

### Introduction

The people of Judah refused to acknowledge reality: “Sure, we lie in the path of the ever-expanding Assyrian Empire, but our wealth and our wine satisfy us so! Nothing can really harm us. Worst-case scenario – Egypt will protect us.” Because of this complacency, because of their pride, their deceitfulness, their mistreatment of the poor, and ultimately because of their disregard for God, Isaiah pronounces six judgment speeches against Judah.

Our first six sermon passages as listed below each begin with the Hebrew word *hoy*, usually translated “alas!” “ah!” or “woe!” This interjection expresses pain and sadness over coming judgment. Sin leads to sorrow: you can count on it. After the six judgment speeches, the climactic chapters 34 and 35 lay out two basic choices: trust in the nations and become like a desert, full of sorrow, or trust in the Lord and the desert becomes a fruitful valley, full of joy. Finally we come to chapters 36-39 and the historical example of King Hezekiah who made the right choice, trusting the LORD in the face of the Assyrian threat. Here at the end of the eighth century B.C., the Lord delivered Jerusalem from the Assyrians, but as chapter 39 hints, it was to the Babylonians that Judah would fall in the sixth century.

In none of these sober warnings, does the prophet Isaiah ever descend into bitterness or hatred. Expressing both the justice and the mercy of God, every one of the judgment speeches in Isaiah 28-35 includes promises of future restoration and glory. Judgment will purify God’s remnant and issue forth into salvation. Included among these promises are some of the best-known anticipations of the Messianic Age: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation” (28:16); “...until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high” (32:15); “your eyes will behold the king in his beauty” (33:17); “then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped, then shall the lame man leap like a deer...” (35:5); and “the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads” (35:10).

### Schedule

Sept. 20: Isa. 28 “*Alas, Ephraim!*” (Stefan Matzal)

Sept. 27: Isa. 29:1-14 “*Alas, Jerusalem!*” (Nathaniel Jackson)

Oct. 4: Isa. 29:15-24: “*Alas, you who hide your deeds from the LORD!*” (Stefan Matzal)

Oct. 11: Isa. 30 “*Alas, stubborn children!*” (Nathaniel Jackson)

Oct. 18: Isa. 31:1 – 32:20 “*Woe to those who go down to Egypt!*” (John Hartung)

Oct. 25: Isa. 33 “*Alas, you destroyer!*” (Jeremy Jackson)

Nov. 1: Isa. 34 “*The LORD is enraged against all the nations.*” (Stefan Matzal)

Nov. 8: Isa. 35 “*The desert will rejoice and blossom.*” (Nathaniel Jackson)

Nov. 15: Reformation Sunday Pulpit Exchange (Pastor Matt Watkins, Beacon Baptist Church)

Nov. 22: Isa. 36:1 – 37:7 “*On what do you rest this trust of yours?*” (Nathaniel Jackson)

Nov. 29: Isa. 37:8-35 “*Save us from his hand!*” (Jeremy Jackson)

Dec. 6: Isa. 38 “*Hezekiah... was at the point of death.*” (Stefan Matzal)

Dec. 13: Isa. 39 “*They have come to me... from Babylon.*” (Nathaniel Jackson)

Dec. 20: CHRISTMAS (Stefan Matzal)

Dec. 27: NEW YEAR’S (Nathaniel Jackson)

*The Eldership: September 2015*