

READING PLAN WEEK 2 for The Epic of Eden – Isaiah – The Office of the Prophet

Word from the Author: As we consider plunging into this great book of Isaiah, we are dealing once again with the Great Barrier... the cultural and historical barrier that stands between us and them. How desperately we want to hear what Isaiah has to say to us, but we stand at a distance. When it comes to studying the Prophets, the distance is literary as well. What IS a prophetic book? Why are there so many of them in the Old Testament? How are they organized? These issues were transparent to the ancient Israelites, but they are a whole new realm for us.

Day #1: Read the Table of Contents of your Bible. Scan through the books of the Old Testament. Take an assessment of how many of those books you think belong to the prophets. Note the book of Isaiah. Where does it fall in the list? Why do you think it was placed there? Consider the length of the book of Isaiah, especially compared with the prophetic books of Hosea and Micah. Read the opening verses of all three of these books. What is common between these verses? Bear in mind that the prophetic books (which are neither biographies nor histories) are sometimes fiery indictments of the state of God's people who were not keeping the covenant with God.

Day #2: Read 1 Samuel 9:1-17; 10:1-13; 15:1-31; and 16:1-13. (Yep, it's a bunch). There is a continuity between these verses which describes a critical characteristic of God's prophets. First, consider the characters involved in chapters 9 and 10. What does Yahweh tell Samuel to do in 9:15-17? What does Yahweh tell Samuel to do to announce Saul as king? (10:1)? What does Yahweh through Samuel command Saul to do to the Amalekites in 15:1-3? How does Saul disobey Yahweh's command, and what is the result (15:7-26)? How does Samuel respond to Saul's disobedience (15:27-29)? Ultimately, what results (16:1-12)? Who has the authority to make and break kings?

Day #3: Read Exodus 20:1-21. This section features the covenant Yahweh makes with Israel at Sinai. Oh, you'll recognize it. As you read, focus on the way Yahweh describes Himself and offer His credentials, and the expectations He lays out before his chosen people. Read **Deuteronomy 28:58-68** if you dare. A covenant, or Berit, has two parts; one for what happens if it is upheld, the other for what happens if it falls apart. This contrast is probably never more obvious than in the Berit between Yahweh and Israel.

This week's reflection question: Dr. Richter notes that her students often ask her, "How could the Israelites have been so stupid to just *ignore* the covenant? Didn't they know what was at stake?!" The answer is yes, of course they knew what was at stake. But they had managed to redefine and rationalize these Ten Commandments and their own behavior so it no longer seemed to them they were disobeying anything. Now the question for our reflection... Any similarities between Israel and us?

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