

1. Ever thought about who we're willing to listen to in life? When I think about it, it's a pretty short list: They include, our family, our friends, our doctor about our health, a sermon in church about what God expects of us, or if we're facing a judge or a police officer, we're willing to be quiet and listen. I'll also add schoolteachers, as children are required to obey them. I give all these obvious examples, because Isaiah falls in that category as he's going to give us here both the good and bad news of the choice we make about either accepting how God wants us to live or the consequences of ignoring Him. These chapters list good things we'll receive now and forever if we're willing to live as God desires, and it lists the ways we'll suffer if we turn from Him.
 - a) Like all of Isaiah, the book is a mixture of facts about life in the Middle East around 700BC with principals that apply to our lives today. Isaiah spends a lot of time telling us "here is how things are" way back then and how we can have joy in our lives despite all the things we have to deal with along with predictions that will occur in the short and long term. As I also love to explain, bible predictions often have double fulfillments. That just means an event will usually occur a short time after the prediction is made to validate the person as a prophet of God. That same prediction will often have a second fulfillment a longer time later and often that second prediction ties with some aspect of Jesus life. If you've read my lessons on a regular basis, you'd know I'm positive every aspect of the events tied to both Jesus First and Second Comings are predicted somewhere in the Old Testament, and that includes a lot of what Isaiah writes.
 - b) My point here is studying Isaiah isn't just to learn ancient Middle East history. It isn't just to learn about the events tied to Jesus' appearance, although that's a major reason why we should study this book. I'm convinced that the main reason God wants us to study all of the bible, including Isaiah is because there's a way God wants us to live out our lives, and the bible teaches us what "that way" is. My point is just as we're required to pay attention to our teachers as children, just as we should listen to what our doctors tell us about living a healthy life, just as we have to listen to police officers and judges as they represent what is the law of the land, so we should pay attention to what the bible says about how to live our lives, not just to please God, but simply because that's the best way to live out life.
2. That little lecture, which I assume is old news for us veteran Christians, applies directly to these two chapters here in the middle of Isaiah. They are full of good and bad news of how God wants us to live, examples of things we can do better and events that'll soon occur to those people living around Isaiah at His time. The important lesson to get out of these chapters is about the choices we make in life, and how those choices affect our lives now as well as our eternity destiny. If you want your life to be full of joy both now and eternally, these two chapters are filled with both the good news and bad news we all need to pay attention to if it is our desire to have joy in our lives.
 - a) Let me address those who think, I already have joy in my life, or I don't need Isaiah to tell me how to live. The reason this book has been studied for 2,700 years (more or less) is it stood the test of time not only for the accuracy of it's predictions but also to teach us what is the best way to live our lives. Think of it this way, no matter what we've accomplished with our lives, no matter what we'd like to accomplish, there is a force greater than us that we call God that's seen it all, knows all things, and knows what's best for us so that we do have as much joy in our lives as possible. All I'm saying is it's worth dedicating taking a little time each day to learn what God expects of us not only to have eternal life, but also to have joy in this life no matter what the circumstances we're dealing with. Therefore, I do ask you take a little time to learn the "good and bad news" of these two chapters as it's not just for people living millenniums ago, but also for you and me to make good choices so that we too can have joy in our lives by living as God desires we live.
 - b) Oh if you haven't figured it out yet, my title is "the good news and the bad news".

3. With that speech out of my system, I can spend a few moments giving some specifics about these two chapters. Some argue they historically take place before the last chapter as Isaiah's book isn't always in chronological order. Personally, I think that's a non-significant issue, because what we should care about is again the good and bad news of this chapter.
 - a) The good news is the promise of good things to come for those who trust in God. Most of the scholars I read argue the short term fulfillment has to do with who is the next king of the Southern Kingdom of "Israel" where Isaiah lived, which would be Hezekiah. All you have to know is that Hezekiah was recorded in "Kings" as being a good king whose life is pleasing to God. Therefore, he's held up as a model of how God wants us to live. What I am equally as convinced of is the long-term fulfillment of many of the positive passages in these two chapters tie to events of when the Messiah comes, who obviously we Christians to be Jesus in His Second Coming.
4. Chapter 32, Verse 1: See, a king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice. ² Each man will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land. ³ Then the eyes of those who see will no longer be closed, and the ears of those who hear will listen. ⁴ The mind of the rash will know and understand, and the stammering tongue will be fluent and clear.
 - a) Let's start by backing up and remembering where we left off. Isaiah was lecturing all the Israelites living in the Southern Kingdom not seek Egypt for protection from the threats of the Assyrian Empire, which were "knocking on their door" wanting to destroy Jerusalem as well as the surrounding area. For a cross-reference, read 2nd Kings 18-19 as it tells of these events from the perspective of King Hezekiah and his dealing with that empire.
 - b) The point is while all of that is going on, Isaiah is trying to encourage the Israelites living there at that time, to trust in God to guide their lives as He still wants to use them as His witness to the world around them. To put it over simply, the Israelites living there were guilty of "going through the motions" of serving God but their hearts weren't in it. What's worse is "idols" were common all over that country. The idea of an idol is like if we say, I am trusting in my wealth or my own ability to overcome a tough situation. Worse, it can be saying, since this empire is threatening us, I'll worship their gods because they're doing so well at this moment.
 - c) That's why I'm saying these two chapters are like a judge telling us how we should live in order to avoid the consequences. That's why I refer to these chapters as the good and bad news that we must listen too. The good news is, well Isaiah starts with the good news:
 - i) The good news is that whatever hardships we are facing, the worse it will last is a lifetime. That's why Isaiah spends so much text describing what life will be like when the Messiah comes on the scene. It's kind of like saying, "Yes I know life is hard and I know we're facing problems. However, we'll all get to live forever in a wonderful way when the Messiah, (That's what the Jewish people call the eternal king who will rule forever, who we Christians call Jesus at His Second Coming)." The point is this life is not all there is to our existence. We'll all live forever either with God as He rules or away from His presence.
 - ii) Try to imagine living in a world where the threat of death of immanent. Imagine a life where the threat of a painful death can come at any moment. None of us know how long we get to live. We may get another 99 years or we may die tomorrow by some horrid tragedy. If this life is all there is, let's be honest, it's very unfair as I'd argue we all know tragic stories of someone who died young. That is the world of Isaiah at that time. Therefore, he is lecturing all of us how we get to participate in a wonderful world where God rules over the world.
 - iii) So how do we know this is not just some fantasy to ease the pain? Isaiah is filled with specific predictions about when this will occur so we'll recognize it one day. That leads me back to these verses as Isaiah gives us specific's of the "when".

- d) Consider for a moment what heaven will be like? Do we sit on a cloud somewhere, or do we watch television all day? Of course not. The greatest way to have joy in this life is to use it for God's glory. I'm sure He wants us to have joy for all of eternity. That's why He tells us so much about eternal life so we can be part of it and have joy as we share in the joy for all of eternity. So how do all of us "get close to God" to be a part of this eternal life? That's why I believe our eternal bodies will exist in more than three dimensions. That is how we can all be close to God and do His will for all of eternity.
- i) Suppose you say, I just want to hang out on a cloud all day for eternity and not be a part of God's eternal plan as it's laid out here. Wouldn't that get boring fast? The reason God gives us all the details about eternity, is not just to fantasize about it as we live, but to realize we will be a part of that reality. Therefore, it is worth taking a little time to pay attention to Isaiah teaching us about our eternal reality. We get a little of that in these verses, speaking of which:
- e) Let me restate Verse 2 with that introduction completed: "Each man will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land".
- i) First realize that Isaiah tells us in Verse 1 this is about what eternal life will be like.
- ii) Next realize that "man" is a man or a woman in this context.
- iii) Isaiah is using colorful metaphor's to say us people will be "good things" when all of this begins. The King James Version refers to "man" as princes. The idea is we'll be under the Messiah's rule helping to enforce His rule.
- iv) These verses imply more things too. Not everyone on earth dies through all of the bad stuff of "Revelation". If we rule with the Messiah, there has to be people we do rule over. That's also implied by this verse. The idea is one of the main things that we do for eternity is enforce and teach God's laws to those who live at that time.
- v) But John haven't you lectured us in the past that there are only a specific number of believers who'll be saved and then Jesus returns? Yes I have. What we all have to realize is the "church" is a "subset" of those who are saved. There are a specific (unknown to us) number of saved Christians who exist before God will say, that's the total, now Jesus can come back and rule over the world. However, our world's still going continue for a while longer with believers (which may also include "Old Testament" saved people") ruling with Jesus when all of this occurs.
- vi) My point here is simply that heaven won't be boring. We'll be busy enforcing and teaching God's rules over humanity at that time. The reason Isaiah is telling us all of this is to encourage the Israelites who were facing extermination at that time, of a glorious future if they're willing to trust God despite all of that horrid suffering.
- f) That leads me to Verses 3-4. The short version of those verses is when all of "this" starts, people are willing to listen to what God has to say. If you've been with me through parts of Isaiah so far, you'd know that one thing Isaiah's been emphasizing over and over again is how those living around Isaiah refused to listen to what God has to say to them. I'd be like preaching the Gospel message and everyone around us rejects that message. Most of us veteran Christians know what it's like to tell people what God expects of us, and we do get rejected for preaching that message.
- i) In contrast to how most people do reject the idea that we should live like He wants us to live, many people will accept that Gospel message when Jesus returns. It's a little like standing in front of a judge or a doctor and realizing we have to do what they say, or else we "get it". My point is simply that when we do serve God in that eternal time frame, people will listen as the real fear of the consequences will force them to pay attention.
- ii) In summary, I'd argue that to serve God now, is in effect a preview of what we get to do for eternity. If it brings us joy now, it'll bring us joy forever for serving Him.

5. Verse 5: No longer will the fool be called noble nor the scoundrel be highly respected. ⁶ For the fool speaks folly, his mind is busy with evil: He practices ungodliness and spreads error concerning the LORD; the hungry he leaves empty and from the thirsty he withholds water. ⁷ The scoundrel's methods are wicked, he makes up evil schemes to destroy the poor with lies, even when the plea of the needy is just.
- Ask yourself, what do we really think of our leaders? I'm sure if we could speak freely, we might use words like, "fool" or "scoundrel" or something much worse. When those in power are the one's we vote for, we might praise them. If they belong to a different party than the one we support, I'm sure these words are mild compared to what we really think of them. The internet is full of negative comments people make about those in charge.
 - My point is it's easy to criticize. It may help to understand the biblical definition of a fool: It is one who either doesn't believe God exists, or doesn't care what God thinks how we're living our lives as they want to do whatever they want to do without thinking of what the consequences might be. The point as it relates to these verses, is there are a lots of people who are elected to office or are "highly respected" in society who think they've got all the answers to our problems and essentially give God "lip service" at best.
 - I have to admit, one of my favorite definitions of a politician comes from an old movie: It is, "I'm a politician, which means I'm a thief and a liar. When I'm not kissing babies, I am stealing their lollipops." A rough translation from the movie, "The Hunt for Red October". As I think of these verses and those who cheat in society, that reference comes to mind.
 - To state the obvious, not all politicians are biblical "fools". Not all fit my "politician" idea as I just described it, however, there are a lot of people we might privately criticize as we don't agree with how they are ruling over us. However, by reading Isaiah here, we do get the idea that in one sense, life hasn't changed: There are those in leadership who do make decisions that only benefit themselves or their "cronies" and hurt the masses. I think that's a pretty good summary of a tough reality. Now let's see where Isaiah goes with this:
6. Verse 8: But the noble man makes noble plans, and by noble deeds he stands.
- Remember that right before all these verses about "scoundrels" in power, Isaiah told us a little about what the "saved" do for all of eternity. The reason we get the last few verses is not just to complain about the way things are, but also to contrast how differently life will be under the Messiah's rule versus how things are now.
 - That's why Isaiah ends this little speech with a proverb in Verse 8. Effectively this verse is saying if a good person makes good plans, those "good deeds" will stand. So does it mean a person can be saved by good works? No. The issue isn't salvation here, but about what is the right way to live out our lives on earth. What Isaiah's trying to get across here is the idea of if we use our time to do the right thing in this life odds are good we'll get the same privilege of doing the right things in the next one. The point is we can recognize who is a good person by how they use the time God's given them.
 - Remember to read this verse in context. The Israelites living around Isaiah were facing a very real threat of their destruction. Isaiah's reminding all of us that there's a lot more to live than our current circumstances. Therefore, how we live now and the decisions we'll make is a reflection of how we'll live for eternity, and thus this proverb in Verse 8.
7. Verse 8: You women who are so complacent, rise up and listen to me; you daughters who feel secure, hear what I have to say!
- From Verse 8 to Verse 16 is a mini-lecture within itself about what happens to us when we do turn from God. It's kind of like an older doctor who's seen lots of people come and go, and he or she is telling us unless we change our eating habits dramatically, here is what'll physically happen to us. As I read these verses a few times, I pondered whether Isaiah is just writing to literal women or to anyone who ignores God. In the end, it doesn't matter. It's still a warning of "If you don't change your lifestyle, you're not only going to waste the time you have left on earth, but it'll be the ruin of you eternity."

- b) With that horrid introduction stated, let me continue. I suppose it doesn't matter whether or not Isaiah is addressing it to just women, as either way it describes how any of us will waste away the time God's given us by not living as He desires. OK, enough of that, time to get started on the details of this criticism:
 - c) Isaiah starts this criticism by saying, "You think you're so secure". Let me "translate" that: You Israelites who live in Jerusalem, you're convinced that God would never destroy this place as He took the time and trouble to bring us all here out of Egypt and He's called us to be His witnesses to the world. Therefore, we don't need to fear an invasion by a foreign army as God's obligated to protect us no matter how we act". To put that in present terms "Hey God, you know the way I am, I don't have to use my life for Your glory, because this is the way You made me and I'm happy just as I am even if I don't seek You very much."
 - d) One thing we have to keep in mind is God is all about relationships. He desires to have a close and personal relationship with each of us as well as believers collectively. That's one reason why He desires we get together in groups to seek Him so we can develop relations with each other as well as drawing close to Him. The reason I state all of that is Isaiah has the tough privilege of telling his readers like a doctor who has to warn us of consequences of ignoring his or her advice of what'll happen to us if we turn from Him.
 - e) That's why this verse starts a little lecture by Isaiah effectively saying, "Stop doing what it is your doing as you're wasting your life away by ignoring that relationship with God".
 - f) With that said, we can now get some details of what Isaiah means by that:
8. Verse 10: In little more than a year you who feel secure will tremble; the grape harvest will fail, and the harvest of fruit will not come.
- a) Remember how I compared this little speech to a doctor giving us the bad news of what we'll face if we don't change our lifestyle? Isaiah's saying something similar here. Verse 10 says that the land you live in is about a year away from having a doomed economy.
 - b) One has to remember that Israel in those days was an agricultural society. To have a year with no fruit means a year with no income. Historically Isaiah wrote this a little over one year before a foreign army was literally trying to siege Jerusalem.
 - c) It may be helpful for a quick moment to explain a siege. Those who know what that term means usually shudder to consider it. The idea is a foreign army would camp around any given city and then park there for years to starve it out. That's how large armies took over a place. The Assyrians, the Babylonians and the Romans were famous for this technique. People living in that city would eventually run out of food, then in desperation turn to say eating their shoes and finally turn to cannibalism to survive. My point is this isn't a pretty picture. However, it was a reality back then and Isaiah's warning those living by him that this scenario is about to occur.
 - d) If you're reading this thinking, "That's horrible, but it'll never happen to me", the point is to realize that God has the right to "take us out of the ballgame" anytime He wants us. As all of us know, nobody knows how long we have to live on this earth. Yes we should plan as if we're going to live a long time, but our life can always end at anytime. That's why we get this lecture here about not wasting the time God's given us as we don't know what life will be like "around the corner" from now.
9. Verse 11: Tremble, you complacent women; shudder, you daughters who feel secure! Strip off your clothes, put sackcloth around your waists. ¹² Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vines ¹³ and for the land of my people, a land overgrown with thorns and briers-- yes, mourn for all houses of merriment and for this city of revelry. ¹⁴ The fortress will be abandoned, the noisy city deserted; citadel and watchtower will become a wasteland forever, the delight of donkeys, a pasture for flocks,
- a) While I was describing a horrible way to die via a siege, Isaiah's still preaching about how God wants us to react to this bad news. It may help to realize Isaiah was a renown priest and some where willing to listen to him like a doctor telling us how we should live.

- b) It may also help to realize that in the Middle East back then a sign of "mourning" is to go around wearing sackcloth, which is an uncomfortable garment. The closest I can come to describing it today would be as if someone is wearing all black clothing because they're in mourning over the death of a loved one.
 - c) With the thought in mind of dressing for a funeral, Isaiah's preaching to the women living in Jerusalem at that time, (I suspect Isaiah is preaching to all people, but using women for this illustration), that all their "care-free" living is about to end. We're back to the idea that people are living for themselves and just going through the motions of seeking God at the appropriate times. Like I said earlier, the general attitude was, that God can't destroy this place, He has His temple here and He lead us to this land. You might recall from the early chapters of this book that Isaiah was preaching against people being care free as if they've got nothing to worry about in life.
 - d) Isaiah is preaching the hard reality that life as they know it is about to come to an end. As I've stated a lot in my previous lessons on Isaiah, the Assyrians didn't destroy Jerusalem, but their siege of the city destroyed all the farmland around Jerusalem. That's why Isaiah is describing destruction all around them. Again it's like the doctor giving us bad news as well as the good news. The good news for those living in Jerusalem, is they'll survive the siege, but the bad news is life as they know it will end as the Assyrian army destroys all the land around that city.
 - e) Notice by Verse 14, Isaiah gets "worse". He implies that much of the land will become a wasteland forever. The key is to read it carefully. The text never says that Israel will be abandoned forever as a country. It's just saying "life as they know it" will come to an end as there will be destruction all around them.
 - f) OK John, too bad for those people living 2,700 years ago. How does any of this affect you and me? The "good and bad news" for the Christian is yes, we'll get to live forever in His presence if we choose to accept His payment for all our sins. The bad (tough) news is God expects us to live as a witness for Him or else we too can be "taken out of the ball game" as I love to say pretty regularly just like these Israelites did so many years ago.
10. Verse 15: till the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest. ¹⁶ Justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness live in the fertile field. ¹⁷ The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.
- a) One of my mentors as a bible teacher used to say that he likes to underline all the "till's" in the bible. That signifies a change of events. I say that because we have a "till" in Verse 15. The point is Israel will suffer collectively as a nation "till" the coming of the Messiah.
 - b) You might recall that I said a few lessons back that part of the traditional Sabbath prayer is that every generation of Jewish people have to fight their battles against those who do want to kill them (Israelites) as a people. That's because many people deep down resent the idea of having to be accountable to God. Others attack them as way of keeping their focus off their own problems and use the Jewish nation as a scapegoat. Other reasons do exist, but the point is the reason that line is part of the weekly prayer is to remind them of the fact that as a people they always face the danger of being wiped out.
 - c) Of all things, that idea leads me to these verses and the "till". Prior to the "till" Isaiah says there is a constant danger of the land being "wiped out". Isaiah doesn't say how long that will last, but it will happen until the "till" occurs. That "till" is the Spirit, (i.e., Holy Spirit) being poured out on that nation. Believe it or not, it ties to Romans 11:26. To paraphrase Paul, he says that there is a fixed number of people that make up the Christian church. In a day only known to God the Father, when that final Christian is saved, then the Spirit of God will be poured out on all of Israel as they dwell there with the Messiah ruling.
 - d) The way I picture it is it'll be a time when Jewish people realize, "boy did we blow it with Jesus", but instead of punishment, they will be saved as the Spirit flows over that nation.

- e) All I'm saying is picture a day when the vast majority of Jewish people will be living there in peace with no more threats of destruction by their neighbors. In that day, there will be a peace when the Messiah finally rules over that nation from that nation. As I also love to point out, why do you think so many people are "hell-bent" on Israel's destruction? That's because there are demonic forces that don't want to see Jesus rule there one day!
 - f) Therefore, we're seeing Isaiah get all "utopia" on us in these verses as he is giving a "till" speech about live when Jesus rules from Israel. That's when all the peace occurs that we read about in these verses. With that said, I'm ready to finish Chapter 32.
11. Verse 18: My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest. ¹⁹ Though hail flattens the forest and the city is leveled completely, ²⁰ how blessed you will be, sowing your seed by every stream, and letting your cattle and donkeys range free.
- a) Like I said in the introduction, this lesson is full of good news based on obedience as well as bad news for disobedience. The last three verses of Chapter 32 continue to deliver how life will be when the Messiah comes.
 - b) I can't help but to notice the "literalness" of life in the future. Whenever this utopia occurs they will not be floating in the air yelling praise God 24-7. They will be dwelling in homes when this utopia begins. While the threat of war will come to an end, there'll still be land that's occupied by homes and places for animals to run. These verses give the impression that despite the damage done by war, there will be planting of seeds to grow food as well as animals roaming free in the area.
 - c) The point is while life as we know it will be different when this utopia occurs of Jesus as He rules over the world from Israel, other aspects of life will go on as we know it today. People will still dwell in houses and farms will still exist. God never does "miracles" so that we don't have to work for ourselves. Life will still go on in that day.
 - d) So does that mean after I die, I'm going to have a job somewhere? I have no idea what we do in heaven all day, but I'm pretty positive it won't be boring and we'll have things to do as well as things we can learn. We get to rule and reign with Jesus as He rules in that day so yes we'll do something and not just "sit on a cloud someday"!
 - e) In the meantime, God's got more "good and bad news" for us as I cover one more chapter.
12. Chapter 33, Verse 1: Woe to you, O destroyer, you who have not been destroyed! Woe to you, O traitor, you who have not been betrayed! When you stop destroying, you will be destroyed; when you stop betraying, you will be betrayed.
- a) Remember how I said I know someone who underlines all the "till's" in his bible? I'll just say that same person gets nervous for people when the word "woe" appears. If you know you're Gospel stories, you'd know that Jesus gave a whole bunch of woe's to the religious leaders of His day and I suspect that group is eternally suffering based on what Jesus did preach in Matthew 23 and other places.
 - b) Now that we know "woe" is bad news, what is the woe's warning about here in this verse and how do we avoid those woes being about us? First remember that Isaiah is talking to those who've God's called to be His witnesses. That means yes, you and me! Now notice the word destroyer and betrayer are used a bunch of times in these verses. All I'm saying is if we waste away our lives only doing things that never make a difference for Him, we also are "betrayers" because we're betraying what God's called us to do with our lives. We also get the term destroyer, because if we're using only our lives for pursuits that'll never make a difference for God, we can be "destroying" others around us as well as wasting the most valuable thing God gives us, our time.
 - c) Let me take a breadth and say, no this doesn't mean we can never say go out to a movie or just enjoy time with those we love. The point is God created us for a reason. To start that relationship we have to acknowledge He exists. The next step is if we realize He exists we ponder, what does He want from us? That's why God gave us His commandments so we can know what rules He wants us to obey as we live out the time He's given us.

- d) To put this in Christian terms, once we realize we can't earn our salvation, then all we can do is use our lives to make a difference for Him out of gratitude for that salvation. That is why I love the expression, "Now what". As in, we are saved, now what? The now what is all about using our lives to glorify Him by using the gifts He's given us and using some of the most valuable thing we own, our time, to make a difference for Him.
 - e) The reason I give that little lecture here, is the people Isaiah were preaching to, were those who were "betraying and destroying" both their own lives and those around them as they either ignored God or were trying to prove their worth to Him by their deeds. Either way it is a pronouncement of judgment the same way Jesus pronounced woe's on the religious leaders of His day as they too were trying to prove their worth to God by their actions.
 - f) The lesson for you and me is the danger of thinking, "God must be pretty impressed with what I'm doing or how I'm living my life right now!" Again, it's never about trying to earn our salvation, but simply to rely upon His power to use our lives to make a difference for Him strictly out of gratitude for what He's done for us. That's the gospel message stated in a few thoughts.
 - g) All of that leads me back to Verse 1. Isaiah is pronouncing a bunch of "woe's" those who are living around him as if to say after you've wasted your life either ignoring God or by trying to prove your worth to Him, you too will be destroyed as you never took the time to realize that God just loves us just because He does and we don't have to earn it and we can't ignore the relationship He desires with us. It's both of those ways that we can earn us a big bunch of woe's like Isaiah is preaching here in these verses.
 - h) Now that I've scared everyone away from Verse 1 of this chapter, let's try Verse 2.
13. Verse 2: O LORD, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress. ³ At the thunder of your voice, the peoples flee; when you rise up, the nations scatter. ⁴ Your plunder, O nations, is harvested as by young locusts; like a swarm of locusts men pounce on it.
- a) As I said in the introduction, Isaiah is like a doctor telling us, "Here is both the good news of doing what's right and the bad news of how we'll suffer if we do what's wrong." Isaiah realizes how tough he was in Verse 1, and he counteracts that condemnation in Verse 2 by asking God to be gracious to the other believers around us. To paraphrase Verse 2, "God, we all know we sin and aren't perfect. Be kind to us as You are well aware how imperfect we all are, and forgive us of our sin." To paraphrase the second sentence in Verse 2, "Lead us by your power to help us through our times of distress".
 - b) It may help to recall how those living in Jerusalem were living in a time where their lives were threatened by a coming invasion. Isaiah's praying here for God to help them as they can't get out of this mess by their own power. I find that's usually when God will do His best miracles, when there is nothing we can do about a situation and we give Him all the credit in advance as we say in effect, "We'll do the footwork, but we let go of the results as we put them in Your hands and accept whatever happens as Your will." When we let go of the results, while doing whatever we can to remedy the situation and trust that He's in control of the outcome. That's when we can have peace through the toughest of situations.
 - c) That's why in Verses 3 and 4 Isaiah's reminding those hearing what he has to say that God is very capable of helping the Israelites through the toughest of situations and all that He asks of us is to realize He exists, He wants a relationship with us, and He wants us to live by the rules He lays out for us. Not so we can prove our worth to Him, but because that's the best way to live out our lives in the first place. As to those who never trust in Him in the first place, we get Verses 3 and 4. They essentially say that when God acts in a major way, people flee away because many don't want God to rule over them and they flee from the destruction to come as if they can avoid His eternal judgment.
 - d) This judgment given in these last two verses is another not so subtle reminder that God is in control of how long anyone lives and how He can end any life here at any moment.

14. Verse 5: The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness. ⁶ He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure.
- a) While I was getting all "hot and heavy" explaining God's judgment, Isaiah's still giving us a prayer of exalting God here in these verses. The idea of these verses is essentially to say, we should still trust God, He's still in charge and He'll still provide justice and He'll do the right thing in every situation. The idea of this prayer isn't that life will always go the way we want it to. The idea is God can be trusted to lead us down the path we should go and help us see life from His perspective as we make the best decisions possible based on the situation we are facing.
 - b) In case you didn't know "Zion" is a nickname that can apply to Jerusalem in particular or all of Israel in general. The idea is that God rules over those of us who are trusting in Him to guide our lives for His glory. Again the idea of these verses isn't that life will go well at all times when we're trusting in God to guide us. Life is as if God's saying to us, He's well aware of what we're facing and He allows our situation to exist ultimately for His glory if we're willing to let Him guide us that way. The key to living as He desires begins with the idea of "Fear of the Lord". That means we live with a healthy fear that He'll judge each of us and that living to make a difference for Him is the best way to live out our life.
 - c) As I like to say every now and then, I don't think the saved get punished for sinning, but I am equally convinced there are eternal rewards if we do choose to use our lives to make a difference for Him with our lives. That's also a big part of "Fear of the Lord".
 - d) That's why these verses say that "Fear of the Lord" comes with His knowledge of wisdom, salvation and His guidance. I've never been one of those who think we have to strain hard to hear God talk to us. If God is God, He can communicate to us however He wants when He desires. The main way He communicates to us is through His Word, which is why He calls on us to study it so much. Another way is we can usually see in hindsight how God has been guiding us the whole time. As to direct communication, I don't seek it as I figure if God's got something to say to me, He'll make it obvious.
 - e) In the meantime, I left Isaiah on a role, and it's time to get back to him.
15. Verse 7: Look, their brave men cry aloud in the streets; the envoys of peace weep bitterly. ⁸ The highways are deserted, no travelers are on the roads. The treaty is broken, its witnesses are despised, no one is respected. ⁹ The land mourns and wastes away, Lebanon is ashamed and withers; Sharon is like the Arabah, and Bashan and Carmel drop their leaves.
- a) Isaiah brings his audience back to reality. He says that despite the fact God rules and He's in charge of all things, life is tough all around us. Again, remember that Jerusalem faced a complete destruction as the Assyrians were performing sieges of nearby cities and they're working their way to Jerusalem. That's why Isaiah uses colorful expressions like the brave men crying because they can't stop this invasion. Those who sought peace with the enemy can't stop the invasion. The main roads are deserted as everyone is afraid of being killed by this group. Isaiah even mentions Israel's northern neighbor Lebanon as they too suffer due to this invasion. Verse 9 then mentions some locations in Israel (Sharon, Bashan and Carmel). Those places were "fertile" grounds that are good farming lands. The point here is the "good land will become a waste, due to this invading army".
 - b) The idea of course is that God does His best work, when life looks hopeless. It's when we realize there is nothing we can do but let go and pray that He'll often do His best work. It is that way because if God works that way, we have to give Him the credit as we let go of a situation and let Him work it out for His glory. It doesn't mean God always works that way. I've seen some wonderful Christians suffer through some pretty horrible things and even die trusting in Him. The point is God uses us as a witness for Him sometimes even through death. The point is He can and does work in ways where He gets the glory even in the worst of circumstances.

16. Verse 10: "Now will I arise," says the LORD. "Now will I be exalted; now will I be lifted up." ¹¹ You conceive chaff, you give birth to straw; your breath is a fire that consumes you. ¹² The peoples will be burned as if to lime; like cut thornbushes they will be set ablaze." ¹³ You who are far away, hear what I have done; you who are near, acknowledge my power!
- a) Recall that most Israelites living around Isaiah at that time were either ignoring God with their lives or just going through the "church motions" but their hearts were not in it. That is why Isaiah says "Now God will be exalted at this time" in Verse 11. What the Israelites didn't know yet is how God will destroy the Assyrian army just outside of Jerusalem. So you know one reason God did that, is that many Israelites did repent and did turn to God based on Isaiah's preaching. Let's be honest, many people do pray and turn to God when they're run out of all other options. God's willing to work at "our level" and help us when we do turn to Him because He desires a relationship with us and He's willing to help us so we can use our lives to glorify Him.
 - b) Believe it or not, that little speech leads perfectly to Verses 11-13. To paraphrase, "You've wasted your lives by ignoring Me, and many will suffer the woe's given a few verses ago because despite whatever problems we're dealing with, we still refuse to make Him to be the center of our lives and trust Him to guide us through whatever we're dealing with."
 - c) That's why God's almost screaming out here, "Acknowledge who I am (Verse 13). I don't want to send anyone to hell, but that's the price one must pay if one chooses to turn from My will for our lives." That's why Isaiah uses colorful but tough concept to digest like the idea of "burned to lime" or "set in flame like thornbushes". The idea is to see something so horrid it's the last thing we ever want to experience. Isaiah then ends with the thought of "Acknowledge Me" as being in charge and acknowledge God's power and we won't have to suffer the "woe's" that were stated to start this chapter.
 - d) Suppose you think, "Ok, I have problems, but nobody's trying to kill me. I do believe in His existence and I do try to use my life for His glory. So why should I care about all of this stuff?" Great question. To state what should be obvious, it's because we don't live in a vacuum. Just as God called Isaiah to preach to others about what He demands of them, so God calls you and me to be a witness to Him and tell others how He's willing to guide us through whatever we're dealing with at this time. My point is it may not be you or me in this predicament, but that doesn't excuse you or I from living how He expects us to live as a witness for Him. With that speech out of my system, time to get back to Isaiah.
17. Verse 14: The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?"
- a) Translation: We're scared to death of facing God. I'll be honest, if I wasn't positive that I was 100% forgiven of every sin I've ever committed or every sin I ever will commit, even the thought of living this verse would scare the daylights out of me.
 - b) The point here is that those living around Isaiah at that time, we're very aware of what it is God required of them because they knew at the least the basic's of God's laws with the 10 Commandments being the obvious example. Most people today accept the idea that a God exists and will judge us based on how we live.
 - c) I recently read a survey about a growing percentage of Americans who don't believe in a god and don't care what any established religion says about how we should live. I'm also convinced that if a person is about to face death, it's amazing how much they'd will think about what'll become of them after death despite whatever they thought in this life. All I am saying is it's a topic people may want to avoid, but the reality of death is always there.
 - d) With that in mind, those who live out their lives without any fear of God will still tremble in fear about the prospect in death! That's what this verse is preaching about.
 - e) Which leads back to you and I who are trusting in Jesus for our salvation. The reason we shouldn't be afraid to preach that message, is death is a reality to everyone and people do need to be assured of salvation even though they claim they don't want to hear it said.

18. Verse 15: He who walks righteously and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil--¹⁶ this is the man who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. His bread will be supplied, and water will not fail him.
- a) In Verse 14, Isaiah just lectured effectively about who's going to hell because they refused to trust in God with their lives. These two verses are "evidence" of how one lives their life based on that trust. It's essentially to say, if one does "x and y" based on the examples that are given in these two verses, that doesn't mean we're saved or unsaved based on whether or not any of us actually did these things. Isaiah's simply giving examples of if we believe Jesus is God, "we put our money where our mouth is" and practice what we preach!
 - b) The way I like to describe this example is, "If we were put on trial for being a Christian, is there enough evidence to convict us?" It doesn't mean we have to be perfect. It does mean God expects us to live differently based on our belief that He exists and He wants us to be a living witness for Him. As I regularly state, since we can't earn our salvation, we live as He desires out of gratitude for what He's done for us and to be a witness to others, not to earn His love or prove our value to Him. We are to live differently and use our lives to be a witness for Him and help others grow in their faith, as that's the best way to live out our lives.
 - c) All of that leads back to these verses. An example Isaiah gives is about refusing to accept a bribe in a case that involves justice. I suspect that if you ask most adults if they've seen justice happen in every case, that's not true. One of the bible teachers I listen to regularly is a former policeman. I've also heard the suicide rate among police officers is higher than it is for the general population. My point is simply that justice doesn't always get done.
 - d) The point for you and me is that God holds us to a "higher standard" than a nonbeliever. If you think about it, it's logical. Since we believe in God and know some stuff about what it is He expects of us, He expects us to act accordingly. We can't fix by ourselves all that is wrong in this world, but at the same time, God expects us to be a witness for Him as we're interacting with others and do what is right in every situation we're in. That's what Isaiah is trying to communicate here.
 - e) The final part of Verse 16 says, "His bread will be supplied, and water will not fail him."
 - i) Most of us know the line from of the Lord's Prayer that says, "Give us this day our daily bread?" In effect that's the same as what Isaiah's saying here in Verse 16.
 - ii) When we ask God to supply our food and drink, does that mean we can be lazy at home and never work for our food? Of course not. It simply means that if we are willing to do our part, (work to provide our needs), God will do His part of making rain come to water the ground to provide food to grow and animals to exist.
 - iii) The reason Isaiah states that line here is if a person is willing to do what's right in a given situation, He promises to do His part and provide us what we need so we can make a difference for Him. That's why that last line is here in Verse 16.
 - iv) In the meantime, we're almost done with this chapter.
19. Verse 17: Your eyes will see the king in his beauty and view a land that stretches afar. ¹⁸ In your thoughts you will ponder the former terror: "Where is that chief officer? Where is the one who took the revenue? Where is the officer in charge of the towers?" ¹⁹ You will see those arrogant people no more, those people of an obscure speech, with their strange, incomprehensible tongue.
- a) Think of Verse 17 as a promise to those who are trusting in God. Let's be honest, all of us who believe in Jesus go through our moments of doubts about whether or not it's worth it to go through all the trouble of living differently by committing our life to serving Him.
 - b) When I have my moments of doubt, I like the idea of thinking, "If I'm 90% sure what I'm doing is right and 10% of me is doubting, why am I focusing on the 10 instead of the 90?"
 - c) Another way to have assurance of our salvation is to spend time in the bible. We'll get a few verses like Verse 17 that it's all worth the time and trouble.

- d) When I'm having doubts, I remember the acronym "MAPS": That stands for Manuscripts, Archeology, Prophecy and Statistics. My point is all four of those areas of study provide a lot of evidence that the bible is real when we go through our doubts.
 - e) Isaiah's point is that life is short. Before we know it, life will be over and we'll be living in an infinitely longer time period where Jesus will rule over the world and we'll be there to enforce His rule. At that time, we can recall, "Hey, whatever happened to all the injustice that used to occur regularly on earth? What happened to all those people who made bad laws that hurt us? Yes Isaiah's back to describing utopia, but that's why I gave that little lecture about how to have assurance that all of "this" is real. For example, the reason that 30% of the bible is predictions is that by seeing them come true, we can have reassurance that all of "this" is worth the effort. It comes back to the example I gave to start this lesson that if we're willing to listen to good advice and practice what they tell us, it's well worth the time and trouble of living this way. That's what Isaiah's preaching to us here.
20. Verse 20: Look upon Zion, the city of our festivals; your eyes will see Jerusalem, a peaceful abode, a tent that will not be moved; its stakes will never be pulled up, nor any of its ropes broken.
- a) One of the great advantages of having the hindsight of history is most of us know that the city of Jerusalem was destroyed twice since Isaiah wrote this: The first time was when the Babylonians destroyed it and again centuries later by the Romans. All the centuries it was under Muslim control, it wasn't a major city for them, and Jewish people lived there when they could, and kept it going with some Jewish presence.
 - b) My whole point is simply that when Isaiah describes Jerusalem as a city that will never be moved, he must be talking about "eternity" and not the actual history of that city. One of the reasons I'm convinced that nonbelievers are so obsessed with Jerusalem's destruction as a Jewish capital is I'm equally convinced demonic forces realize that God's eternal plan involves using that city as center for Jesus to rule. Therefore, it makes sense that so many people who don't realize their being used as pawns want that city destroyed.
 - c) I'm reminded of the expression that in life, people are both the "pawns" and the "prizes" as God desires to use us to make a difference for Him.
 - d) All I'm saying is this verse reminds us that we're talking "eternity" here, and not "today".
21. Verse 21: There the LORD will be our Mighty One. It will be like a place of broad rivers and streams. No galley with oars will ride them, no mighty ship will sail them. ²² For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; it is he who will save us. ²³ Your rigging hangs loose: The mast is not held secure, the sail is not spread. Then an abundance of spoils will be divided and even the lame will carry off plunder. ²⁴ No one living in Zion will say, "I am ill"; and the sins of those who dwell there will be forgiven.
- a) Speaking of eternal life as seen from Jerusalem's perspective, I present these last verses of this chapter. If you don't know, there are no rivers in Jerusalem. The Jordan River flows a good distance east of that city. Also, it's not a mighty river for ships to sail upon. All I am saying is that Isaiah can't be describing that city in either 700BC or today, so this must be a future day. I admit I've pondered, of all the cities on earth, why Jerusalem? Other than its religious history, there's nothing special about it. No natural resources, no great river, it's not bordering an ocean or sea! God picked it just because He did and we have to accept it as the place where He'll rule the world from one day.
 - b) Whenever that day comes it'll be much different from how it exists today. Isaiah as well as Ezekiel and Revelation teach us a mighty river there one day. It will be from there that Jesus as both God and the one in charge of our lives will rule there. Further, no one will ever suffer there and Verse 23 paints the picture that ships will sail there bringing "spoil" to that city. I think that means when this "utopia" begins, people still need to eat, and we'll read of stuff brought there so people can physically survive and serve God. Finally it says that no one will be ill there. The short version is life will still exist but be different then.

22. Remember why Isaiah's giving this lecture to all of us in the first place. It's to remind us that in spite of whatever we're dealing with, the longest we're going to deal with this life is one lifetime. An eternity will exist that lasts a lot longer and Isaiah paints a picture of us of what eternity will be like. That's why this chapter is full of good news about God's promises to us both in this life as well as the next one when we live as He desires and the dangers of turning from Him. Given that summary thought, let's close in prayer:
23. Father, Even as devout Christians, it's so easy for us to get our focus onto you and onto our own lives. Help us to live as You desire. Guide our lives so we can use them to make a difference for You and use the gifts You've given us by Your power to make that difference. Help us as we deal with whatever issues we're facing at the moment, to make the right decisions so that our lives do glorify You in all that we do. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.