

old testament

big picture/little picture **STUDY GUIDE**

Each week, gospel learners of all ages and all backgrounds can gain confidence in their scripture study!

The BIG PICTURE section helps you feel confident with how the assigned reading fits into the entire Old Testament. After reading only a few conversation-style bullet points that catch you up on important people or background knowledge, you'll be able to contribute in Sunday School or teach others with ease!

The LITTLE PICTURE section helps you dive into each chapter and apply the concepts you'll learn. You'll get quick context and chapter summaries, and then seven spiritual guiding questions to walk you through applying some of the most important concepts from the reading.

Ready for the scriptures to completely make sense, and totally come alive?
Let's dive in!



ISAIAH 40-49

"Comfort Ye My People"

BIG PICTURE

How to feel confident fitting in this week's readings with the entire Old Testament

General Context:

- **As we continue into our third week studying the prophecies of Isaiah, our focus turns to the theme of COMFORT.**
- **Chapters 40-49** all focus on how the Lord will comfort and try/test His covenant people. Even when they are taken away into Babylon, He will hear their cries and ultimately deliver them. Remember, Isaiah lives BEFORE the nation of Judah is carried into Babylon, and before King Cyrus and the Persians allow some of them to return to Jerusalem. So while these historical elements may seem familiar to us, Isaiah is prophesying that they will happen in the future.
- **Look for this theme of "comfort" in virtually every single chapter we study this week.** Just like in previous weeks, think about how Isaiah's prophecies and stories can be interpreted as being "fulfilled" at multiple times. For example:
 - How was this prophecy literally fulfilled for the people living in Jerusalem? (being conquered by Babylon, captivity in Persia, being allowed to rebuild later...)
 - How has this prophecy been fulfilled at other times in history? (Christ's mortal birth, His atoning sacrifice, the Apostasy...)
 - How is this prophecy being fulfilled in the restoration of the fulness of times, right now? (Joseph Smith, the gathering of Israel, temples dotting the earth...)
 - How might these prophecies be fulfilled in the future? (Christ's Second Coming, the Millennium, Judgment Day...)
 - AND most importantly for your personal study right now, how might these prophecies be fulfilled with your own personal relationship with the Savior?

- **What happens in the chapters we skip?** Isaiah 36–39 cover parts of Isaiah and King Hezekiah’s stories that we already studied in 2 Kings 18–20. In one story, Isaiah helped King Hezekiah listen to the Lord’s message for how to win a battle by doing nothing. In another story, King Hezekiah, on his deathbed, pleaded for more years of life, and Isaiah told him his wish would be granted. The son of the Babylonian king visited Hezekiah, and Hezekiah showed him all of their riches and precious things. Isaiah warned and prophesied that Babylon would eventually return and take them into captivity, but that it would mercifully be after Hezekiah’s death.
- **Ready for a chiasmus?** A chiasmus is a formal structure often used in poetry where the author starts with an idea, moves toward a central point, and then moves back to the starting idea. For example, if each idea or concept was given a letter, a chiasmus would look like: A B C D E E D C B A
 - **Chapters 40–57 make a giant chiasmus!** Each chapter is considered one point that Isaiah makes.
 - **This week, we are studying the first half of the chiasmus.** Chapter 40 starts with the basic idea that God comforts His people. Each subsequent chapter builds on this idea until **Isaiah reaches his main point in chapter 48:** that God will always save His covenant people. Isaiah then repeats that same idea in chapter 49, the final chapter we study this week.
 - Heads up: Next week, look to see how the chapters mirror what we are studying this week! Chapter 50 mirrors the ideas in chapter 47, chapter 51 mirrors the ideas in chapter 46, and so on.

Spiritual Themes:

Look for these themes as you read this week! Find examples in the scriptures, and ponder on what these themes can look like in your life.

- **The Lord is greater than anything we fear**
- **Christ will sustain and strengthen us when we are weak**
- **God remembers His covenants and will gather scattered Israel**

People to Know:

- **Isaiah**

- Isaiah is a prophet in Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. He has a wife, referred to as “the prophetess”, and at least 2 sons. He begins his ministry during King Uzziah’s reign and ends around the same time as King Hezekiah. In these chapters, Isaiah prophesies and teaches about the Lord’s relationship with covenant Israel, including the comfort he gives them. Isaiah is alive when the northern kingdom of Israel is taken captive by the Assyrians, and he also witnesses the Assyrians take over much of the southern kingdom of Judah, although Jerusalem is spared at the time. He assists King Hezekiah by speaking with the Lord on his behalf. Tradition says Isaiah was killed by an ax during wicked King Manasseh’s reign (though there is no scriptural record of his death).

- **Cyrus**

- Cyrus is the king of Persia who conquers Babylon after Babylon conquers Judah. He also allows groups of Jewish people to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. We learn from Isaiah’s prophecies that Cyrus was a servant of the Lord in what he did.

Where are We?

- **Judah**

- Judah is the southern kingdom. The capital city is Jerusalem, sometimes referred to as Zion. At certain points in Isaiah’s prophecies this week, Isaiah speaks as if Jerusalem has fallen, and the Jewish people have been carried away captive. “Redemption” usually refers to the Jews being allowed to return to Jerusalem.

- **Babylon/Chaldea**

- Babylon is the nation that conquers Judah and carries the Jewish people away captive. Babylon is also used symbolically for those who rely on their own strength and turn away from the Lord. These chapters also prophesy the eventual fall and destruction of Babylon.

LITTLE PICTURE

How to understand each chapter and apply principles to my life

- **Isaiah 40:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah is starting a new section of prophecies about the Lord's role in comforting and humbling His covenant people. This is Isaiah's first main point in a chiasmus structure (see the Big Picture for more details) about the different ways that the Lord comforts the righteous.
- **What You'll Read About:** The Lord comforts His people. His path is prepared before Him, and all will recognize His glory. He is a shepherd who works gently with His people. He will give the righteous renewed strength.

- **Isaiah 41:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah teaches that the Lord will comfort His covenant people.
- **What You'll Read About:** As Israel serves each other, the Lord serves Israel. The Lord counsels us to have no fear. Man has done nothing compared to the Lord.

- **Isaiah 42:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah teaches that the Lord does not want us to fear.
- **What You'll Read About:** The servant (AKA the Savior) will be gentle and kind. He created the earth, and we should give all praise to Him. God is pleased with the righteous, and He wants all people to get rid of their idols.

- **Isaiah 43:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah teaches about the Savior and why we praise Him.
- **What You'll Read About:** The Lord will be with us in trials and has given us His name. He will be Israel's Savior and will forget their sins if they turn to Him.

- **Isaiah 44:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah teaches about the Savior's willingness to stay with us and forgive us.
- **What You'll Read About:** The Lord is the only God we should care about. False idols and graven images are completely meaningless, even if we don't always recognize that. The Lord will forgive us of our sins and redeem us.

- **Isaiah 45:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah teaches the importance of focusing on the Lord, not false idols. Remember that Cyrus was the Persian king who eventually allowed some Jewish people to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple after its destruction.
- **What You'll Read About:** The Lord helped prepare the way for Cyrus to be able to bless the people of Judah. The Lord created everything, and everyone will need to turn toward Him.

- **Isaiah 46:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah teaches that the Lord should be our main focus of worship.
- **What You'll Read About:** False idols are meaningless and should never be compared to the Lord. The Lord is ready to bring salvation to Israel.

- **Isaiah 47:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah teaches that the Lord warned against false idols. Remember that Chaldea/the Chaldeans are part of Babylon, symbolizing worldly and selfish priorities.
- **What You'll Read About:** Babylon thinks that they will last forever, but they don't recognize that they are trusting in nothing that lasts. They will be destroyed, and no one will come and save them. Babylon will fall.

- **Isaiah 48:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah teaches that Babylon will be conquered and fall. If you are tracking the chiasmus in this reading (see the Big Picture portion), chapter 48 is Isaiah's main conclusion. Chapter 49 then mirrors this main conclusion, and similar points are made backward in later chapters. This chapter is also quoted in the Book of Mormon in 1 Nephi 20.
- **What You'll Read About:** The Lord is refining Israel in the furnace of affliction. He has always revealed His plans to the prophets, but most people have not listened. The Lord comforts Israel when they keep the commandments. The Lord commands Israel to leave Babylon.

- **Isaiah 49:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah teaches that the Lord has always revealed His plans to the prophets. In the chiasmus format, chapter 49 repeats Isaiah's main point from chapter 48 before going backward. This chapter also appears in the Book of Mormon as 1 Nephi 21.
- **What You'll Read About:** Isaiah laments that he hasn't been able to change many hearts with his message and that it has all been in vain. The Savior promises that He will never forget us and will continue to work with us. Israel will all be gathered together.

SPIRITUAL GUIDING QUESTIONS

Question: When have you felt “weary” or like your strength wasn’t enough? Where can you find strength that sustains you? (Isaiah 40:28-31)

Question: What fears or worries are hardest for you to surrender to the Lord? What does it look like to actually trust Him with your fears? (Isaiah 41:10, 13-14)

Question: Consider how the Lord promises He will be with His people when they pass “through the waters” and “through the fire.” How is this different than a promise that we won’t experience hard things? (Isaiah 43:1-2)

Question: How does the Lord feel about His covenant people, even with their imperfections?
What does this teach you about how the Lord feels about you? (Isaiah 43:4)

Question: What are some modern idols that can quietly receive your trust, time, attention, or devotion? (Isaiah 44:9-20)

Question: What does it look like to actually “look unto” Christ and make Him the center of your life? (Isaiah 45:5-6, 22)

Question: What is your role in God’s work of gathering His children to the gospel? What are some simple ways you could help people feel they belong with Christ and His covenant people? (Isaiah 49:22-23)

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ISAIAH 50-57

"He Hath Borne Our Grievs, and Carried Our Sorrows"

BIG PICTURE

How to feel confident fitting in this week's readings with the entire Old Testament

General Context:

- **This is our fourth week studying Isaiah's prophecies and teachings!** In these chapters, Isaiah continues with a set of prophecies. Look for prophecies and themes focused on:
 - The bondage and eventual gathering of Israel/Judah
 - The everlasting and abundant mercy of the Savior
 - The painful and intimate sacrifices the Savior made on our behalf
 - The covenants made between God and the people who remember Him
- **Just because I think we need a little review, I'm going to give you a quick recap of who Isaiah is, when he lived, what was going on, and what we've studied from his writings for the past three weeks:**
 - **Do you remember when Israel had been split into two kingdoms, with Israel in the north and Judah in the south?** Judah had a series of wicked kings for a while, and the people were starting to turn to false gods.
 - Four kings ruled Judah in succession: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. **Isaiah prophesied during all four kings' reigns, covering almost 40 years,** although in the book of Second Kings we read only about his interactions with the righteous King Hezekiah.
 - As a reminder, King Hezekiah withstood attacks from the Assyrians right after they conquered the northern kingdom of Israel. Hezekiah also asked for his life to be spared on his deathbed. Isaiah advised Hezekiah many times, and Hezekiah was always receptive to the prophet's messages.
 - Although not confirmed by scripture, it is often assumed that Isaiah was killed by the next king of Judah, Hezekiah's son, the wicked King Manasseh.
 - To clarify, this means Isaiah lived before the kingdom of Judah was captured by the Babylonians, BEFORE the Jewish people were taken into captivity, and before the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. So when you see writings and prophecies about these events, it is a cool testament to just how prophetic Isaiah was—because we can see how they came true!

- **What is the best way to understand Isaiah?** First, understanding the history of what was happening around Isaiah and what was about to happen helps a lot. Learning about the northern and southern kingdoms, Assyria, and Babylon makes Isaiah much easier to understand. Instead of random names of people and places, it becomes clearer how they all relate. Many of Isaiah's prophecies are literally about these ancient nations falling into pride, captivity, and eventually being restored to their homes. This is what I focus on in my study guides.
 - **But Isaiah's prophecies aren't only about ancient Israel.** It is great to understand all the historical context. But many of the prophecies can also be interpreted as being fulfilled during **Christ's mortal ministry, in the latter days, or during the Millennium.**
 - Many prophecies can also be interpreted as fulfilled spiritually in our lives (battles, captivity, and redemption happen in our souls every day).
- **One other cool thing to note:** In last week's guide, you'll remember I talked about a large CHIASMUS that covers Isaiah chapters 40-57.
 - **A chiasmus is a formal structure often used in poetry where the author starts with an idea, moves toward a central point, and then moves back to the starting idea.** For example, if each idea or concept were given a letter, a chiasmus would look like: A B C D E E D C B A
 - **Chapters 40-57 make a giant chiasmus!** Each chapter is considered one point that Isaiah makes.
 - **We studied the first half of the chiasmus LAST week.** We started with Isaiah's first basic idea in chapter 40 that God comforts His people. Each subsequent chapter built on that idea until Isaiah reached his main point in chapter 48: that God always saves His covenant people. Isaiah then repeated that same idea in chapter 49, the final chapter we study this week.
 - **Now this week, we get to finish the chiasmus.** We will see similar points that mirror what we studied last week. Chapter 50 mirrors the ideas in chapter 47, chapter 51 mirrors the ideas in chapter 46, and so on. So keep looking for themes of God comforting His people, trying His people, and ultimately saving His covenant people.

Spiritual Themes:

Look for these themes as you read this week! Find examples in the scriptures, and ponder on what these themes can look like in your life.

- **The Savior willingly suffered and submitted to the Father's will**
- **The Lord comforts, strengthens, and gathers His people**
- **The Lord invites everyone to come unto Him**

People to Know:

- **Isaiah**
 - Isaiah is a prophet in Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. He has a wife, referred to as "the prophetess", and at least 2 sons. He begins his ministry during King Uzziah's reign and ends around the same time as King Hezekiah. In these chapters, Isaiah prophesies and teaches about the Lord's relationship with covenant Israel, including the comfort he gives them. Isaiah is alive when the northern kingdom of Israel is taken captive by the Assyrians, and he also witnesses the Assyrians take over much of the southern kingdom of Judah, although Jerusalem is spared at the time. He assists King Hezekiah by speaking with the Lord on his behalf. Tradition has Isaiah being killed by an ax during wicked King Manasseh's reign (no scriptural record of his death).

Where are We?

- **Judah**
 - Judah is the southern kingdom of the Israelites. Its capital city is Jerusalem, sometimes called Zion. This is where Isaiah lived as a prophet, and it is the topic for many of the prophecies he received.

LITTLE PICTURE

How to understand each chapter and apply principles to my life

- **Isaiah 50:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah has just finished the first large half of a chiasmus, proving that the Lord will always show mercy on His covenant people (see the explanation in the Big Picture portion). This chapter is also in the Book of Mormon in 2 Nephi 7.
- **What You'll Read About:** The Lord is showing that He has not gone anywhere– it is the people who are choosing to reject Him. Isaiah has not been rebellious, so the Lord will show him mercy. The Lord should be the light, instead of people trying to make their own light.

- **Isaiah 51:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah just taught that the Lord is ready to help His people. Find these words in the Book of Mormon in 2 Nephi 8.
- **What You'll Read About:** The Lord reminds His people of their spiritual heritage that they can draw strength from. He will always comfort those who need help and call upon Him, which means His people have no need to fear their enemies. There will be so much joy when Israel is gathered together, and people turn back to the Lord.

- **Isaiah 52:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah has been teaching about the Lord's mercy and the joy that will come when He gathers His covenant people together. Much of this chapter appears in the Book of Mormon in 3 Nephi 20, where Jesus Christ quotes it to the Nephites. Many of these verses also appear in other books of scripture, highlighting the importance of these teachings.
- **What You'll Read About:** Those in Babylon (or any other kind of captivity) will be freed and gathered back to Jesus. Righteous members will spread the message throughout the earth, and there will be much joy! The Lord gives directions to His covenant people.

- **Isaiah 53:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah wrote about the joy that will come to the Lord's covenant people as they gather together and spread the message to others. Much of this chapter is found in the Book of Mormon in Mosiah 14. Many of the verses are also quoted multiple times in the New Testament. This is one of the most powerful and specific prophecies about Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice.
- **What You'll Read About:** Jesus Christ is well-acquainted with grief. He made the choice to atone and suffer for our sins, which means that we can be made whole through His sacrifice. His atonement for our sins was made willingly.

- **Isaiah 54:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah has been prophesying about Jesus Christ, and the role that His atoning sacrifice plays for covenant Israel. Many of these verses appear in the Book of Mormon in 3 Nephi 22, as quoted by Jesus Christ to the Nephites.
- **What You'll Read About:** God's covenant people have been in captivity because they have forgotten the Lord. But even though they were apart for a while, the Lord will show great mercy and kindness as He fulfills His covenants. In the future, the posterity of the righteous will find peace and prosper.

- **Isaiah 55:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah has been teaching that the Lord shows great kindness and mercy.
- **What You'll Read About:** The Lord invites everyone to come to Him. Even people who don't know Him will be drawn to Him. The Lord wants to "abundantly pardon" us, and even though that doesn't make sense with all of our sins, He has ways of doing things that are higher than our own understanding.

- **Isaiah 56:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah has been prophesying about Jesus Christ. Remember, many of these prophecies are literally about the house of Israel, but can also be seen as being fulfilled in our personal lives. Also look out for many references to the temple in this chapter.
- **What You'll Read About:** The Lord continues to invite everyone to come and partake of His gospel, no matter their background. He warns that some of the people who should be most devoted to Him are actually getting caught up in sin.

- **Isaiah 57:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah has been prophesying about the Savior's constant mercy, devotion, and saving grace. This is the final chapter of the giant chiasmus that began in chapter 40, reiterating that the Lord will comfort and strengthen the righteous.
- **What You'll Read About:** The righteous will die in peace, but if they are not replaced by a righteous rising generation, then their priorities will be false. The righteous will always receive mercy, but the wicked will find no peace.

SPIRITUAL GUIDING QUESTIONS

Question: What can you do to become a person who knows how to strengthen and encourage those who are spiritually struggling? (Isaiah 50:4-5)

Question: What does Christ's willingness to endure suffering teach you about trusting Heavenly Father when obedience is difficult? (Isaiah 50:6-7)

Question: Who is the source of our lasting comfort? How have you experienced the Lord's comfort in a way that another person or circumstance couldn't provide? (Isaiah 51:12)

Question: What does it mean to you to “awake” and arise? Are there areas of your discipleship where you might be spiritually asleep right now? (Isaiah 52:1-2)

Question: Why do you think “going our own way” is such a natural human tendency? What helps you recognize when your “own way” is actually taking you away from Christ? (Isaiah 53:6)

Question: How have God’s correction and His enduring love for you coexisted in your life? (Isaiah 54:7-10)

Question: How can you maintain faith when God’s timing, answers, or plans don’t make sense to you? (Isaiah 55:8-9)

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ISAIAH 58-66

"The Redeemer Shall Come to Zion"

BIG PICTURE

How to feel confident fitting in this week's readings with the entire Old Testament

General Context:

- **We are at the final week of our five-week study of the writings of Isaiah.** As a quick reminder, Isaiah was a prophet who lived in the southern kingdom of Judah before its captivity in Babylon. He gave many prophecies, both about the eventual captivity and destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, as well as powerful prophecies about the Savior and events in the Millennium.
- **What can we expect in these final writings from Isaiah?** There are three main themes that you'll find in these last chapters:
 - **Theme One:** The Lord wants us to know what His covenant people do. It's clear that the Lord, through Isaiah, really wants to teach His people that becoming covenant people is more than just keeping the commandments. You'll see warnings for people who think they are being righteous when their hearts aren't really "in it." You'll also read specifics about how the Lord expects His people to act and treat each other.
 - **Theme Two: God always blesses those who keep covenants with Him.** Through Isaiah, the Lord teaches this by describing in detail what will happen in the future. Knowing what will happen at the Second Coming or during the Millennium matters because it helps us see the consequences awaiting those who follow the Savior and those who do not.
 - **Theme Three:** The Lord will always extend mercy. Covenant Israel will choose to ignore and abandon the Lord time and time again. But any time that they choose to focus on keeping their covenants and remembering the Lord, He will forgive them and extend His mercy.

- **This week also includes many prophecies about the future.** Isaiah teaches what will happen in the Last Days when Christ comes to rule during the Millennium.
 - **Why is it important to know what will happen in the future?** Look for the Lord's warnings to learn what He wants us to avoid. And look for the praise from the Lord to learn what He expects His covenant people to do. The applications for these chapters are endless! When we know what the Lord expects, we can make better decisions each day to ensure we live up to our covenants and turn our hearts to the Savior. **Listen to the Spirit this week as you read in order to learn how you can make changes in your life right now to be part of that righteous Zion people in the future.**

Spiritual Themes:

Look for these themes as you read this week! Find examples in the scriptures, and ponder on what these themes can look like in your life.

- **True worship changes how we treat others**
- **The Lord wants to redeem and transform His covenant people**
- **God will ultimately create a new world of peace, righteousness, and His presence**

People to Know:

- **Isaiah**
 - Isaiah is a prophet in Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. He has a wife, referred to as “the prophetess”, and at least 2 sons. He begins his ministry during King Uzziah’s reign and ends around the same time as King Hezekiah. In these chapters, Isaiah prophesies and teaches about the Lord’s relationship with covenant Israel, including the comfort He gives them. Isaiah is alive when the northern kingdom of Israel is taken captive by the Assyrians, and he also witnesses the Assyrians take over much of the southern kingdom of Judah, although Jerusalem is spared at the time. He assists King Hezekiah by speaking with the Lord on his behalf. Tradition says Isaiah was killed by an ax during wicked King Manasseh’s reign (though there is no scriptural record of his death).

Where are We?

- **Judah**
 - Judah is the southern kingdom of the Israelites. The capital city is Jerusalem, sometimes referred to as Zion. In many of the prophecies this week, you may notice other locations being briefly named (like “Sharon” or “the valley of Achor”). These virtually all refer to other cities/lands/locations close to Jerusalem.
 - This is where Isaiah lived as a prophet, and it was also the topic of many of the prophecies he received.

LITTLE PICTURE

How to understand each chapter and apply principles to my life

- **Isaiah 58:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah has been recording many prophecies and teachings that focus on Jesus Christ and what happens when we turn away from or toward Him. Isaiah now dives into teachings about what it means to be a covenant people.
- **What You'll Read About:** Isaiah prophesies that people will complain to the Lord that He is not giving them blessings, even though they are fasting and keeping the commandments. The Lord then teaches the true law of the fast, including being humble during it and caring for the poor and needy. He also teaches how to make the Sabbath a delight.

- **Isaiah 59:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah just finished teaching about the true ways to fast and keep the Sabbath holy.
- **What You'll Read About:** Isaiah teaches that when Israel or other covenant people feel separated from God, it is because of their sins. Israel will have to wait in darkness for a while due to their wickedness, but the Lord will always keep His covenants with those who turn to Him.

- **Isaiah 60:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah has been prophesying about the Lord returning to His covenant people. Look for the theme of light in this chapter in particular.
- **What You'll Read About:** The Lord's covenant people will be a light to those who don't know Him. The righteous will be blessed in many ways. The Lord will then reign and become a light to His people.

- **Isaiah 61:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah has been prophesying about the blessings the righteous will receive in the last days. Jesus Christ quoted the first 2 verses of Isaiah 61 in Luke 4 to show that He was the promised Messiah.
- **What You'll Read About:** The Savior is sent to free those who are in bondage and teach them how to be righteous. The Lord's covenant people will then bless the entire world with their abundance.

- **Isaiah 62:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah has been prophesying about the role of Jesus Christ, both in His mortal ministry and during the last days.
- **What You'll Read About:** Both Jews and Gentiles who are righteous will be gathered together. Prophets will speak of Jesus Christ. Christ will come to redeem His people.

- **Isaiah 63:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah has been prophesying about Christ's role as Redeemer for His righteous people. This is an important chapter because the first 2 verses establish that Christ will be wearing a red garment when He returns to the earth.
- **What You'll Read About:** The Lord's covenant people have turned away from Him, but He is ready to extend mercy and redemption toward them. The righteous will praise the Lord.

- **Isaiah 64:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah has been prophesying about that future day when the Lord will rule over the righteous. This chapter is quoted in Doctrine and Covenants 133.
- **What You'll Read About:** Isaiah prophesies about what the righteous will say to the Lord when they desire Him to come and reign among them. The righteous know they don't fully comprehend the reward waiting for them, and are willing to let the Lord mold them into the people He wants them to become.

- **Isaiah 65:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah has been prophesying about the desires that the righteous will have in the future to be ruled over by the Savior.
- **What You'll Read About:** Isaiah prophesies about the Lord's disappointment in covenant Israel because they have continuously forgotten Him. The Lord explains the blessings that will come to the righteous, followed by what the unrighteous will experience. He describes the peace found in the Millennium.

- **Isaiah 66:**

- **Before You Read:** Isaiah has been prophesying about the Millennium. This is the final chapter of the Book of Isaiah and serves as a great conclusion and resolution for many of the themes found in his writings.
- **What You'll Read About:** Isaiah teaches about the ultimate fate of those who choose righteousness and those who do not. The righteous will feel comfort and ease. Zion will be built up again, teach the gospel, and prosper.

SPIRITUAL GUIDING QUESTIONS

Question: How can you tell the difference between simply participating in a fast and actually using your fasting to become closer to Christ? (Isaiah 58:3-7)

Question: What have you learned about the connection between serving others and feeling God's guidance in your own life? (Isaiah 58:9-11)

Question: Why is recognizing the effects of sin important to genuine repentance? At the same time, how can you avoid letting your guilt convince you that you are permanently separated from God? (Isaiah 59:1-2)

Question: How do you allow your light to point other people toward Christ? (Isaiah 60:1-3)

Question: How can Christ change the way you carry grief, disappointment, or discouragement?
(Isaiah 61:3)

Question: Just as Isaiah remembers the Lord's "lovingkindness," why can remembering God's past goodness be especially important during seasons when you don't currently feel His Spirit?
(Isaiah 63:7-9)

Question: What does it mean to allow God to shape you, rather than insisting that He simply bless the person you have already decided to become? (Isaiah 64:8)

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JEREMIAH 1-3; 7; 16-18; 20

"Before I Formed Thee in the Belly I Knew Thee"

BIG PICTURE

How to feel confident fitting in this week's readings with the entire Old Testament

General Context:

- **Are you ready to learn about the next prophet in the "prophet" section of the Old Testament?** Jeremiah, while not as well-known as Isaiah, is still one of the most major prophets in ancient Judah. Over the next two weeks, we will dive into his teachings and story. His calling lasted about 40 years, and he saw some of the most tragic events in all of Israelite history. His life covers the history of Judah as told in 2 Kings 24-25.
- **Jeremiah lived after Isaiah, starting his prophetic duties around 75 years after Isaiah's assumed death.** Remember that at this time, the children of Israel had split into two kingdoms: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Jeremiah lived in the southern kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom of Israel had already been destroyed by the Assyrians and carried away into captivity.
- **Jeremiah began his calling as a prophet when Josiah was the righteous king of Judah.** (Remember him? He rediscovered the lost scriptures and reinstated the law of Moses!) In total, his life covered five different kings of Judah. Jeremiah also saw the complete destruction of Judah by the Babylonians, including the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and many Jewish people were carried off to Babylon in the process. Jeremiah stayed behind in Jerusalem after the Babylonians had conquered them and destroyed their monarchy, and he was eventually taken to Egypt, where he was stoned to death.
- **So are Jeremiah's writings prophecies like Isaiah? Or stories like Moses?** A little bit of both!
 - **In the chapters we are studying this week, these are all PROPHECIES written in poetic format.** After reading Isaiah for the last five weeks, you'll be a total pro at studying these select chapters in Jeremiah! These prophecies include historical details, but the focus is on the prophecies.
 - Next week, we'll read some of the "biographical chapters" where Jeremiah will talk about his experiences and what was going on with the kingdom of Judah during his lifetime.

- **Which kings of Judah do I need to know for this week?**
 - **Josiah** was a righteous king of Judah. He rediscovered the law of Moses that his people had been ignoring and tried to reinstitute covenants and ordinances the Lord had asked the Israelites to keep.
 - Jeremiah started his role as prophet about halfway through King Josiah's reign. **His prophecies from this time are recorded in Jeremiah chapters 1-6. This week, we will read chapters 1-3 from this section.**
 - **Jehoiakim** was a wicked king of Judah. His brother had been the next king after their father Josiah died, but great political turbulence followed when the Egyptians took over and made Jehoiakim king. The Judahites were also paying tribute to the Babylonians. Jehoiakim wanted to stop paying tribute to the Babylonians, which ultimately ended with the Babylonians laying siege to and then conquering Jerusalem (this is the first time they do this, not the great and final destruction where the temple is destroyed, too).
 - Jeremiah preached and prophesied throughout the 11 years that Jehoiakim was king. You'll see that Jeremiah reveals God's will for the Judahites to submit to the Babylonians, but Jehoiakim will refuse. **Jeremiah's prophecies from this time are recorded in Jeremiah chapters 7-20. We will be reading chapters 7, 16-18, and 20.**
- **So what is going on in the chapters we are skipping this week?**
 - **Chapters 4-6** are prophecies Jeremiah receives during King Josiah's rule. These prophecies focus on how Judah will completely fall away from the Lord, refuse blessings, and eventually be conquered by a foreign nation.
 - **Chapters 8-15 and 19** are prophecies Jeremiah receives during King Jehoiakim's rule. These prophecies focus on Judah's eventual scattering because of its wickedness and the destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremiah mourns that they have turned away from the Lord.

Spiritual Themes:

Look for these themes as you read this week! Find examples in the scriptures, and ponder on what these themes can look like in your life.

- **God calls and prepares us to do His work**
- **The Lord really wants our hearts-not just our outward religious behavior**
- **Repentance allows God to reshape our lives**

People to Know:

- **Jeremiah**

- Jeremiah prophesied for more than 40 years in the southern kingdom of Judah. He advised many kings, but most did not listen. His main message warned the Judahites who had completely turned away from the God of Israel. He preached with much sorrow and saw little success. He eventually saw the final and complete destruction of Jerusalem, and chose to stay behind with those who were not carried away into Babylon. He was later taken to Egypt and stoned to death.

- **King Josiah**

- Josiah was the final righteous king of the southern kingdom Judah. He became king at a young age and instituted major religious reform after hearing the scrolls of scripture read to him. He removed all evidence of false idols, altars, and priests, and consolidated all religious worship at the temple in Jerusalem. Josiah was ultimately killed in war right before the land of Judah was taken captive by the Egyptians.

- **King Jehoiakim**

- Jehoiakim was the wicked older brother of Jehoahaz, and the son of King Josiah. After the Egyptians took the land of Judah captive, they replaced Jehoahaz (who reigned for 3 months) with Jehoiakim. The Babylonians also attacked, and the Judahites paid them tribute. During Jehoiakim's 11-year reign, he faced some of the most difficult political situations, all while ignoring the prophet Jeremiah's inspired advice. Jehoiakim wanted to stop paying tribute to the Babylonians, which ultimately led to the Babylonians laying siege to and then conquering Jerusalem (this was the first time they did this, not the great and final destruction when the temple was destroyed, too). The Babylonians killed Jehoiakim during the siege.

Where are We?

- **Jerusalem**

- Jerusalem is the capital of the southern kingdom Judah, where the tribes of Judah and Benjamin reside. "The land of Benjamin" refers to a specific area of the kingdom of Judah. Jerusalem houses the kings' palace as well as the temple. At the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign, the Egyptians attacked and conquered Judah. The Babylonians also started attacking, and the Judahites had to pay tribute. The Babylonians laid siege to Jerusalem when they stopped receiving tribute, and conquered Jerusalem for the first time, carrying away many Judahites into captivity in Babylon.

LITTLE PICTURE

How to understand each chapter and apply principles to my life

- **Jeremiah 1:**

- **Before You Read:** This chapter is a great introduction to who Jeremiah is, where he comes from, and how he got his start as a prophet. Jeremiah's initial call happened about halfway through righteous King Josiah's reign.
- **What You'll Read About:** The Lord calls Jeremiah and tells him He knew him before he was born and has foreordained him for his role on earth. Jeremiah feels inadequate, but the Lord promises him that he will be protected and prevail. The Lord warns Jeremiah that he probably won't find much success in crying repentance to the Judahites.

- **Jeremiah 2:**

- **Before You Read:** Jeremiah has explained how he was called as a prophet during the rule of King Josiah. He was asked to cry repentance to the Judahites. Look for lots of metaphors and references to water in this chapter!
- **What You'll Read About:** Jeremiah writes the words that the Lord asked him to teach to the people in Jerusalem. The Lord teaches that Judah has turned away from Him even though He has done so much for their ancestors and continues to plead with them. All the false gods and idols that they have turned to will not be able to save them.

- **Jeremiah 3:**

- **Before You Read:** Jeremiah has been sharing what the Lord asked him to preach to the people in Jerusalem.
- **What You'll Read About:** The Lord continues to teach Jeremiah about the unfaithfulness that both Israel and Judah will show to Him. The Lord uses a metaphor of marriage and devotion vs. infidelity to show how devoted He is to Israel and Judah while they continuously turn to idols. In the future, Israel and Judah will both be gathered together in Jerusalem.

- **Jeremiah 7:**

- **Before You Read:** This is the beginning of the section of Jeremiah where he records the prophecies given to him during the reign of wicked King Jehoiakim. The people in Jerusalem have become much more wicked during this time. Interestingly, Jesus Christ quoted and paraphrased scriptures from this chapter when He cleansed the temple during His mortal ministry.
- **What You'll Read About:** The Lord warns that the people of Judah have been turning against Him and placing their trust in things that don't matter. They have defiled the temple and stopped serving each other. They have also been sacrificing their own children, which is an atrocity, but also fulfills prophecies made during Moses' time that the people would eventually become so wicked that they would turn to child sacrifice.

- **Jeremiah 16:**

- **Before You Read:** We skipped over chapters where Jeremiah prophesies of the great destruction that will come to Judah because they are turning away from the Lord.
- **What You'll Read About:** Judah will be completely destroyed due to their focus on other gods. They will wonder why bad things are happening to them, but it is because everyone is choosing to do what is right in their own eyes. Eventually, the scattered tribes will be brought back together in a gathering greater than the miracle of the Exodus. Righteous missionaries will seek out the lost Israelites and gather them back together because the Lord knows exactly where they are.

- **Jeremiah 17:**

- **Before You Read:** Jeremiah has prophesied about the destruction of Jerusalem, the scattering of Israel, and the eventual gathering of Israel.
- **What You'll Read About:** Judah is in captivity because they do not trust in the Lord. The Lord knows everyone's heart and can search for those who have sincere intentions. The Lord instructs Jeremiah to plead with the people to keep the Sabbath day holy.

- **Jeremiah 18:**

- **Before You Read:** Jeremiah has prophesied about the destruction of Jerusalem and received warnings about keeping the Sabbath day holy.
- **What You'll Read About:** The Lord asks Jeremiah to go to a potter's house. As Jeremiah watches the potter do whatever he desires with the clay, the Lord teaches him that He can mold the house of Israel into anything. The Lord wants Jeremiah to invite the people of Judah to repent, but He knows they will reject His words. Judah will be punished and scattered.

- **Jeremiah 20:**

- **Before You Read:** In the chapter we skipped, Jeremiah continued to prophesy that the people of Judah will commit very wicked atrocities.
- **What You'll Read About:** Jeremiah is taken, smitten, and put into stocks as punishment for his prophecies about Judah. Once released, Jeremiah continues to prophesy that Jerusalem will be utterly destroyed by Babylon. Jeremiah then gives a heartfelt cry of hope and pleading toward the Lord.

SPIRITUAL GUIDING QUESTIONS

Question: How can you learn from Jeremiah about responding when God asks you to do something you don't feel qualified or prepared to do? (Jeremiah 1:5-8)

Question: How can knowing that God is with you change the way you respond to criticism, rejection, or opposition? (Jeremiah 1:17-19)

Question: What does the way God speaks to people who have wandered teach you about His attitude toward repentance? (Jeremiah 3:12-14, 22)

Question: What is the difference between changing your behavior and actually turning your heart toward God? (Jeremiah 3:10)

Question: Why can your own ideas sometimes feel more trustworthy to you than God's instructions? How can you learn to be better at obeying and trusting the Lord? (Jeremiah 7:23-24)

Question: What helps you remain spiritually rooted even when circumstances around you are difficult? (Jeremiah 17:7-8)

Question: Just like Jeremiah became exhausted by his calling, yet felt God's word "as a burning fire" within him, have you ever known something was good even when doing it was difficult? (Jeremiah 20:7-9)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.