

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Lecture 31, Prophets of the Southern Kingdom

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Let's pray together as we start.

Our Father in heaven, our precious Redeemer, most Holy Spirit of truth, as we bow, help us to be mindful of who you are, of the astonishing privilege it is to be your children, of the amazing grace that you've granted to each one of us in our need. Father, we confess that we do need you, especially when we're feeling overwhelmed by burdens that may be academic or otherwise.

We pray for your tender care, guidance, and protection. Father, we also ask that you be present with us as we study today. May we worship you as we study.

May our hearts burn with a desire to know you better. Father, may we prepare to be prophets to our own generation, to the people around us. May that preparation be out of love for them and deep concern.

Father, we continue to pray for those who struggle with very, very difficult things. We ask that you care for them. Bless us this day. Bless each one here. We ask these things in Christ's name with thanksgiving, amen.

We're going to review just a little bit because, as I said before, as you start thinking about the prophets, particularly in conjunction with the exam, there are some things that I think it would be helpful that you know that kind of encapsulate what each prophetic message is all about. Now, let me just remind you: go back to that list on Blackboard, which prophet did this, which prophet was that, and use that to review even for the ones that are forthcoming for the Friday exam.

But let's try this one. Which prophet condemned the nation's roundabout before addressing Israel? Somebody we talked about last time. Amos, right, good.

There's a lot more you want to know about him, but you know, that's kind of critical as well, isn't it? How about this one? Which prophet gave his children symbolic names? Jezreel, not loved, not my people. Hosea, right. And then, what was the purpose of the Book of Jonah? It's kind of an overarching purpose that we described.

Yeah, convey this message about the sovereignty of God in every sphere, his intention to save people even if they weren't Israelites. His mercy to Nineveh, in other words, and his sovereignty over the natural realm as well. That's just a little bit by way of review.

We've got lots to do today in terms of our prophets of the South. We're going to spend most of our time, obviously, on Isaiah. But we want to talk about Micah as well because Micah's a contemporary of Isaiah.

He lives in a slightly different part of the Southern Kingdom. Isaiah is sort of located in Jerusalem. Micah's going to be out in the Shephelah.

Isn't it fun to know that the Shephelah is interesting in terms of understanding a prophet? And then we'll talk about Joel. I think I said when we were sort of locating what prophet spoke to whom, we're not entirely certain, just when Joel prophesied. But it's a good guess that it might be some time just prior to the fall of the Southern Kingdom.

So, we're going to put him in here today as well. First of all, Isaiah, well, you know, Isaiah is wonderful for lots and lots of reasons. I hope to unpack a little of that for you today.

But it's significant, too, just from the perspective of all the prophets that are quoted in the New Testament. Guess who got the highest rate, okay? Isaiah is quoted more frequently in the New Testament than any of the other prophets. Interestingly enough, Isaiah is also a high-profile character in the Dead Sea Scrolls. For those of you who know anything about the Dead Sea Scrolls, it is a very important discovery of manuscripts just about 12 miles east of Jerusalem, right along the edge of the Dead Sea at a place called Qumran.

Among those scrolls are a fair number of biblical texts, or at least portions of biblical texts. Isaiah shows up there in multiple copies, but that's not true of all the others, whole scrolls.

Also, there are some commentary materials left over from the Dead Sea community talking about Isaiah. So, you get the impression that Isaiah is really, really important. And of course, we'll try to understand why that might be as we work our way through it today.

The first thing we have to do regarding Isaiah is discuss the historical contexts. And I have that in the plural. Let me read you chapter one, verse one.

Trust you've read this already. I should have turned there. Haven't yet.

Getting there. Slowly getting there. The vision.

Notice we've got another instance here where Isaiah is seeing, and he's seeing rather remarkably. It's a hazon. Remember ahoze was somebody who saw what's on the other side of your computer screen, if I'm in this perspective.

At any rate, the vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah saw during the reigns of the kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah is that. I suggested to you when we talked about the historical period, that it seems, according to Jewish tradition, that Isaiah was martyred during this horrible purge of God's people under Manasseh. So, Isaiah's prophesying for a long, long time.

Now, we need to talk a little bit about this. Uzziah, we've got some dates for Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Hezekiah, down to about 685. Well, that's all well and good.

And again, just keep in mind the length of time. We're going to come back to that a little bit later on. But the other thing I want you to notice is that we've got a changeover as you're looking forward.

When Isaiah is living, i.e., on these dates that are right here, the major foreign threat is Assyria, right? A major foreign threat is Assyria. We saw that with Hezekiah, Hezekiah was building the tunnel, restructuring the walls, and defending Jerusalem, and we were worried that Sennacherib was going to take over. Assyria was the major threat during Isaiah's lifetime.

However, in the second part of Isaiah, the major threat is Babylon. Beyond that, we have the mention of someone named Cyrus, who is mentioned by name in the book of Isaiah. At the end of chapter 44 and the beginning of chapter 45, God, speaking through Isaiah, refers to Cyrus, my anointed, who's going to restore Jerusalem, all right? So, our historical contexts are very important here.

Isaiah is speaking in this timeframe that I've got up there for dates, but he's looking way ahead, not only to Babylon and the return from captivity, but also naming a name, and that name happens to be Cyrus, King of Persia, who gives the decree. And we're going to be talking about that later on next week. Cyrus gave the decree that the people were to come back to Jerusalem.

Now, of course, what is this doing then? Isaiah is very specifically prophesying, isn't he? He's not just generally saying, well, you know, you're probably going to come back from exile that you might go into. He's saying somebody named Cyrus. 539 is when this decree happens.

That's a far piece down the line chronologically from when Isaiah was living. And of course, if you're somebody who doesn't necessarily believe in miraculous events, such as predictive prophecy, and the fact that God can indeed do that and reveal these things through his prophets, then you might say, well, somebody else wrote it. And that brings us to, whoops, it brings us to a map.

I forgot the map was in here. This is just to remind you of where Assyria is located. You know all that.

By the time Israel comes along, I have my pointer here somewhere. Sorry, by the time Israel comes along. By the time Isaiah came along, we'd got the Assyrians very clearly taking over the northern kingdom, which was Israel, and then laying siege to Jerusalem.

And so, this whole area is going to be tenuous, what am I trying to say, existing by that time. All right, now let's go on to what I wanted to do. You know, there's a number of instances in which biblical scholarship has looked at things in the Old Testament, and they've said, boy, you know, I'm not so sure that this person authored this book.

We confronted it just a little bit when we talked about who might have written the Pentateuch, whether it was Moses or somebody else. There are a number of instances where these questions are raised. Isaiah is probably the most prominent example.

There are others, but Isaiah is the parade example. The reason is that scholars read the text and see what I just pointed out to you. Isaiah, in their minds, could not have written those two verses, the end of chapter 44 and the beginning of chapter 45, that specifically name Cyrus.

In their minds, Isaiah could not have written those. Because how on earth could somebody living back in the 700s or early 600s look all the way ahead and name somebody by name who didn't even show up on the scene and make his decree until 539, all right? That's the problem for them. And so let me give you a little illustration of this.

The book entitled Understanding the Bible is used throughout campuses in this country. I happen to have a second edition in my hands right here. It's already up through its seventh edition.

So, this is a fairly well-used text. And it's an introduction to the Bible, a reader's introduction. And let me read to you a couple of paragraphs in terms of what this author, reflecting the common opinion, all right, what this author says about Isaiah.

Prominent among the prophetic books is that of Isaiah. I've just tried to illustrate that to you as well, which preserves some of the loftiest thoughts and most memorable poetry in world literature. I would agree with that.

It's not a single unified work, however, but an anthology of many prophetic oracles produced over many years. Well, you know, okay, Isaiah's writing, I would say over a

period of 40 years, so produced over many years, not a problem. Scholars who have analyzed Isaiah's 66 chapters have generally agreed that the book can be divided into at least three distinct parts.

Each portion, now here comes a place where I will probably part company with this author. Each portion represents a different time period and a different author. The first 39 chapters, except for 24 through 27, 33 through 35, and 36 through 39, did you catch that? We're leaving out 11 chapters right away because, unfortunately, they happen to mention Babylon and a few other things, all right.

But at any rate, the first 39 chapters, with those exceptions, are thought to be largely the work of Isaiah of Jerusalem, who prophesied between about 742 and 700. He's compressed that a little bit here when the Assyrian Empire engulfed Israel and threatened Judah as well.

Okay, so that's section one. Chapters 40 through 55 present a historical situation in which Babylon, not Assyria, dominates. That, in common parlance, is Second Isaiah.

So, if you're ever reading something about the book of Isaiah and you read Second Isaiah, you know where that author's coming from. He's bought into this whole thing that it's written later. The figure of Isaiah does not appear after chapter 39.

Striking differences in style—hold on to that; I'm going to talk about it in a moment. Style, vocabulary, and theological perspective indicate a new author at work. Chapters 56 through 66 seem to represent oracles from the 8th to early 5th centuries BCE, almost the whole Age of Prophecy.

Scholars customarily treat each of Isaiah's three major divisions as separate literary units. He goes on to talk a little bit more about that. So, you got the point, right? You deal with this thing about mentioning Cyrus.

Now, notice he never said anything about that. But that's underlying, that is the underlying problem. You deal with that by saying, okay, divisions of the text.

Presumed authors and dates, I've just told you what those are. And our key section, chapters 40 through 55, is coming somewhere along the area of the 6th century as opposed to the 8th century. In other words, when any dodo in the world could look at Cyrus and say, oh yeah, I bet he's going to do something like issuing a decree.

Let's write it all down and call it prophecy. I'm sorry, I've sort of, you know, caricatured that, but you get the point. Let's talk a little bit about this.

And, you know, let me just say this right from the get-go. I'm dealing with Isaiah in 40 minutes today. Take Dr. Wilson's prophetic literature class, where he really does dig

into some of these things at much greater depth than we can ever do in this particular context.

The Old Testament is written to give you an overview. But there are all these other classes that you can dig, and Dr. Wilson's prophetic lit class is a class not to be missed, even if you're not a Bible major. It's a class to take for lots of reasons.

At any rate, he'll deal with Isaiah. Let's talk a little bit about that quote that I just sort of read to you from Stephen Harris's book, where he's saying it's evident that we're talking about different authors because of differences in style, content, and theological perspective. And again, noting that he doesn't raise the real red flag, which is the mention of Cyrus.

First things first, kind of a simplistic answer, but let's at least talk about it a little bit. Isaiah's prophesying for 40 years. He's writing over that period of time.

Stop and think about it. Hang onto the paper that you wrote for this class on Proverbs and drag it out when you're 60. And see if it reflects the kind of writing you're doing when you're 60.

I'm presuming you're still going to be writing something at that point. The stuff I wrote as a college student is just not at all like the kinds of things I'm writing right now. I'm not saying that Isaiah matures from a crummy writer to a really excellent writer in the last half of the book, but I'm saying there are, just from a human perspective, there are going to be some changes here.

Remember, the Holy Spirit doesn't squelch the person of the prophet, or for that matter, the age of the prophet. The Holy Spirit instead uses that person in the given circumstances. And so, it is not a surprise that there would be some changes over time in the style of writing, in the vocabulary, in the theological perspective.

Not a surprise at all. And especially if we've got God the Holy Spirit inspiring us for some specific purposes that God the Holy Spirit has, which gets us to point two. As we study history, you can't ever lose sight of history when you're reading prophetic literature.

The major problem, major problem, the thing that God invaded against them over and over and over again, was their spiritual adultery. Remember Hosea? In other words, idolatry. That's the crisis.

That's what we're reading, especially Kings--2 Kings. These people kept prostituting themselves after other gods. That's a huge crisis.

Interestingly enough, and we're going to look at it in a minute, Isaiah chapters 40 through 45, more than anything else, are a strong, strong, strong condemnation of idolatry. And if you've read it, you know that it's there. Now, here's what's fascinating.

After the exile, when it's coming to a close and when they're coming back to the land, idolatry is not that much of a problem yet. Their minds and their hearts have been purged of this. They've spent 70 years in exile.

They know that that exile was because of the kinds of things they did. They don't need a big, long sermon about idolatry. They've been chastised.

And so, it doesn't make sense to have chapters 40 through 55 dated to a time when idolatry wasn't an issue. That am I speaking English on that? If you get nothing else out of what I'm saying right now, recognize that this is one of the major ways to counter this claim that Isaiah can be divvied up into different sections, and that happens to be written later. If Isaiah's going to spend all this time, and we're going to look at some of these passages, he's stingingly rebuking people who worship idols.

You know, that doesn't have any weight at all if it's not a problem. Doesn't have any weight at all. All right, also, and point two leads to point three.

Right at the end of this stinging condemnation of idolatry is when Isaiah mentions Cyrus. But what he said before that is, look, the Lord God knows the beginning from the end. If you've read Isaiah chapters 40 through 45, you know that.

God is beginning, he ends, he knows the beginning from the end, he's the one that says something will happen, and it happens. And Isaiah's saying, the sovereign Lord in that way is contrasted with your idols that you are so stupidly making and worshiping. All right, they can't, they're dumb, they're blind, they're deaf, they can't do these things, they're objects of wood and metal.

God can tell the future, but idols can't. And then he says, doesn't say it like this, but here's the parade example. The mention of Cyrus is to illustrate this.

People who would be reading the book of Isaiah and having that tradition in their minds, even 150 years later when it actually comes to pass, would say, oh yeah, we had a prophet that said that. It must be something about God. All right? And then interestingly enough, even though our critics tend to say that the same theological themes don't appear, they do.

God is called the Holy One of Israel throughout the entire text. It's more than 25 times it's mentioned. And it's not in just one part, it's in both parts.

All right? There are references to the temple in both parts. And so, some of the same prominent themes that are very important for Israel and God's people show up throughout the book. Now, there's a lot more to say about that.

And so, I would encourage you to take Dr. Wilson's class. Now, any questions? I really want you to get this idolatry issue. That's the big key here.

Yeah, Rebecca? Could you just be saying like... The two that are really prominent in terms of the same themes and expressions sort of thread their way throughout both sections, both parts, and all three parts of the book. First of all, God's being called the Holy One of Israel. That never changes.

All right? So, either you say Isaiah himself was using it in the eighth century, and then you've got this anonymous school of Isaiah that just sort of picks it up and likes it, and then a later bunch of oracles from three centuries also having the same thing. I mean, it's possible, but at least it makes more sense. The second one is the temple.

The idea of the temple shows up in both the first part and then that very clear passage that Jesus is going to quote from Isaiah chapter 56, as well as others. Sarah? Are the people of Israel still falling into the veil in Asherah worship, or are they influenced by many different people? Are you talking about the people when? During Isaiah's time? It's all there. Yeah, it's all there.

If he's living at the same time the Northern Kingdom falls, do you remember 2 Kings 17, where everything possible they could worship, they seem to be worshipping? So, it's all there in that one big, messy, syncretistic, ugly stuff. Yeah.

Sorry, Chelsea. Well, my suggestion is that they have now spent their 70 years in exile, and they know if they're listening at all to the Torah, that the reason they were taken into exile is because of their idolatry. That's what the prophetic voice has been saying all along, over and over and over.

It's a hammering at home. And so interestingly enough, when you read Ezra and Nehemiah, there are some warnings there, but there are not strong warnings against idolatry. Not yet.

It's going to show up again. And Nehemiah's going to warn them against intermarrying lest they fall into these patterns. But you don't have this steady drumbeat about idols and idolatry that are so apparent earlier on.

Trevor. So, you're just saying that it makes more sense for him to be condemning idolatry in the 8th-century context. Yeah.

Because it's leading up to exile, as opposed to coming back from exile. Yeah, it makes a whole lot more sense because that's when the idolatry was such a threat to who they were. And, you know, the Torah said, if you continue to prostitute yourselves, the land is going to vomit you out.

Leviticus talks about that specifically, just as it vomited out its former inhabitants. So yeah, that's exactly right. Good.

Got it? Let's carry on a little bit. This fills right in from where we left off. God's very clear here in who he is.

And we're going to pick up on this supreme and unique nature of God. Again, we could go on and on and on, looking at passage after passage because this is a hugely important book. But, just let me read to you a little bit of this condemnation that I've just been talking about.

Because you see, Isaiah is pretty sarcastic here. Don't think the prophets don't have their own ironies and sarcasm. I won't read the whole thing, but here's the flavor.

This is chapter 44, starting with verse six. This is what the Lord says. Israel's king and redeemer, the Lord Almighty.

Got the titles? It's probably a fairly important discourse. And now, let's see. I am the first, and I am the last.

Apart from me, there's no other God. Who, then, is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare.

Let him lay out before me what has happened since I established my people and what is yet to come. Yes, let him foretell what will come. Are you getting the picture? The Lord, speaking through Isaiah, is setting the stage here and saying that if somebody is truly God, that somebody can tell the future.

Let him foretell what will come. Don't tremble, don't be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago? You are my witnesses.

Is there any other God besides me? No, there's no other rock. I know no one. Now, he goes on with his sarcastic condemnation of people who are stupid enough to make idols.

All who make idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless. Those who speak up for them are blind. They're ignorant to their own shame.

Who shapes a God and casts an idol which can profit him nothing? In verse 12, the blacksmith takes a tool and works it in the coals. He shapes an idol with hammers. He forges it with the might of his arm.

Are you getting a picture here? Use your mental imagination even at 9.30 in the morning. Do you know what a forge looks like? It's hot in there. You're getting this metal to the point where you can hammer it, and it's malleable.

You can shape it the way you want it. This guy's working hard, all right? He gets hungry, he loses his strength. He drinks no water, he feels faint.

All to make a piece of metal. The carpenter measures with a line, makes an outline with a marker, roughs it out with chisels, marks it with compasses, shapes it into the form of a man, of a man in all his glory, that it may dwell in a shrine. Cuts down cedars, et cetera, et cetera.

Some of it he takes and warms himself. Some of this wood, kindles a fire, bakes bread, but he also fashions a god and worships it. Makes an idol and bows down to it. Half of the wood he burns in the fire. Over it he prepares his meal. Roasts his meat and eats his fill.

Warms himself and he says, ah, I'm warm, I see the fire. From the rest, he makes an idol. He bows down to it and worships.

He prays to it and says, save me, you're my god. Are you getting how dumb this is? Verse 18: they know nothing, they understand nothing. Their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see and their minds are closed so they cannot understand.

No one stops to think, half of it I use for the fuel and the other half I'm making an idol. They're just doing it, which shows how blind and deaf these folks are. So, there are two things going on in that passage.

One is the contrast between God, who can tell the future, and the idols, who are challenged to do so and cannot. And of course, it is the very end of that chapter where he then says, I, the Lord, made all things, stretched out the heavens, foils the signs of the false prophets, who says of Jerusalem, it shall be inhabited, who says of Cyrus, he's my shepherd, and he will say of Jerusalem, let it be rebuilt. And that's the closure to this whole challenge to idols.

Got it? Sort of, let's go on. It's not surprising that Isaiah would focus on the holiness of God. How was he called? Go back to two lessons from today.

How was Isaiah called? Kate, yeah, he's in the temple, isn't he? And he sees God on his throne, and the seraphim are there, and they're calling out, holy, holy, holy is the

Lord God Almighty. And Isaiah is, I'm a ruined person, I'm a man of unclean lips, what on earth am I going to do? Then the seraph comes and touches his lips, and then he's given his commission to speak God's word. No wonder he's got a sense of the holiness of God that most other folks just don't have.

He's seen God in that sanctuary. And remember the sanctuary was specifically there to be God's presence in their midst, God's holy presence in their midst. But this expression comes out over and over and over again.

Usually, not usually, but often used in conjunction with the redeemer of Israel. So the holy one of Israel, the redeemer of Israel, they go together. Well, that gets us to our next point, which is simply this.

Isaiah is probably quoted so much in the New Testament because it's Isaiah among the prophets who gives us this embrace on God's part of Israel. God of people well beyond the boundaries of Israel. It's a universal message.

It's reaching out to Gentiles. Let's read just a little bit. Chapter two, verse two.

Everybody's going to stream to the temple. All the nations will come to the temple. And then think of that.

And remember our temple theme that continues right on into chapter 56, a passage I bet you're familiar with. Verse six, the foreigners, okay, not Israelites, the foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to serve him, to love the name of the Lord, to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it, these will I bring to my holy mountain. Wonderful promise to people who are at least, were then considered on the outside, the other.

God is saying, no, they're going to be part of this. I'll bring them to my holy mountain; I'll give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar.

For my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. Where do you hear that again? Who says it? The right answer is? Yeah, when? Remember when he was cleansing the temple? And he says you've made this place a den of robbers. It's supposed to be a house of prayer for all nations.

He's putting together Jeremiah seven, that accusation about den of robbers, we're going to do that next week. And this promise, the temple in Jesus' day had a huge courtyard around the temple, a huge courtyard, the court of the Gentiles, and they could come there, all right? So there was an invitation to people. Isaiah has a message about, as I said, reaching out.

And then we have a third thing. This third bullet is going to actually lead us into the next other bullet, if you want to call it that. But if you've got your Bibles, I'm going to read for your sections of chapter 49, verse six, the second half of verse six, talking about the servant of the Lord, to whom we're going to come back in just a moment and kind of flesh that out a little bit.

But the second half of verse six says, I'm going to make you a light for the Gentiles. Now, who the servant is another whole issue. We're going to get to that.

But I'm going to make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth. No wonder the gospel writers are inspired to draw Isaiah's message. No wonder Jesus refers to Isaiah so much.

My salvation, God speaking, to the ends of the earth. That brings us to our whole idea of the servant. And this is another key thing I want you to get.

There are all sorts of just splendid theology in Isaiah. All right? The servant of the Lord shows up in Isaiah. You all, we all, are probably very familiar with the last line here, the suffering servant, the one that Isaiah portrays, led to slaughter.

And we're going to read parts of that in a moment. But starting with chapter 42, we have a building up towards that. It doesn't just jump out of anywhere.

In fact, this whole section of Isaiah is kind of a cycle of songs, and they're called the servant songs. Let me just dip in a couple of places. The tasks of the servant, well, I read to you one of them.

One of the tasks of the servant is to, indeed, be a light to the Gentiles. But you know what else he's to do? He's to bring justice to the nations, too, okay? Justice is a real issue. So, in chapter 42, let me get to chapter 42.

Read it. Here's my servant, whom I behold, my chosen one, in whom I delight. By the way, those of you, well, you've all been in New Testament at some point, right? When Jesus is transfigured, that voice from heaven says, this is my servant, in whom I delight.

Listen to him. Quoting this section of Isaiah or alluding to this section of Isaiah. At any rate, here's my servant.

I'll put my spirit on him. He will bring justice to the nations. Justice, justice, justice.

That's one of the things a servant's supposed to do. And he goes on and fleshes some of that out, and says he's not going to falter until he, indeed, establishes justice on earth. But then it goes on.

Middle of verse six. I'm going to keep you. I'll make you to be a covenant for the peoples and to be a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind and free captives from prison.

So light is also part of this. Justice and light. Those are the tasks of the servant, and they're fairly important.

Now, unfortunately, the servant, who is designated as Israel, Israel's called to be the servant. That's their role. But they fail.

Verse 18 of the same chapter. Hear you, deaf. Look you blind and see.

Who's blind but my servant? Oops. Deaf like the messenger I sent. Blind like the servant of the Lord.

Something's wrong here. This servant, Israel, isn't doing what the servant was called to do because the servant is made up of fallible, fallen, sinful, rebellious human beings like us who need to be redeemed just like everybody else. And that's what's interesting.

Now, go to chapter 49. Where it says, I'm going to jump in with verse three. You're my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor.

It goes on a little bit, but then it says, and here's the key thing that I want you to catch, all right, starting at verse five. Now the Lord says, he who formed me in the womb to be his servant—got the next line? Listen carefully.

Wake up. He formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to himself and gather Israel to himself. Somebody is now being appointed as a servant to restore Israel, who was blind and deaf, as we read about in chapter 42, verses 18 and 19.

So, the servant is now going to be a person from Israel, right? And then it says, I'm honored in the eyes of the Lord. My God has been my strength. God says it's too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob.

That's the initial thing. Jesus came first, and what did he say? I'm here to restore the lost tribes of Israel. But Isaiah is already saying, too small a thing just to do that.

I will also, and now I'm going to read what I just read to you a moment ago. I'll make you a light for the Gentiles that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth. This is what the Lord says, the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

So, in these chapters, we see a need on the part of Israel who was originally the servant. God's choosing to meet that need through somebody that he's going to designate to restore and gather Israel and Jacob. And then of course, we pick up on the suffering servant, which is the means by which this is done.

At the end of chapter 52, my servant will act wisely. He will be raised up and lifted up and highly exalted. And then, of course, it goes on in chapter 53 with stuff that's really familiar to us but would have probably been a little bit shocking to folks back then because they wouldn't think of a messianic figure who's going to rescue them as rescuing in this particular way.

Despised and rejected, a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering, took our infirmities, carried our sorrows, stricken by God, pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him. By his wounds, we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray. The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. That's the suffering servant.

That's how it gets done. You all know that if you've grown up in church, we hear it all the time. But think of what that would mean to the audience in that particular timeframe.

Yeah, Kaylin. They tend to read it as still referring to Israel, or King Hezekiah, that's another one that's often seen as the person who this is about. They struggle with it.

They really struggle with it. Yeah, Sarah. How are tribal identities, the 12 tribes, how are these kept alive? Good question.

Tradition, the fact that they know this. We often refer to the 10 lost tribes, and it's not quite that easy, because there's still people from the Northern Kingdom that are living in the Northern Kingdom. They're not all ripped out of there, and there are references even after the Assyrian exile to tribes from Asher, Zebulun, Issachar.

So, I would suggest it's probably just tradition, and fairly good tradition, probably. Those of you who know any stories about Jews who have, within the last century, come to the United States, they have a kind of good sense of their lineage that goes back a long, long way. It's pretty interesting.

If they're religious. You know, if they're not, it probably doesn't make a whole lot of difference, but if they're religious. Well, we need to carry on, because we want to talk.

That leads us very much into a quick look at what Isaiah says about the Messianic figure. Suffering servant is obviously the big picture here, but there's a couple other places that are equally important. Isaiah does use the term servant.

He uses the term branch. He uses the term descendant of David, David's son, and then also the righteous king. And here are the key passages, and I'm going to talk through the first two and then the very last one since we've already done that one on the servant.

Now, to understand the first two, we have to, believe it or not, go back and pick up a little history. Don't you love it? Isaiah chapter seven. Ahaz's king, is he good or bad? Thumbs down, right?

Now, one of the things that Ahaz struggles with at one point in his reign is a really serious threat from a political alliance between the northern kingdom that's still there and Syria. Do you remember when we were reading 2 Kings 16, and I said, remember this? All right, here we are. The northern kingdom and Syria have ganged up on Ahaz.

That's the context for chapter seven. The Lord says to Isaiah, you will go on out, and you confront Ahaz. Chapter seven, verse three.

You and your son, Shear-jashub, meet Ahaz, chat with him a little bit, and basically tell him, this isn't going to happen. It won't take place. Verses seven and eight.

Within 65 years, Ephraim's going to be too shattered to be a people. The head of Ephraim is Samaria, the head of Samaria is only Ramaliah's son. In other words, don't worry about it so much.

Now, 65 years, that's kind of a long time. You guys are going to be 85 at that point, 65 years from now. So, you know, maybe Ahaz wants to see something a little bit more here and now.

Isaiah goes on and says to him, if you don't stand firm in your faith, you're not going to stand at all. And then he says, ask the Lord for a sign. Do you remember this sign business we talked about? When a prophecy was given that was long range, like that one about Josiah, for example, there was a short-term thing that the people could see that here and now, that know that the long-term one is going to happen.

Well, ask the Lord for a sign. And Ahaz says, I wouldn't think of doing that, I don't want to put God to the test. And Isaiah says, hear this you house of David, don't try the patience of God.

Verse 14, the Lord will give you a sign, whether you're going to ask for it or not. Here's the sign, a virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call his name Emmanuel. Have you heard that before? Where does it show up? Gospel of Matthew, right? And we know that the name Emmanuel means God with us.

But what's all this business about the sign? I thought I just said that a sign was supposed to be something to give them the assurance that 65 years from now, things is going to come true. What's going on if this doesn't come true until Jesus is born by the Virgin Mary? To the Virgin Mary. Let me explain it this way and we can argue about it later if you want.

I think what's going on here is that God in his absolute astonishing sovereignty as he inspires the scriptures has got just the right word chosen to describe not only this situation, but the one that would take place some 700 years later with Jesus being conceived and born of a virgin. And here's how I would suggest it works. The word that's translated as virgin in your NIV, if you read a different translation, you may see a young woman, and it can mean both.

It's not your common garden variety word for virgin in the Old Testament. That's betulah. If you really wanted to say only virgin.

Alma is the word that's used here and it can mean both. It's a much less frequently used word. It's properly chosen.

I would say it's exquisitely chosen so that it covers this situation and it covers the situation that will take place when Jesus is conceived and born. Isaiah's wife already has a kid. We know it.

His name is Shear-jashub, which by the way happens to mean a remnant shall return. She conceives again. She has another child.

Notice what the passage goes on to say. Before that boy, I'm in verse 16, before that boy knows to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread is going to be laid waste. In other words, your wife's going to have a son.

Name him Emmanuel, means God with us. And before he's 13 or 14 or whatever, those kings you're worried about, they're going to be gone. That's the sign.

Now I'm not in any way undercutting the fact that it also, as I said, looks way ahead to its complete fulfillment because Matthew cites it and he's citing at that point the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which uses the Greek word for virgin, parthenos. And here's the other interesting thing and then we need to go on. It doesn't stop here.

What do I say up there? Note the continuity from this context to the next one when you read chapter eight, God with us, God with us, Emmanuel. There's that theme that keeps coming back.

Chapter eight, verse eight, your land, O Emmanuel, verse 10. Devise your strategy, it's not going to stand for God is with us. That's Emmanuel.

And then when you read verses 18 and following, here I am, Isaiah speaking, I and the children the Lord has given me, we are signs and symbols in Israel from the Lord Almighty who dwells on Mount Zion. Get the picture? That whole idea of Emmanuel is being knit throughout this chapter, referring to that child. And by the way, as you continue to read through chapter 10, there's that theme, a remnant shall return, a remnant shall return, a remnant shall return.

That's the translation of Isaiah's first child's name, Shear-jashub. So, he's saying, my children, they're signs and symbols. Listen to what's going on.

Now, not only are they signs and symbols, in verse 20 it says, to the law and to the testimony, if they don't speak according to this word, they have no light in them. Light, light, light. Now we start chapter nine.

The people walking in darkness, verse two, have seen a great light. This is always read in Advent, right? On those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned. And then it goes on, talks about warriors' boots being burned and all implements of war being destroyed.

And then, for unto us a child is born. Child, okay? Unto us a son is given. Government shall be upon his shoulders.

He'll be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Those are divine titles. This child that's been talked about in chapter seven, Emmanuel, one of Isaiah's children, I would suggest, initially.

But looking way ahead to the child in chapter nine, who is also Emmanuel, who's going to have all these titles of deity, the child who is God. Okay, the theme all winds together there. You have a look at all three chapters, really, to make it work.

Does that make sense? Sort of? Well, we need to keep moving. Peace is part of it, as well. We've talked about chapter 53.

In chapter 61, I won't say much about this other than to say that God speaking says, "'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach good news, 'release for captives,' et cetera.'" And that's the passage that Jesus quotes when he's in the synagogue in Nazareth, and he stands up and reads the prophet's reading, Luke chapter four. And

you've been through that in your New Testament class. That's all I'm going to say about Isaiah because we still have to do Micah and Joel.

So here you go. What does the Lord require of you? What's the answer to that? I'm hearing little bits and pieces. Let's start with, do justice.

You ought to mercy this one. You ought to memorize this one. Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.

Know that, just for your own sake. You know, that's what God requires of us. Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.

Shows up in chapter six. Micah's background historically fits Isaiah's. As I said, Isaiah lives in Jerusalem.

Micah's actually in a slightly more tenuous situation because it's out in the Shephelah that you have these enemies starting their invasion into the hilly country and up to get Jerusalem. So life is a little more tenuous there. When you read Micah, you'll notice that chapter four sounds just like chapter two in Isaiah.

They're sharing the same oracle at that particular point. Well, here's the messages of Micah, and I'm going to run through these fast because I want to get to Joel. There are some important things in Joel that we need to talk about.

If you think of nothing else, you know, here's our little test. How do we remember Micah? Oh, how am I going to remember Micah amidst all those other minor prophets? Look at the bottom line. Micah's the one who prophesies that the Messiah is going to be born in Bethlehem.

Remember when the wise men come, and they're trying to figure out where this star is leading them. They get to Herod's court, and Herod calls all the wise persons there. The people that know the Torah say, oh, it's Bethlehem, and they quote Micah chapter five, and of course, they don't go, interestingly, but Micah does.

Remember Micah that way. Okay, Messiah's birthplace. Bethlehem, Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come one whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.

And Micah chapter five goes on a little later on, saying, he will be our peace. I'm going to write a passage that Paul's going to quote in chapter two of Ephesians. So, remember Micah that way.

Obviously, these other things are equally important, and they're themes that we see in all of the prophetic literature. God will come in judgment. Human sin, our sin, sin of God's people, remember, that's who Micah's talking to, is going to be judged.

And, you know, it's the same tragic litany that we read in all the prophets, because they're talking to people like us. Hypocrisy, lies, falsehood, injustice, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. But the hope is there as well.

Should we go on to Joel? I know I did Micah really fast. Yeah, Kaylin. Yeah.

Is Ephesians prophecy? Yes, it is. Is it used? Do they think of it that way now? Not really. Other than to say that David, their idea of a messianic figure, whoever happens to be in Judaism, is kind of diffuse, even in Jesus' day, in terms of how many messiahs they thought they were expecting.

But it was going to be David's son. It was going to be David's son. So, Bethlehem is the city of David.

So, does it make sense? Are there no Jews expecting a messiah? It depends on who you're talking about. The question is, are Jews still expecting a messiah? We have to be careful not to think of Jews as being monolithic in terms of how they think and believe. They're as fractured within Judaism as we are within Christianity, in terms of doctrinal issues and so forth.

There's a group of Jews in Jerusalem right now that are planning to rebuild the temple. They're gathering all the stuff to do it and waiting for the messiah to come. Others would say, no, the messiah's going to build the temple when he comes.

And there are lots of other ways of looking at it, too. Well, there have been false messiahs throughout history. And as you look at the history of Judaism, especially in Europe, there are some very tragic things that show up in terms of people following false messiahs.

Now, here is one quick note in response to that. Interestingly enough, in Jesus' day, Josephus tells us this, there were lots and lots of false messiah, messianic pretenders coming up. And it wasn't an accident.

They'd been reading the book of Daniel. Daniel gives some chronological stuff that got them thinking that there must be somebody coming along then. And of course, there was.

Jesus shows up at that point. We'll do that more when we do Daniel. Okay, because in Daniel chapter nine, we've got some very helpful suggestions in terms of chronology.

And that's probably one of the reasons there's such an uptick in people claiming to be messiahs in those first centuries, B.C. and A.D. Well, I got some pictures for you as we move on to Joel. For those of you who love archived stuff, let me encourage you to find the 1915 edition of National Geographic. That magazine's been around a long time.

It's a great one. Because at that particular point in time, if you can't read it from way back there, this is somebody who lived through a locust plague in Jerusalem, photographed it with all the equipment that they had back then, and wrote a marvelous article for National Geographic on what it was like to exist through a locust plague. We don't know what this is like.

Probably the worst thing that we can imagine are those little moths that eat your trees and the leaves. But that's nothing like what happens in a locust plague. So at any rate, let me encourage you.

The recent locust influx into Palestine is compared the same with ancient invasions as narrated in the Bible. Here's a locust. Aren't they cute? Okay, let's go on.

Again, this person is photographing this stuff, and here come the locusts being swept in by the breezes. Here they are all over the trunk of a palm tree that probably at one point had either bananas or dates on it, yes. How big are they? Like this, yeah.

There's, that's a little difficult. There are four different kinds of locusts, and there are four different Hebrew words for locusts that show up just in the book of Joel. Let's keep going.

Chapter one, verse seven talks about laying waste my vines and ruining my fig trees. Here's one tree, and here it is after the locusts hit. And it wasn't very long in between, right? They're there on the wall of the house.

Yummy. Climbing up all over the place. And I haven't got a picture of this next thing I'm going to tell you, but he also describes what it was like for the women, who back then, as you probably know, wore long dresses with lots of petticoats under them, right? That's how you had to dress, even in Jerusalem back in the 1915s and 1920s.

And he talks about how these poor women would have just everything they were wearing infested with locusts. Hundreds of them you'd shake out of what you were wearing when you took them off at night. Good stuff.

Now, I show you that just to give you a sense of locust plague. We see those words and we don't think too much of what it really meant. This was a terrifying time for the people because it was indeed a symbol of God's judgment.

Now, I want to make three points here. As Joel is writing, he's not only talking about a literal locust plague, which is bad enough, because it's going to take out the grain, new wine, and oil, which are those three key crops of the land and are demonstrative of God's blessings. But he's also going to liken it to an army invading.

The locusts are not only going to be literal locusts, and they're going to be symbolic of an invading army. And all that wound together is representative of the day of the Lord. We talked about the day of the Lord in Amos, chapter five.

Joel also mentions the day of the Lord, and that day of the Lord is a day of reckoning. In light of that, in chapter two, the people are called to repent, turn to the Lord, rend your hearts and not your garments, he says. In other words, don't just do this symbolic thing of tearing your garments, rend your hearts, tear your hearts, repent, chapter two, verse 13.

But then he does something else very interesting, and here's where we're going to land up. And again, I have to find the thing. In Joel, chapter two, verse 28.

Afterward, I'm going to pour out my spirit on all people, your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.

Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit in those days. Show wonders in the heavens, on the earth, blood and fire, billows of smoke, et cetera. Verse 32: everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, there will be deliverance.

As I noted for you, Peter cites that. Now, what happens in Acts chapter two? What's going on in Acts chapter two? Right, you've got all the people that are gathered there, and we know they're gathered from the far reaches of the Eastern Roman Empire, as far away as Rome, as a matter of fact, and beyond, into the eastern portions that are Persia and so forth. They're all there.

Why are they there? Why are all these people from foreign countries sitting in Jerusalem at this particular event? What's Pentecost? It's a Jewish festival, isn't it? Feast of Weeks, that's what they're there for. It's the Feast of Weeks. It's one of those three pilgrim festivals.

All the Jews are supposed to come. That's why all these people are there. And in that context, you have the coming of the Holy Spirit descending on the apostles who then speak in sufficient languages, sons and daughters prophesying, and therefore, the message is going to get out to all those people in their own language.

Peter cites this passage. All who call on the name of the Lord will be saved. That's the punchline.

Notice that in between, you know, the prophesying, dream dreams, and visions, and all those who call on the name of the Lord will be saved, there are some other things that aren't going to happen until Jesus comes again. Those astronomical signs that are associated with his second coming. So, this afterward is a whole long afterward, really encompassing the entirety of what you might call the church age.

Okay, we need to stop. Again, you can start as early as, what is it, 8.45 for the exam. Study hard.