 11, verse 1, There shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots, obviously a reference to Christ. And it goes on through the entirety of chapter 11, up to this point, the longest prophecy of the Messianic age that we've encountered so far in Isaiah. There has been one in chapter 2

that was about 4 verses long.

There's one about that length in chapter 4. There was one in chapter 9, which was 7 verses long. And now in chapter 11, we have one that's 16 verses long. It is talking about the same age that chapter 2 and chapter 4 and chapter 9 were talking about.

It has many of the same features, only it's more detailed, more elaborate. We will talk about this in detail in a session to come. It's a very, very important chapter in Isaiah.

Chapter 11 is like one of the few chapters that you can really use to connect many places with the New Testament. Many of the things in Isaiah 11 were alluded to or quoted in the New Testament so as to give us a flawless understanding of how the apostles and Jesus understood this chapter. And the reason that's valuable is because this chapter is about the same thing that all the kingdom passages are about.

And therefore, by the reference points in this chapter to the New Testament, we can get a glimpse of how the New Testament writers and Jesus understood these kingdom passages in general and applied them. Unfortunately, we'll have to just make that comment and pass over it now, reserving it for a later time. Chapter 12 then is a hymn of praise, of praise to God.

And it's very short, but I believe it's a hymn of praise for the salvation that we have in Christ. Obviously, I believe chapter 11 is about the church age and our salvation. I think it says in chapter 12, verse 1, in that day, that is the day described in chapter 11.

So it is a hymn that applies to the salvation that we have in Christ. Now, having said that, and not reading at this point because we need to move quickly along. We're about done in about two minutes here, three.

Chapters 13 through 23, as I said in our introduction yesterday, are the third section and the longest of the book of judgment, the first 39 chapters of Isaiah. Eleven chapters long. It is the segment I called the burdens against the nations.

We have two chapters of burdens against Babylon. Chapter 13 and 14 are against Babylon, with the exception of the last few verses of chapter 14, which are about against the Philistines. And then chapters 15 and 16 are against Moab.

Chapter 17 is against Damascus or the nation of Syria. Damascus was its capital. Chapter 18 is against Ethiopia.

And chapter 19 against Egypt. And chapter 20 against Ethiopia and Egypt. So 18 is against Ethiopia.

19 is against Egypt. And 20 is against Egypt and Ethiopia. At the end of chapter 19, there's an interesting prophecy about Assyria and Egypt being together with Israel with

one altar.

We'll talk about that under another heading later on. Chapter 20 has a sign that Isaiah was required to walk around naked for three years, as a picture of how the people of Egypt and Ethiopia would be carried away in captivity into Assyria naked. Strange passage.

Back in chapter 14, I passed over quickly, there's the only place in the Bible that mentions Lucifer. We'll cover that on another occasion as well. Chapter 22 is the only chapter in this segment that is against, not a Gentile nation, but against Jerusalem.

And then chapter 23 is against Tyre. And that encloses the section of chapters 13 through 23. And it's interesting that a prophecy against Jerusalem would be put in just one chapter before the end.

And that one Gentile nation of the many would be reserved for afterwards. I mean, it seems like Tyre, which is mentioned in chapter 23, could have been in chapter 22. Then you would have had all the Gentile nations together in ten consecutive chapters.

Then the one against Jerusalem could be put in. But it's as if God deliberately had the chapter against Jerusalem inserted before he was done with the section about the Gentiles, as if to say Jerusalem really belongs in this class. Even though Jerusalem thought itself superior to the Gentiles, God had the same kind of complaints against Jerusalem that he had against the Gentiles.

And for that reason, it's put in where it is. Now, we're going to close with this, but let me say about chapter 22. There is an interesting little prophecy at the end of chapter 22.

In verses 15 through 25. In that prophecy, it's basically a prophecy about a guy named Eliakim and a guy named Shebna. If you read the prophecy, you'll find that Shebna, at the time that Isaiah was making this prophecy, was apparently the steward of the king's house in Jerusalem.

He had a role similar to Joseph in Potiphar's house. In fact, the word that is used to describe him being over the house in verse 15 is the same expression in Hebrew as used of Joseph being over the house of Potiphar. He was a servant, but a servant with great authority.

He had the keys to the king's chambers. If people wished to see the king, it was up to Shebna to give it to them or not. Give them access or not.

However, Shebna, for reasons not described herein, had displeased God and was going to be cast out like a tumbleweed out of the land of Israel. He may have been a foreigner. His father's name is not given.

But the prophecy says that somebody else named Eliakim, verse 20, the son of Hilkiah, who is clearly Jewish by the name, was going to replace Shebna. He says in verse 21, I'm going to close Eliakim with your, Shebna's, robe and strengthen him with your belt and commit your responsibility to his hand. So this is a prophecy about the rejection of a man named Shebna from office in the Jerusalem court and his replacement by a man named Eliakim.

But what makes this an interesting prophecy is verse 22. Speaking of Eliakim, who would replace Shebna, it says, The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder. He shall open and no one shall shut.

He shall shut and no one shall open. Now, the reason this is interesting is because Jesus, in Revelation 3, 7, picks up the wording from this verse deliberately. He doesn't quote it precisely, but there's no question as to the allusion.

In Revelation 3, 7, Jesus says to the church, the angel of the church of Philadelphia, right? Thus says he who is holy, who is true, he who has the key of David, who opens and no one shuts and shuts and no one opens. Alluding very strongly, partially quoting from Isaiah 22, 22. Now, the prophecy in Isaiah is about a man named Eliakim.

It specifically says so. He has the key of David on his shoulder, which means that the house of David, which is the king's palace, is accessible to him and only to him. He alone has the power to grant access or to debar access to the king.

He has the keys. He can open. If he opens the door, no one has the authority to shut it.

If he shuts and locks the door, no one has the authority to open it. He's the man with this kind of authority in the king's house. Now, the language applies to Jesus in a secondary but more important sense.

Jesus is saying to the church of Philadelphia, I'm the one who opens or shuts the doors to God's house. If I grant access to heaven, no one can debar you. No one can shut that door that I open.

However, if I shut the door to anyone, no one can open it. It's like saying, I'm the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me.

Jesus alone has the authority in God's house that Eliakim was being given in the house of the king of Judah. The king of Judah being a type of God's kingdom. And Eliakim being a type, in this case, of Christ.

Therefore, the words that apply to Eliakim are applied by Christ to himself. Again, a second kind of fulfillment, a different kind of thing, a spiritual version of the same thing. By the way, the closing verses of chapter 22 indicate that Eliakim's house will become overburdened.

He'll be fastened like a tent peg. It says in verse 23, I will fasten him as a peg in a secure place. And he will become glorious, thrown to his father's house.

They will hang on him all the glory of his father's house, offspring and issue, all vessels of small quantity and cups and pitchers. And that day, says the Lord of hosts, the peg that is fastened in a secure place will be removed and cut down and fall, and the burden that was on it will be cut off. Apparently, Eliakim was a good man, but his whole family, through nepotism, would take advantage of his high status in the government.

And he'd be like a kitchen peg with all these pots and pans hanging on it, his relatives hanging on him, burdening him down. That is, through his position of authority, relatives of his would come into the administration and get places of authority and responsibility, and they'd be kind of all hanging on his shirt tails, like pots in a kitchen hanging on a peg. But it would be too much to bear.

Apparently, his relatives would be unworthy of their positions and will bring down the whole reputation of his house. We don't know anything about the fulfillment of this. All we know is the prediction.

We read nowhere in the Bible how this was literally fulfilled, but we have no reason to doubt that it was. The interesting thing, however, is that there is a sense in which Eliakim serves as a type of Christ, so that the words that are predicted of him are later applied to Christ. Well, we didn't quite make it, but I do believe that in one more session we could get to the bottom of this.