

Scripture Text

Isaiah 13-20

Context

These chapters contain a series of five oracles, in which God declares judgment against various nations. At the same time, God holds out the promise of restoration to those who will turn from their prideful rebellion and trust in Him.

Observation and Meaning

1. What does the “day of the LORD” (13:6, 9) refer to? What will God do, and why?
2. Read 14:24-27 and 17:12-14. What do these passage reveal about God’s rule over the nations?
3. Read 13:19; 14:9-20; 16:6-7 and 17:9-11. What particular sin do these oracles highlight?
4. Even as God judges the nations, what promise does He hold out to His people (14:1-2)?
5. What plan does God have for the nations (19:16-25)? How does Jesus Christ accomplish this plan (eg. Matt. 28:18-20)?
6. In light of God’s purpose to judge and save, what response does He call for (17:7-8)?

Big Idea

In his judgment and salvation of the nations, God demonstrates his absolute sovereignty over all. God’s people are thus encouraged to trust wholly in Him, and not in the passing kingdoms of this world.

Connecting to the Bible’s storyline

The themes of judgment and salvation come together in Jesus Christ. He bears God’s wrath against sinners, in order to redeem a people from every nation, language and tribe. We enter God’s kingdom by believing in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.

Application

1. What do we depend on in times of trouble?
2. In which areas of life are we tempted to be proud and self-sufficient?
3. Give examples of what it looks like to trust in the kingdoms of this world.
4. How do God’s sovereignty and His promises of salvation speak to our fears and anxieties?
5. How have difficult life circumstances caused you to turn away from self-reliance to God-dependence?

Guide for Study Leaders

Use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text.

Context

Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.

Note how this passage fits within the larger storyline of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

Observation & Meaning

Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (eg. “for”, “if”, “therefore”), repetition, dialogue, narrative, OT quotations, etc.

To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author’s purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?

Helpful questions to ask include:

Who is writing and to whom?

What is the situation of the author and of the readers?

Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?

Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Application

Apply God’s word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviour by asking good “heart” questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?

Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?

Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.