



Isaiah

God gave Isaiah the difficult task of preaching profound biblical truth to a people who would completely ignore it. But this does not mean that Isaiah's words were wasted because they are a blessing to us today. In this series, we will learn from Isaiah's message about our God, who is a righteous king and an irreplaceable sovereign judge. Yet the very same God is a suffering servant who comforts us in our times of need and provides Hope to the nations.

WEEK THREE

Our God is Sovereign

Message Passage: Isaiah 44:24-28 & Isaiah 11:1-9

Small Group Passage: Isaiah 40:1-14 & 40:27-31

TEACHING AND VIDEO NOTES

One of the unquestionable themes of the book of Isaiah is that God is sovereign. That is a theological term that simply means that God is in control of all things at all times. 90% of the time, we would gladly affirm and "amen" that God is sovereign over all things. After all, he is God! But when things are going wrong, we don't like to think about God being sovereign. We want to focus more on God as a comforter. But that is not the way it works. The reality is that God is both. God is sovereign, and he comforts us in tragedy. In fact, what I want us to see today is that because God is sovereign over all, he can comfort us in all situations.

GOD IS SOVEREIGN

All throughout the Book of Isaiah, the prophet predicts exactly what will happen to Israel on the world stage because of its sinful rebellion. Keep in mind that all of this was predicted from the 8th century, between 740 and 720 BC.

Assyria's Rise - 745–727 BC (Israel conquest in 722 BC)

- Isaiah 7-8 — Assyria will flood into the land as God's judgment (8:7-8).

- Isaiah 10:5-19 — Assyria is the “rod of God’s anger” used to judge Judah and nations.

Assyria's fall (612 BC)

- Isaiah 10:20-34 & 14 — After being used, God will judge Assyria for its arrogance.
- Isaiah 30:31-33 & Isaiah 31:8-9 — The Lord will strike Assyria down, “by a sword not of man.”
- Isaiah 36-37 — All of this is fulfilled when God destroys Sennacherib’s army and delivers Jerusalem.

Babylon's Rise

- Isaiah 13:1-22 — Babylon will become the dominant world empire, but will later be destroyed.
- Isaiah 14:3-23 — Describes Babylon’s arrogance and eventual downfall.
- Isaiah 39:5-7 — Hezekiah, the king of Judea, is told, “*The days are coming when everything in your palace... will be carried off to Babylon*,” a century before the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem (586 BC)

Put yourself in the shoes of the Captives now. The Assyrians had destroyed your countrymen to the North. Your home in Jerusalem was ruined when the Babylonians came and took you and your fellow Jews captive. Since then, the Persians had taken control. It feels like you are helpless. Like a fishing bobber just bouncing up and down in a storm. *They knew that God was sovereign over all things, but it didn't feel like he was sovereignly in control over their lives.* But God had a message for his people; while they were not in control, God still was. Just because we do not see the power of his plan does not mean it is not there.

Isaiah 44:24 “This is what the LORD says—
*your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb:
 I am the LORD,
 the Maker of all things,
 who stretches out the heavens,
 who spreads out the earth by myself,*

Even in chaos, our God is still the creator of all things!

Isaiah 44:25 *who foils the signs of false prophets
 and makes fools of diviners,
 who overthrows the learning of the wise
 and turns it into nonsense,*

Choose who you listen to in chaos. God's wisdom is vastly greater than ours.

Isaiah 44:26-27 who carries out the words of his servants
and fulfills the predictions of his messengers,
who says of Jerusalem, 'It shall be inhabited,'
of the towns of Judah, 'They shall be rebuilt,'
and of their ruins, 'I will restore them,'
27 who says to the watery deep, 'Be dry,
and I will dry up your streams,'

The current crisis is not greater than God's power. It is greater than your power, and that is the point.

Isaiah 44:28 who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd
and will accomplish all that I please;
he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt,"
and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid." '

Cyrus the Great ruled the Persian Empire from 559 BC to 530 BC. He was a pagan Emperor who did not know God. But God is so sovereign that he used this man to be his shepherd and fulfill God's task of bridging his now humbled people back to Israel (538 BC). That is exactly what Cyrus the Great did... about 180 years after Isaiah prophesied it would happen.

It is amazing to see how God sovereignly brought Israel back to the promised land. But what does that have to do with me? Good question. The good news for us is that God is still sovereign. **He was in control then, and he is in control now, and he has already told us how we will be delivered from this chaotic and broken world.**

Isaiah 11:1-5 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—
3 and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;
4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.

*He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.*

5 *Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.*

Who is this shoot coming up from the smoldering stump? It's Jesus. When Jesus was born, Israel was still a conquered people, at that time by the Romans. The world was still broken, but he wasn't like the world because he wasn't of this world. He would redeem this broken world.

Isaiah 11:6-9 *The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.*

7 *The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.*

8 *The infant will play near the cobra's den,
the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.*

9 *They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.*

Segway to Small Group: The question is, will we trust in his sovereignty so much that we run to Him as a comforter? To do that, it helps us to know how God comforts those he loves

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. As the Israelites marched off to Babylon in fulfillment of God's prophecy, I do not doubt that they knew God was sovereign over all. It was clear that God was in control of all that happened here on earth. While we do not know what each Israelite was feeling, I believe many of them felt like God was in control of everything, except for their lives, which were now in utter chaos. Many people can relate to just such a feeling. So how do we trust in God's sovereignty in the midst of chaos and even tragedy?

Leader Note: One thing we must remember is that chaos and crisis are not forever. They may last far longer than we want, but they are not forever. The Prophet Jeremiah, who was ministering at the time of the Babylonian captivity, told the people that they would return after 70 years (Jeremiah 26:12-13). Their captivity would not be forever, nor will ours. Regardless of how long our corsis may last, we can rest assured that one day we will be with Jesus face to face, where crisis and chaos are no more (John 14:1-4).

2. Why is it good news that God is sovereign and in control?

Leader Note (disclaimer): The nation of Israel found itself in exile because it had rebelled against God for generations. Because of this rebellion, God had sent the Assyrian Empire and later the Babylonian Empire to carry his people into exile. Therefore, the terrible situation the nation of Israel found itself in was God's punishment and correction. This is important to note because not every tragedy or difficulty in life is God's correction. The reality is that we live in a broken world, and because of that, difficulty and adversity will define our lives at times. But the good news is that whether we find ourselves in difficulty due to our own mistakes or because of circumstances beyond our control, God comforts us all the same.

READ: Isaiah 40:1-14

3. Vs. 6-8, Crisis reminds us that we are not God. Like grass that is blown by the wind and a flower that fades and withers, we are not as strong as we think we are. But the good news is that God is. He is eternal and mighty in power. What situation or crisis in your life has reminded you of your own weaknesses but also of God's power to sustain you?

Leader Note: There is no tragedy or situation that is greater than our God. We are reminded of that when a crisis hits, and we are overwhelmed. We are reminded that God is sovereign and we are not. We learn to rely on the strength of our sovereign God rather than our own. As the apostle Paul said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me (2 Cor 12:9)."

4. Vs 10- Israel needed to be reminded in a time of chaos that "the Sovereign LORD (still) comes with power, and he (still) rules with a mighty arm." This was true even when Jerusalem fell. This was true even in the Babylonian captivity. How do we remind ourselves of God's power and might when we are afraid and powerless?
5. Vs 11 - What did Isaiah mean when he said God is like a shepherd?

Leader Note: If you would like to dive deeper into this question, you can ask, "How is a right and full understanding of God's power and sovereignty critical if we are going to view God as a good shepherd?" Part of the role of a shepherd, especially a good one, was to protect the sheep. The shepherd would protect the sheep from predators, thieves, and the elements. Likewise, our sovereign God is more than capable of being our defender. Jesus builds on this theme in John 10, especially in verses 28-29.

6. Vs 12-14 - In verses 12-14, Isaiah asks five questions of Israel, and the world for that matter, if they could even begin to rival God's wisdom and knowledge. He did this because in a crisis, we will often begin to question God's wisdom. What is so dangerous about this pitfall, and how can we avoid it?

Leader Note: It is easy to ask the question, "God, what are you doing?" in a crisis. But the vastly better question is, "God, how will you use this situation?" To be more specific, we should ask, "God, how will you use this situation for my good and your glory?" That is the question that the Apostle Paul tried to get the church in Rome to ask in Romans 8:28-29.

READ: Isaiah 40:27-31

7. One of the worst phrases that you commonly hear in Christian circles is that God will never give you more than you can handle. This is neither true nor biblical. We are often given more than we can handle. We will never be given more than God can handle. The question is, will we rely on his strength or our own? How can we practically rely on God's strength in crisis rather than our own?

PRAYER TIME

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