

READING PLAN WEEK 7 for The Epic of Eden – Isaiah
The Message of Latter Things

Word from the Author: Our heroes wait in exile in the land of Babylon, grieving their profound losses (and fully aware that these are the earned consequences of their national and individual sin), the heart of every faithful Israelite turns toward this singular hope: If only God could forgive us, if only He would send us a champion, a king born of the line of David, a just and righteous leader, perhaps this broken people would regain their lost inheritance and find peace. This week's plan looks at the second half of the book of Isaiah, the Northern Kingdom has fallen and the people have been carried off by the Babylonian army. We will be looking at the message Isaiah delivers to his "second" audience, the people living in the exile. (We have some lengthy readings this week. Resist the urge to hasten through them.)

Day #1: Take the time to **Read Isaiah 40**. These are God's words to the second audience, those in exile. Hold your thoughts on this as, by comparison, you take the time to **Read Isaiah 1**. These two passages are articulations of "former things" and "latter things"; God's words of warning to the first audience, people who were mistakenly secure and comfortable, and His words of unreasonable hope to the second audience. Recall Week 2 for a reminder about the covenant lawsuit found in Isaiah 1 and consider where each reading falls in the six-part form.

Day #2: Read Isaiah 42:24-25 and Isaiah 43. As the words of Yahweh to his people in these verses work their way into your spirit, give thought to your own life; something that may stand in your mind as a moment of profound failure, something you have not found easy to forget or forgive. In these verses, Yahweh is taking into account those former things of His people, but also speaking words – probably nearly unbelievable words – of the new thing about to come. Using images that even recall the crossing of Israel through the red sea, can you see God speaking to people who have come to realize the consequence of their failures with words almost too good to be true?

Day #3: Read Isaiah 40:3. Certainly this sounds familiar to our ears. Look at the four Gospels: **Matthew 3:1-3, Mark 1:1-3, Luke 3:1-6, John 1:19-23**. It is no coincidence that all four Gospel writers make reference to John the Baptist in the words of Isaiah 40:3. If John was Isaiah's "voice crying out in the wilderness," who does that make Jesus? The goal of the Holy Spirit in the words of the Gospel writers was to demonstrate to us that Jesus' mission, the mission Isaiah first spoke of in chapter 40 of his book – that of the "latter things" – was coming and had come in the form of the Gospel. We are reminded that even if we have lost sight of the original goal and plan of God, He has not.

This week's reflection question: Considering the weighty content of these chapters, what can you take away from this view of God as one who sees brokenness as it is and has already set about to rescue those He loves? Feel free not only to apply that revelation of God to yourself, but, in your reflection, to those you know or love who may also be struggling with the reverberating error of their own ways.

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