

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP STUDY IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH CHAPTERS TWENTYSEVEN TO THIRTYNINE

In the first chapter of Isaiah, he sets out the problem that is common to all men in all circumstances, rebellion against God and its consequences. In the following ten chapters Isaiah presents the solution for all human failure, the good news of the One who will come to be the Teacher,(2) the Healer and Ruler,(3) the Branch,(4) the Vine,(5) the Holy God,(6) the Baby of a virgin,(7) the Rock,(8) the Child King,(9) the Restorer or Judge,(10) and the One on whom the Spirit rests.(11)

All that is required of us is to say thank you and trust Him so that He can comfort us, save us, give us joy, identity and purpose.(12)

In the following chapters Isaiah delivers a series of messages to Israel's neighbours who have consistently threatened God's people throughout their history. When Israel rebelled they became enslaved to these various neighbours. At the time the problems they created would have seemed insoluble but the gospel Isaiah has spelled out would be the answer to each of their challenges. Babylon was the most powerful of Israel's enemies with a vast empire and seemingly inexhaustible armies. Consequently they were characterised by pride as graphically demonstrated when God gave Daniel a dream to warn Nebuchadnezzar of where his arrogance would lead.(Dan.4) Their seemingly invulnerable empire would fall to the Medes and Persians.(13:7; Dan.5:31)

Their pride would be a reminder of Satan himself whose pride led him to challenge God and to tempt man to do the same.(14:1-27) The Philistines as typified by Goliath who believed no Israelite could defeat him,(I Sam.17) had the same attitude as Babylon. The serpent pictured Satan who taught Adam and Eve they could be as good as God.(Gen.3:1-5; Rev.12:9) David, a man after God's own heart, would demonstrate the emptiness of Goliath's boast.(14:28-32)

Moab who was conceived through immorality,(Gen.19:30-38) regularly came into Israel's history to tempt them by immorality and greed.(Num.22, 25; Judges 3:15) Moral compromise is born out of pride and ultimately leads to disgrace and defeat.(15,16)

Syria, the immediate neighbour to the north of Israel would invade from time to time bringing their various heathen gods, like Baal and Asherah, whose influence on the hearts of God's people would linger long after the Syrian armies had gone home. Only the teaching of the gospel could expel these false religions.(17)

Cush, otherwise known as Ethiopia, seemed far away but could appear suddenly and swiftly in their fast ships and inflict defeat. So often it is the unexpected temptation which catches us off guard. But the Holy Spirit in us is never taken by surprise.(18)

Egypt had enslaved Israel long before the Babylonians. By the time of Isaiah they already had nearly 2000 years of continuous history, and had accumulated vast wealth and tradition. They seemed an attractive place to turn to in difficult times instead of trusting God to provide.(Gen.12, 42) The day would come when even they would turn to Christ as their Saviour and Champion.(19)

Isaiah now turns to the immediate crisis of his time, the king of Assyria, who seemed for the moment to be a greater threat than their old enemies but who would in his turn learn from Israel which God is greater.(20)

To the south and east of Israel were desert areas with only scattered communities moving between occasional oases. They would be places into which fugitives would try to escape in the hope that they would be left alone. Having hidden themselves in such remote places they would be constantly watching for signs of pursuers. Our only security is in Jesus Christ whose coming this book so keenly anticipates.(21)

In our defeat we look for answers in every direction except the right one which begins with true repentance. Again there is a glimpse of the one who will come, God's choice for High Priest with authority to open heaven to those who trust Him.(Rev.1:18; 3:7; Matt.16:19) He will be like a tent peg which breaks off, as

Jesus was broken on the cross.(Zech.10:4) There is only one answer! Why do we waste so much of our lives trying alternatives?(22)

The coastal fortress cities of Tyre and Sidon had a long history of proud independence in their defiance of foreign invaders. They too would eventually fall.(23)

The ultimate outcome of pride in all its forms will be a society and a world fallen apart morally, socially and physically, on which God must act in final judgement. Among them however will be those who put God first and can celebrate His coming to take over.(24)

The following chapter picks up the theme of chapter 12 in offering thanks to God for who He is, what He has promised and what He has done in dealing with all those who oppress the needy. He has lavished His grace on those who have waited for His response.(25)

In that final period of history, the world will be divided into those who trust the Lord, whose deepest heart longings are satisfied, and those who continue to rebel and try to fix their own problems. They will learn how wrong they have been. Make up your mind!(26)

27 Q.1 Four times 'in that day ' is used in this chapter. Which day is Isaiah talking about? What four events will occur 'in that day '? Where else in the Old Testament is Leviathan mentioned? Who or what is Leviathan? What is the Lord's sword?

28-31 Q.2. How many 'woes' are given in chapters 28-31? What is the main idea of each one? What do you notice when you compare this section with Lk.1:42-52?

28 Q.3. Verse 11 is quoted in 1 Cor.14:21. How does its context in Isaiah help us to understand what Paul means by speaking in tongues? Where in the New Testament is verse 16 quoted and how does it interpret this verse?(Rom.9:33; 10:11; 1 Pet.2:6)

29 Q.4. Where is this chapter quoted in the New Testament?(Matt.11:5; 15:8,9; 24:7; Lk.19:43; Rom.9:19-21; 11:8; 1 Cor.1:19; 1 Thess.5:3; 2 Thess.2:9-12; Jas.1:9; Rev.11:13,19; 16:18) What is the common theme of these quotations? How do they fit into the 2 'woes' of this chapter? How do verses 11,12 explain why so many people find the Bible difficult to understand ?

30-31 Q.5. Isaiah speaks again of those who trust 'Egypt', the world they came out of, when instead they are in need of God . What kind of pastors and teachers will they prefer? With what result? What was God's way then and now to lift us out of this empty and frustrating life?

32 Q.6. Who are the king and princes in verse 1? What must we do to be part of His kingdom? What will that kingdom be like?

33 Q.7. Who is the destroyer in verse 1? What do we have to do not to be destroyed by him? How will this show in our lives?

34,35 Q.8. Isaiah concludes this section by presenting his hearers with a choice? What were their options? What will God do according to the choice we have made? How does this choice affect our lives today?

36,37 Q.9.Isaiah now draws again on events of his later years to illustrate his message. How does this story of the threats of the king of Assyria, Hezekiah's response and God's answer show how the teaching of earlier chapters works in practice? Put this story into a modern setting to show its application today.

38-39 Q.10. This next story illustrates how not to respond to crises. What does Hezekiah do wrong? How has he ignored Isaiah's teaching? Put his prayer,(38:10-20) into modern terms. What is the consequence of his mistake? How can the 2 stories 36,37 and 38,39 be about the same man?