

Bible Studies on

Isaiah

The LORD Saves

7 studies with Leaders Notes

Study 1: Rebellion OR Repent (Isaiah 1-2:4)

Study 2: Is God with Us? (Isaiah 7)

**Study 3: Should we rely on the Nations OR the Lord?
(Isaiah 17)**

Study 4: A Radical Shift (Isaiah 27)

**Study 5: A Message of Hope for a Demoralised People
(Isaiah 40)**

Study 6: Come! (Isaiah 55)

Study 7: The New Creation (Isaiah 66)

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Welcome to the Book of Isaiah and to these seven studies.

Context

God created the world and it was good. Humanity was the pinnacle of creation, but they sinned, and were thrown out of God's presence, from the Garden of Eden. But God promised Abraham that his descendants would be blessed and all the world would be blessed through him. God's people became the people of Israel but they were enslaved in Egypt. But God rescued them and gave them the law to live by and a land to live in. Once settled in the land, God raised up David to be king. David and Solomon's reigns were blessed by God but both kings were sinful.

As punishment for their sin, after Solomon dies, Israel is torn in two (922 BC):

- Israel, the northern kingdom, is made up of ten tribes (capital: Samaria)
- Judah, the southern kingdom, is made up of two tribes (capital: Jerusalem)

Israel, from the start, sets up idols to be worshipped to stop the people going to the temple in Jerusalem to worship. Each king of Israel is evil and does not follow God's ways. God's sends prophets to Israel to call them back to Him, but they are ignored. Finally, in 722 BC, God sends Assyria to punish Israel and Israel as a country is destroyed.

Judah, continues to be led by kings who are descendants of David. Some of these kings like Hezekiah and Josiah are godly and follow the Lord. Many do not. God's sends prophets to Judah to call them back to Him. Sometimes they are obeyed but mostly they are ignored. Finally, in 586 BC, God sends the Babylonians to punish Judah and the people of Judah are carried off into exile.

But there is hope, a remnant survives. In 2 Samuel 7, God promises David that His throne will be eternal. These promises will be fulfilled when the Messiah, Jesus, comes. Jesus will deal with the issue that has troubled both Israel and Judah, in fact what has troubled all humanity: sin. By dying on the cross and rising again, the problem of sin is dealt with. God's people can then come back into His presence.

What is the book of Isaiah about?

The book of Isaiah covers history from before the fall of Israel, the northern kingdom, to the end of time, the New Creation. Isaiah is about obeying God's word. Will God's people rely on Him or something else? God is faithful to His promises and wants His people to be with Him. So a great summary of the book is:

"God will rescue and renew a faithful, obedient people for Himself, out of the ashes of Judah's failure and exile, through the coming of His Servant King (the Messiah)." – David Jackman

What can be confusing in studying the book of Isaiah is that it covers such a long time frame, after all it is a book of prophecy! Some of the book occurs in real time, in Isaiah's day, but much of the book is prophecy of the future. Isaiah covers:

- The northern kingdom, Israel, will be conquered by Assyria and destroyed because of their persistent sin and rebellion
- Because of their repentance, the southern kingdom, Judah, will be saved from the Assyrians
- The warning that this repentance will not last and that Judah will be carried off into exile in Babylon

- However the exile will not be forever and God’s people will eventually return to the Promised Land
- But even after exile and return, the people still rebel against God
- How will God solve the problem of sin and rebellion for good?
 - Through the coming of the Suffering Servant, the Messiah
- What does the coming of the Messiah lead to?
 - The New Creation where there will be no more sin, death, or suffering
 - God’s people will be in God’s direct presence again, just like in the Garden of Eden, but this time it will be a Garden City, the New Jerusalem

Historical Structure

It is important to know where you are as you read through Isaiah. The following table should help give the time period and historical setting for each section of Isaiah:

Section of book	Key date	Key historical crisis	Bible references to key historical crisis	Choice created by key historical crisis
Chapters 1-12	734 BC	Alliance of Ephraim* and Syria against Judah**	Isaiah 7 2 Kings 16	Ask Assyria for help OR Rely on the Lord?
Chapters 13-27	713-711 BC	Philistine revolt against Assyria, backed by Egypt	Isaiah 20	Join the nations OR Rely on the Lord?
Chapters 28-35	~ 704 BC	Judah’s revolt against Assyria led by Hezekiah and aided by Egypt	Isaiah 31:1 2 Kings 18:7-8	Rely of Egypt for help OR Rely on the Lord?
Chapters 36-37 (Historical pivot, pointing back)	701 BC	Assyrian siege of Jerusalem (Zion)	Isaiah 36-39 2 Kings 18:13-19:37	Give in to Assyria OR Rely on the Lord?
Chapters 38-39 (Historical pivot, pointing forward)	587 BC	Babylonian exile foreshadowed by the arrival of Babylonian envoys	2 Kings 20:1-19 2 Kings 25	Make alliance with Babylon OR Rely on the Lord?
Chapters 40 - 51:11	537 BC	Persian king Cyrus conquers Babylon and issues a decree for Judah to return home	Isaiah 45:1-4 Ezra 1:1-4	Stay in exile (with Babylonian idols) OR Return home to the Lord?
51:12 - Chapter 55	517-516 BC	Initial return of Israelites from Babylon to Jerusalem (Zion)	Isaiah 52:7-12 Ezra 1:5-11	Wake up and receive God’s salvation!
Chapters 56-66	516 BC	Rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem (Zion)	Isaiah 64:11-12 Ezra Ch 3, 5:1-2, Ch 6	Back to the old days OR live in the light of the final glory?

Source: www.lionelwindsor.net

* Ephraim is another name for the northern kingdom of Israel, because it was the major tribe

** Judah is the southern kingdom of Israel

Note: The events of Isaiah’s life are also played out in 2 Kings 15-20.

To further help follow where Isaiah is in history two appendices are provided:

- **Appendix A** gives a timeline of biblical history.
- **Appendix B** has a similar timeline to Appendix A but focuses on the specifics of the book of Isaiah. Note that the difference between the period in which Isaiah prophesies (his life time) and the period in which he prophesies is about (hundreds of years).

Why is the book of Isaiah important for us today?

One of the most important roles the book of Isaiah serves is as a bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament. This book details three facets of the Messiah: His role as King, as Servant, and as the Anointed Conqueror. Isaiah's name means "The Lord saves" and that is what He does!

Isaiah is central to the Christian faith. It is worth your time to grasp its message. Isaiah's turn of phrase and metaphors make his book a really interesting read. So get into it – take the time to read one of the greatest pieces of literature ever. Read it slowly.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of the book of Isaiah on the formation of Christian doctrine. Isaiah is the book second-most often quoted by New Testament authors (only the Psalms are quoted more often), but I wouldn't be surprised if Isaiah surpassed the Psalms in the sheer number of off-hand allusions (see **Appendix C** for a list of all quotes).

Just think: Without Isaiah, we wouldn't have Immanuel, a voice crying in the wilderness, the sting of death, the root of Jesse, proclamation of good news to the poor, a bruised reed he will not break, light for the Gentiles, every knee shall bow, how beautiful are the feet that bring good news, go out from their midst, a house of prayer, or the earth is my footstool.

Without Isaiah, we wouldn't have a breastplate of righteousness, helmet of salvation, new heavens and new earth, he gave himself for our sins, by his wounds you are healed, the suffering servant, a ransom for many, the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world, the many will be made righteous, unquenchable fire, being taught of God, blessings of David, a remnant shall be saved, found by those who didn't seek me, a spirit of stupor, the wisdom of the wise, eye has not seen, ear has not heard, speak in strange tongues, the breath of his mouth, feeble hands and weak knees, feet swift to shed blood, clay in the hands of a potter, lest tomorrow we die, the acceptable time, the day of salvation, God supplies rain and seed, a precious cornerstone, owning a vineyard and expecting it bear fruit, you are my witnesses, I am the first and the last, the skies roll up like a scroll, robe stained in blood, no hunger or thirst, wipe away every tear, the children God has given me, or behold your God!

Source: <https://www.knowableword.com/2020/10/09/isaiah-judgment-and-deliverance/>

The plan for these studies

The following table gives you a quick overview of the seven studies and how they fit together. Two other passages have been added to show the flow of the book:

Study	Passage	Summary
1	Isaiah 1	The blessing of obeying God's word and the judgement of not obeying God's word
2	Isaiah 7	Ahaz – an example of someone who doesn't follow God's word
3	Isaiah 17	The judgement of not obeying God's word, but in His mercy, God will save a remnant
4	Isaiah 27	Judgement will lead to Salvation
	Isaiah 36-37 (not a study)	Hezekiah – an example of someone who does follow God's word
5	Isaiah 40	Hope for those who follow God's word
	Isaiah 53 (not a study)	The Suffering Servant enables a people that can respond to God's word
6	Isaiah 55	We are called to obey God's word
7	Isaiah 66	The blessing of obeying God's word and the judgement of not obeying God's word

To give your group a quick introduction to the book of Isaiah, it is worth watching the Bible Project's video (it is in two parts: Isaiah 1-39 and Isaiah 40-66 – the second just follows the first):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0A6Uchb1F8&ab_channel=BibleProject

Recommended Commentaries and other Appendices

Four good **commentaries** on Isaiah are:

- The message of Isaiah by Barry Webb
- Isaiah – Surprising Salvation by Kirk Patston
- The Book of Isaiah and God's Kingdom – A thematic-theological approach by Andrew T. Abernathy
- Isaiah – God Saves Sinners by Raymond C. Ortlund Jr

Three other **appendices** have been added to help your understanding of the book of Isaiah:

- **Appendix D** shows a one page diagram of an overview of the book of Isaiah for the more visual learners.
- **Appendix E** shows a helpful structure of Isaiah that Patston has developed. This structure helps show how the themes of Isaiah progress throughout the book.
- **Appendix F** shows a map of Israel prior to the split into the nations of Israel and Judah, the way things were.

Study 1 – Isaiah 1:1-2:4 “Rebellion OR Repent!”

Here we are at the beginning of the book of Isaiah and God is not happy. After saving His people from slavery in Egypt, giving them the law to live by and a land to live in, God’s people have chosen to rebel against Him, to worship idols, complete meaningless religious rituals, and to not care for the vulnerable. As a result they will be punished with an invasion by Assyria.

But this is not the whole story. God has been patient, waiting for Israel to repent for hundreds of years. He desires mercy and He will bring His people back to Him through the Suffering Servant, the Messiah. And through the Messiah, the whole world will be blessed.

Key verse:

Is 1:18 “Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the Lord.

“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;

though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

19 If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land;

1. As we start this series, what thoughts, questions or comments do you have about the book of Isaiah?

Structure of Isaiah 1:

- Israel’s rebellion (1:2-4) – key words: forsaken, rebelled, sinned, ‘not like animals’
 - Israel’s present devastation (1:5-9)
 - Condemnation of Israel (1:10-15) – key words: rulers, murderers
 - Call to repentance (1:16-20)
 - Condemnation of Israel (1:21-23) – key words: rulers, murderers
 - Israel’s present devastation to be reversed (1:24-27)
- Israel’s rebellion: guilty parties will be punished (1:28-31) – key words: forsaken, rebels, sinners, ‘like trees for burning’

Chapter 1 introduces three major tensions in the book:

- The Tension of Kingdom: Exile and Exaltation
 - How does the looming danger of Assyria harmonise with God’s promises to Abraham and David of a great nation, peace, and a kingdom?
- The Tension of Presence: Holiness, Sin, Judgement, and Transformation
 - Israel has repeatedly violated God’s holiness, and they are now going to meet Him in Isaiah’s vision
- The Tension of Time: Present and Eschatological (End Times)
 - How can God work through the current situation to fulfil the future?

The rest of the book will continue to expand on these tensions.

A summary of the chapter is:

- Three views of God's uncomprehending people (1:2-26)
 - The tragedy of their humiliation – sinful nation (1:2-9)
 - The hypocrisy of their worship (1:10-20)
 - The corruption of their character (1:21-26)
- The alternatives confronting God's people (1:27-31)

Read Isaiah 1:1-2:4

2. What do we learn from 1:1?

- *This gives us the context of the book and who Isaiah is*
- *The book we are reading contains a singular vision "the vision"*
- *It is thought that Amoz was a relative of the king so likely a man of some importance, influence, and wealth*
 - *Perhaps even the brother Amaziah, King of Judah before King Uzziah*
- *Isaiah prophesied during the reign of four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (see **Appendix B** for a timeline)*
- *Isaiah's ministry goes from about 740 BC to 690 BC*

Kings of Judah	Year of Reign
Uzziah (Azariah)	767 - 740 BC
Jotham	750 – 735 BC
Ahaz	735 – 715 BC
Hezekiah	715 – 686 BC

But their Ultimate King is God!

3. How are the people of Judah and the nation of Judah described in 1:2-9?

- *Rebels (verse 2, 5)*
 - *But God's people are also:*
 - *Children v2*
 - *Belong to Him (owned) v3*
 - *He is their Lord and Master, so they are totally dependent v4*
- *Dumber than an ox (verse 3)*
 - *Even a dumb ox knows who feeds him and takes care of him each day*
- *Sinful, guilty, corrupt, evildoers, they have forsaken the Lord (verse 4)*
- *Notice the growing negativity:*
 - *Rebellious child (v2) → dumb as an ox (v3) → sinners, offspring of evil (v4)*
- *A bruised and wounded body that is left untended, that doesn't want to be helped (verse 5-6). Judah is compared to beaten up old slave who never learns his lesson.*
 - *In fact, in three ways Isaiah shows the pervasiveness of their sin (vv5-6):*

- *Your whole head*
 - *Your whole heart*
 - *From the soul of your foot to the top of your head*
- *Judah is desolate, burned, stripped, and laid waste (verse 7) – Assyrian marauders have been entering the land and destroying it. This will continue for the next 40 years or so.*
- *Judah is only a shelter in a field not a city, they are under siege and Jerusalem is all that is left (verse 8)*
 - *Three images of vulnerability:*
 - *A shelter in a vineyard*
 - *A hut in a cucumber field*
 - *A city under siege*
- *But also Israel is God's daughter (verse 8)*
- *They could have even become like Sodom and Gomorrah ie totally destroyed (verse 9) – that's what they deserved*
 - *Sodom and Gomorrah being symbolic of a place where sin abounds with no shame or restraint*
- *God's chosen people are NOT immune from judgement*
- *They had forgotten that they owe God everything, scorning their identity as His children*
 - *Their response is like "What do you mean that we're rebellious and uncomprehending and sick and desolate? We're the people of God!"*
 - *It's like God says, "You're right. You're not like Sodom and Gomorrah ... You are Sodom and Gomorrah!"*
- *These verses define the nature of the problem: that God's children are rebellious*

Israel is not looking like God's people are supposed to.

4. In 1:4 we see what God looks like. What title does Isaiah use for God? Why that choice?

- *Holy One of Israel (used 25 times in Isaiah)*
 - *There is only one Holy One*
 - *The Holy One is the Creator*
 - *The Holy One is the covenant Lord (He has committed Himself to us and in turn calls us to commit ourselves to Him)*
 - *He is Father (humans are not merely objects to God, nor are we merely subjects) – 1:2*
 - *He defines the terms of our life*
- *To contrast with the unholy Jews*
- *God expects His people to be holy because He is Holy*

God has disciplined Israel (with Assyria) – but still their hearts are hard. Israel has been dealt a terrible blow but there are still survivors. Can anything be done to make things right?

5. Maybe not? What is God saying in verses 11-15?

- *I hate your outward signs of religion: your meaningless sacrifices and prayer*
- *I hate your evil deeds*
- *Sacrifices and religious performance are not going to solve the problem of their rebellion against God*
- *“your hands are full of blood” v15*
 - *Full of the blood of sacrifice*
 - *But also full of the blood of the innocent*
- *Sacrifices don't save you but they are there to symbolically show spiritual realities*
- *This is not what God intended*
- *There is no heart relationship with God*
- *But the diagnosis of the problem shows the solution (see vv16-20)*
- *These verses show us how God rejects false solutions to the problem of God's rebellious children (the problem right throughout the book – Is 66:24)*
- *God wants a heart relationship with His people – for them to love Him and love others*

6. Maybe yes. What hope is there in verses 16-20?

- *They are going to be transformed somehow, and dramatically so, from sins of scarlet to the innocence of white (verse 18)*
- *They should repent – it doesn't have to be like this (God and their relationship)*
 - *They are, in one sense, to repent of their worship*
- *They will be offered complete forgiveness*
- *The choice is outlined in verses 19 and 20: blessing or judgement*
- *The alternative to rebellion is not mechanical obedience, it is repentance of the heart*
- *What does it look like to repent?*
 - *God is the God of the fatherless, He is just and opposes oppression, and He upholds the widows cause (vv16-17). While these values reflect God's heart, Judah seems to have rejected them, instead displaying hard-heartedness. See v17, 21, 27.*
 - *Be concerned with justice and righteousness*
- *This is a call to repentance and the key passage of the chapter*
- *These verses show the beginnings of the solution to the problem of God's rebellious children*
 - *A call for repentance*
 - *An offer of complete forgiveness v18*
 - *But there is a tense stand-off – will the people respond?*
- *God seeks worshippers – but only those who worship Him in spirit and in truth*

7. From 1:24-31, what is going to happen?

- *There is a warning. God's work will be like a fire:*
 - *A fire that either purifies or a fire that destroys*
- *Jerusalem will become a City of Righteousness, a Faithful City (v26) – see Revelation 21-22*
- *Vv21-24 show the contrast of what God wanted and what God got:*
 - *Wanted faithfulness, got harlotry (notice the marriage imagery)*
 - *Wanted righteousness, got murder*
 - *Wanted silver, got dross*
 - *Wanted pure wine, got a tasteless dilution of water and wine*
 - *Wanted rulers, got rebels*
 - *Wanted defenders of the helpless, got takers of bribes*
- *They are God's enemies v24-25*
 - *But they considered themselves in a privileged position because they were God's people, but then they lived how they wanted*
- *After the charges of verses 23 and God's anger of verse 24, what follows is the possibility of redemption (vv25-26)*
- *Zion (verse 27) is another name for Jerusalem*

8. And what will happen in 2:1-4?

- *The transformation of Jerusalem will lead to a transformation of the nations*
- *God will be worshipped by a people from all the nations*
- *They will be transformed into a people that love God, obey His word, worship Him from the heart, desire righteousness, and help the vulnerable*
- *God is a God of truth and love*
 - *Truth – sin must be punished*
 - *Love – but He will show mercy by paying the price Himself through Jesus dying on the cross*

9. How will this transformation take place?

- *Isaiah doesn't mention it in chapter 1, but God's people will be transformed by the coming of Jesus Christ, and by His death and resurrection*
- *Through this, true, permanent repentance will be possible*
- *God is a God of justice, so He must punish sin. But He chooses to take that punishment on Himself, and thus show us His love and mercy.*
- *Judgement on Jesus through His death has a positive effect on the world*
- *In Isaiah's day, the people are going through judgement, but judgement with a purpose and a desire for restoration of God's people*

10. When thinking about chapter 1, what is true religion? How can it be shown?

- *Religious behaviour is not a means to manipulate God. God does not owe us.*
- *Because we are God's people, under God's covenant, we should want to reflect His character of justice and righteousness*
- *Faith is not shown by our religious behaviour but by our love*
- *Take time to contemplate what true religion means for your own life*

Summary

In this chapter we have seen that the rebellious people of God will be punished. But this punishment will lead to restoration and hope.

Jesus teaches us in John 13:35 that real faith in God is shown by our behaviour, through surrender to God and obedience to Him manifested in how we treat one another. Love is the key!

Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ... but the cost is God's Son.

Study 2 – Isaiah 7 “Is God with Us?”

1. Do you trust God in all circumstances? What about when you are afraid?

For this chapter it is helpful to understand some geographical terms. See the table and map below:

Country	Other Names	Capital	King	Comments
Assyria		Nineveh	Tiglath-Pileser	Super power of that time
Syria	Aram	Damascus	Rezin	
Israel	Samaria or Ephraim	Samaria	Pekah	Northern Kingdom (ten tribes)
Judah		Jerusalem	Ahaz	Southern Kingdom (two tribes)



It's 734 BC. Assyria is the world's super power. They want to take over the countries around them. Syria (a different country) and Israel (the northern kingdom) want Judah (the southern kingdom) to join them in an alliance to oppose Assyria. Who will King Ahaz of Judah put his trust in? Syria and Israel? Assyria? The Holy One of Israel? Isn't the Lord their King?

Key verse:

Is 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

To understand the passage it may be helpful to see the wider structure of chapters 7 and 8.

Structure of Isaiah 7-8:

- Introduction: plot of Syria and Samaria against Judah (7:1-2) – key word: fear
 - Prediction of the failure of invasion that presently threatens (7:3-9) - key words: water, fearing Rezin
 - Child Immanuel: sign of Syria-Samaria failure (7:10-16)
 - Coming of the greater invasion: Assyria (7:17-25)
 - Child Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz: sign of Syria-Samaria failure (8:1-4)
 - Prediction of the success of future invasion from Assyria (8:5-10) - key words: water, fearing Rezin
- Conclusion: don't fear what these people fear; instead fear Yahweh (8:11-18) – key word: fear

There are two key themes in Isaiah 6: The Lord's supreme, universal sovereignty (6:1-3); and the necessity of wholehearted reliance upon the Lord. We'll see in chapter 7 how both these themes are expanded on.

Read Isaiah 7

2. What are Ahaz's two fears?

- *He fears invasion by Syria and Israel*
- *But he fears invasion by Assyria more!*
- *When Isaiah goes to meet Ahaz, Ahaz is at the aqueduct (v2), probably checking Judah's water supply in light of the coming siege of Jerusalem by Assyria (note: this is also where the Assyrians demand the surrender of Jerusalem in 36:2, 11-15).*

3. What does Ahaz put his security in?

- *A treaty with Assyria – that is where he puts his trust (see 2 Kings 16:7-9)*
- *Ahaz puts his trust in human power not in God's word*
- *See 2 Kings 16:2-4 for a summary of Ahaz's character*

4. What is Isaiah's radical alternative? And what is Ahaz's response?

- *Forget about Assyria!!*
- *Follow the Lord (vv7-9), take Him at His word*
- *Ahaz's response is to refuse to do it (vv10-11)*
 - *God knows this will be Ahaz's response and I think that is why God commands Isaiah to go to see Ahaz with his son, Shear-Jashub, whose name means "a remnant will return". This is an ominous warning.*
- *God in His graciousness actually offers Ahaz four ways to try to gain Ahaz's trust:*
 - *Assurance that the coalition will not harm Judah (vv3-7)*
 - *The coalition is only controlled by two men and surely God can handle two men? (vv8-9)*
 - *God offers a sign – Ahaz can request ANY sign (vv10-13)*
 - *But because of Ahaz's rejection of the request for a sign, God WILL give a sign any way – but maybe not now to Ahaz's liking (vv14-17)*

5. In rejecting Isaiah, what is Ahaz really doing? How does he show this?

- *He is rejecting the Lord*
- *He is rejecting the word of the prophet of the Lord*
- *He shows this by rejecting the offer of a sign and piously says in verse 12 "I will not put the Lord to the test"*
- *He is not pious! He is just making excuses – the Lord is the one offering the sign! There is no test of the Lord involved.*

6. There is a change in verse 11 from 'your God' to 'my God' in verse 13. What does this mean?

- *This is ominous*
- *It looks like the Lord has rejected Ahaz*

7. So if Ahaz's disobedience continues, what does Isaiah say is going to happen? (verse 14)

- *The year is 734 BC*
- *There will be a sign – a child called Immanuel will be born*
 - *His name means 'God with us'*
- *By the time this child has reached the age of accountability, the land will be so devastated and depopulated by Assyria that cultivation will be impossible (v15a, 17-25)*
 - *In 732 BC Assyria first invaded and took many captives from Israel and Damascus away*
- *But even before this, Syria and Israel will be deserted*
 - *Syria (Damascus is the capital) was destroyed by the Assyrians in 732 BC and Israel finally destroyed as well in 722 BC*
- *Finally, in the future, Judah itself will be all but devastated in 701 BC*
 - *In Isaiah 36-37 we see the contrast to King Ahaz, where King Hezekiah puts his trust in the Lord*
 - *Assyria has besieged Jerusalem and it looks like the city will fall*
 - *But then the Lord kills 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night and the Assyrians return home defeated (2 Kings 19:35) **
- *Judah survives but only for another 150 years (until the Babylonians came and conquer the city in 586 BC)*

8. From Isaiah 7 it looks like there is only judgement when 'God with us'. But is that what 'God with us' means?

- *Yes and no*
- *Syria and Israel were destroyed*
- *But Jerusalem was spared in a miraculous event mentioned above **
- *Since God is with them, they need not fear their two small neighbours*
- *But since they have refused to trust God and have instead put all their trust in their worst enemy, they are going to find out what a disastrous mistake that is*
- *The failure shared by the whole house of David (the 'you' in verse 14 is plural) calls for a new future hope – the sign of verse 14*

9. But there is more to this prophecy than just the next 150 years. God will save Judah, but He also has a bigger salvation plan in mind. Ultimately, who is the child of Isaiah 7:14? How can we have confidence that 'God is with us'?

- *Read Matthew 1:23 (which quotes Isaiah 7:14)*
- *Jesus is Immanuel, 'God with us'*
- *God came to earth as a man*
- *What does this mean?*
 - *God is both just and loving*
 - *He is fair and ethical*
 - *Therefore He must punish sin*
 - *And sometimes in life He does that directly, like here to Syria and Israel*
 - *But, God has a bigger plan than just punishing us*
 - *He takes the punishment we deserve on Himself so that we can be His people*
 - *He does this through sending Jesus to earth to live and to then die on the cross*
 - *And by Jesus rising from the dead, we see that Jesus has paid the price for all sin forever because He loves us and wants to be with us*
 - *Thus God balances His justice and His love*
 - *All we need to do is accept what Jesus has done for us*
- *1 Peter 1:10-12 gives a good insight into how Isaiah as a prophet in the eighth century BC, is used by God to reveal Jesus Christ*
- *When God is with us, we need not fear what other human beings may do to us*

10. Who do you trust?

Summary

King Ahaz has a difficult choice, but he chooses using human wisdom, focusing on the might of Assyria. But God says you can trust His word. He can do anything, including destroying an invading army.

But this is just a foretaste of the bigger picture. The real enemy of humanity is sin and death and the ultimate solution to these problems is Jesus. Jesus will save those who accept Him and judge those who do not. But His desire is for people to come to Him. So Jesus is the ultimate fulfilment of what Isaiah promises here.

So God really is with us. He is with us so much that He came to earth as a man. What's more He suffered and died as a man. But He rose again. Ultimately 'God with us' means being with Him in heaven forever.

Study 3 – Isaiah 17 “Should we rely on the nations OR The Lord?”

Judah is surrounded by enemies in every direction.



Chapters 14 to 16 have focused on the judgement of Philistia to the west of Judah, Moab to her east, and now Damascus the capital of Syria, to her north (see the map above). The following two chapters will focus on judgement on Egypt to the south. Wherever, Judah looks, to the west, east, north or south, she sees only nations whose glory is fleeting and whose fate is sealed. There is no where she can look for her own security but to the Lord.

Here we are in the same situation as chapter 7, with an anti-Assyrian pact between Syria and Israel. Syria and Israel want Judah to join them against Assyria.

Note: Ephraim = Israel (the northern kingdom).

Key verse:

Is 17:1 A prophecy against Damascus: “See, Damascus will no longer be a city but will become a heap of ruins.”

Read Isaiah 17

Israel (the northern kingdom) and Syria will be invaded and conquered by Assyria. But Assyria will be judged later. The fall of Damascus (capital of Syria) is the topic of verses 1 to 3 and the fading glory of Israel then is the topic of verses 4 to 11. When the Lord gave Israel the Promised Land, he gave them rest from their enemies (Joshua 21:44). If they obeyed God they would be blessed. But instead, Israel chose to rebel against God. God then judges Israel.

1. What are the three images used to describe Israel after her collapse?

- *This is after God executes His judgement*
- *Like an emaciated man whose fat has disappeared (v4)*
- *Like a reaped field in which only a few stalks remain for the poor to glean (v5)*
- *And like a grove of olive trees that have been so thoroughly beaten that only a few pieces of fruit remain (v6) - fruitless*
- *Although almost completely destroyed, a remnant will survive*
- *Note: Damascus, also mentioned in this passage, was destroyed by Assyria in 732 BC*
 - *Dominion and glory can be short lived*

2. Why does God allow Israel to be conquered?

- *On one level, it is because of the coalition with Syria against Assyria, and Assyria turns out to be much stronger*
- *But really it is because they have forgotten God (vv10-11)*
- *They followed idols instead (vv7-8)*

3. Can you be an idolater but never make a physical idol? Explain.

- *Idolatry is when you worship anything that is created instead of the Creator, so it is worshipping anything other than God*
- *In the Old Testament, idolatry is often pictured as worshipping another god by worshipping a wooden or metal idol, clearly something created by hand*
- *But idols are not just statues*
- *They can be anything you put before God e.g. career, materialism, popularity, your family, your health etc*
- *So, yes, you can be an idolater without making a physical idol*

4. What day is verse 7 talking about?

- *It is a day when the folly of idolatry will finally be realised*
- *It is a day when the supremacy of Israel's God will be acknowledged*

5. What does God say about Assyria?

- *Her power is illusory*
- *Assyria are under God's control*
- *God used them to punish Israel but they thought it was due to their own power and might*
- *Verse 14 anticipates her fate which occurs in Isaiah 37:36 – she will be destroyed*

6. But it looks like Assyria is just representative of anyone who makes war on God's people (vv12-13). What happens to them?

- *They will be 'gone' (v14b)*
- *God will destroy them – when all hope looked lost for Judah, God destroyed the Assyrian army*
- *That is why we shouldn't fear the nations*
- *Isaiah is attempting to get His people to focus beyond the realities of life and onto the One who is in control of all things, 'the Holy One of Israel' (v7)*
- *Remember from study one:*
 - *There is only one Holy One*
 - *The Holy One is the Creator*
 - *The Holy One is the covenant Lord (He has committed Himself to us and in turn calls us to commit ourselves to Him)*
 - *He is Father (humans are not merely objects to God, nor are we merely subjects) – 1:2*
- *Also vv12-14 seems to have a lot of similarities with the Red Sea opening up so that the Israelites could escape Egypt. God is in control of all things.*

7. Is there any hope?

- *Yes. A remnant will survive and turn back to God (v7)*
 - *They will worship their Maker*
 - *Why Maker?*
 - *To contrast with worshipping something they make, like an idol*
 - *There is only two chooses: worship the Maker or worship something made*
- *They will stop their idolatry (v8) – there is hope of repentance and restoration*

Read Isaiah 19:23-25

8. What ultimately happens to Assyria and why?

- *Assyria will worship the Lord with Egypt and Israel*
- *Assyria will be part of God's people*
- *When Jesus comes His death and resurrection will open the way for any person of any nation to come and join God's family*
- *This is 'the day' Isaiah is referring to*

9. What do these passages have to do with us?

- *God is still Holy*
- *We are still rebellious*
- *But there is hope – God brings about salvation through Jesus*
- *Salvation for all people, regardless of who you are or what you have done*

10. Where do you place your trust when things are looking bad?

11. What steps can we take to remember the God of our salvation?

Summary

Refusal to depend on God is foolishness which will result in destruction. Nevertheless God is in control of the nations and will not permit them to obliterate His people. Despite all the raging of the nations, He is their Master. Even when God uses judgement, His ultimate desire is always mercy and forgiveness.

Read 1 Peter 3-12 to see how God is in control not the worldly powerful.

Study 4 – Isaiah 27 “A Radical Shift”

This chapter finishes the section that started from chapter 13. It’s the climax, where all the enemies of God get summed up in one frightening image.

Can God defeat Israel’s enemies? Yes. And so much more than that. Isaiah is presenting a glorious future. God has a plan which embraces all nations, and Israel is destined to play a central role in that plan. But before it can fulfil its calling it must be cleansed.

Key verse:

Is 27:6 In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit.

Read Isaiah 27

The vineyard of Jacob is going to be so fruitful that it will fill “the world with fruit”. What accounts for this radical shift? This is what this study is about.

1. What is Leviathan? (verse 1)

- *It seems to represent all of the world’s evil*
- *What does the serpent references in verse 1 remind you of?*
 - *Satan in the garden of Eden*
 - *Satan is also referred to as a dragon and serpent in Revelation 20:1-3*
- *This verse introduces the destruction of all opposition so that God can truly protect His vineyard (Israel – God’s people)*
- *The threefold description of Leviathan*
 - *Gliding serpent, coiling serpent, and monster of the sea*
- *Is matched with the threefold description of the sword of the Lord*
 - *His fierce, great and powerful sword*
- *So I think there is an allusion to Genesis 3:15 where God defeats Satan (the serpent)*
- *God, the great warrior, is going into battle against the most fearsome and monstrous enemies and utterly defeating them*

There are two songs about the Vineyard (Israel) in Isaiah. The first is in chapter 5 and the second in chapter 27. These songs have a number of contrasts:

Chapter 5	Chapter 27
Bad fruit (v2, 4)	Good Fruit (v6)
No rain (v6)	Rain (v3)
Abandoned (wall removed) – (v5)	Guarded (v3)
Thorns and briars (v6)	No thorns and briars (v4)
Trampled/Overrun (v5)	Spreads out (v6)

2. Why the difference between the two songs?

- *In essence the song in chapter 27 announces that eventually the judgement proclaimed in the first song will be totally reversed*
- *The time will come when God's wrath is over (v4)*
- *Isaiah 27 is a picture of New Creation*

3. What is verse 6 saying?

- *Instead of the nations invading the vineyard, the vineyard will invade the nations, filling it with fruit*
 - *This second 'invasion' will be a positive thing*
- *God has a plan which embraces all nations, and Israel is destined to play a central role in that plan*
 - *See Genesis 12:1-3*
- *But before Israel can fulfil its calling it must be cleansed*
- *There also seems to be a link with the Garden of Eden and in Revelation 21-22 the New Jerusalem is described as a Garden City*
- *Here Isaiah uses the terms Jacob and Israel, not Judah, implying the whole people of God*

But in Isaiah's day, Israel (represented, after the fall of the northern kingdom in 722 BC, by Judah and Jerusalem) was very far removed from the ideal situation envisaged in verses 1-5. She is in the midst of a cleansing process.

4. What can we say about the Lord's judgement in verses 7 to 9?

- *It is less severe than that which the Lord has already exercised against Judah's enemies (v7)*
- *It is carefully controlled – God knows what He is doing (v8)*
- *It has a goal – atonement (v8)*
 - *The removal of what is offensive to God (sin and idolatry) so that forgiveness can become possible (v9)*
 - *His purpose is not annihilation – exile is punishment tempered by mercy because they are not destroyed*

5. Why did this have to happen? (verse 11)

- *Because the people of Judah were without understanding*
 - *Recall Isaiah 1:2-3 – they rebelled against God*
- *Chastisement is the hard route to fruitfulness*
- *And even still some will reject what God is offering (vv10-11)*

6. What are the two images to express the final destiny of God's people in verses 12 to 13?

- *When the threshing is over, the precious grains will be gathered one by one*
 - *We are each of great individual importance to God*
- *The great trumpet proclaims both liberty and a call to worship the Lord*
 - *Just as freed captives in Exodus assembled at Mount Sinai to worship the Lord, so will those saved in the future assemble at the holy mountain in Jerusalem for the same purpose*
 - *This is the same as at the ending of the book in Isaiah 66:18-23*
 - *The Year of Jubilee, another foreshadowing of heaven, was pronounced on the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 25:8-12 by a great trumpet*
 - *The Year of Jubilee was a time where debts were forgiven, a time of new beginnings, of freedom*
- *It is also interesting to note that the boundary described in verse 12 is the boundary of the Promised Land (Gen 15:18) – the whole of the land*
- *On the face of it, this is a vision of the rescue of the Israelites but Isaiah mentions the lands of Assyria (river Euphrates) and Egypt. This is a rescue for anyone who would repent and believe in God as Saviour.*

God's people will be set free by God's grace and will respond with renewed obedience to the covenant. Jesus achieves this by dying on the cross and rising again and Isaiah predicts this hundreds of years before it happens.

7. Is it possible that in our suffering God has a cleansing process as the goal? Discuss.

- *When we suffer it can be for a multitude of reasons:*
 - *To bring us to God*
 - *As a punishment for our sin*
 - *To build up others*
 - *To save someone else*
 - *To challenge us about a sinful area in our lives*
- *Often we don't know why we suffer and it is difficult to know without God telling us directly*
 - *So be careful not to assume you know why you are suffering because there can be a multitude of reasons*

8. How would you answer people who charge God with passivity and disinterest in not immediately curtailing the wicked activities of Satan?

- *Similar to the previous answer in one sense – we don't always know the details of God's plan*
 - *Why do we suffer?*
 - *Why do the wicked seem to succeed at times?*
- *We do know that God wants all people to turn to Him*
- *We do know that God's heart is for mercy and compassion*
- *We do know that God is in control and has a plan*
- *We do know that God will be just*
- *We do know that God will set all things right*
- *Through Jesus becoming a man, living on earth, dying on the cross, and rising again, God has done everything needed to bring us back into a right relationship with Him*
 - *He has paid the price for our sins by dying on the cross*
 - *That is all that is needed to be done*
 - *All we need to do is repent and believe (accept Jesus' free gift)*

Summary

God sums up all the enemies of God in Leviathan. Like God can easily defeat the enemies of Judah, He can also defeat all of His enemies.

He does this through the Son of God, Jesus, through His death and resurrection.

So now the message of Jesus should be proclaimed to the world so that many will enjoy the kingdom of heaven, a glorious future.

Study 5 – Isaiah 40 “A Message of Hope for a Demoralised People”

In chapter 36 and 37, we see that when Jerusalem is surrounded by Assyrians, Hezekiah begs God to deliver them and he does. 185,000 Assyrian soldiers die in one night and the siege is lifted (2 Kings 19:35)!

In chapter 39, Isaiah warns Hezekiah that a time will come when Judah will be carried off into exile to Babylon. In 586 BC, they were. During the exile, God’s people were disillusioned. Why did this happen? Where is God? In response, God will comfort His people. This is the focus of Isaiah 40.

Key verse:

*Is 40:31 But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*

1. Do you ever get despondent? If so, what causes this to happen?

Read Isaiah 40

All the major themes which the following chapters will develop so powerfully get their first exploratory treatment here. Things like: comfort (v1), atonement (v2), the way of the Lord (v3), the glory of the Lord (v5), the power of the word of God (v8), the city of God (v9), and the might and tenderness of the saviour of God’s people (vv10-11). It leaves us full of expectation that a whole new movement in God’s dealings with His people is about to unfold.

2. What do we learn about the people in verse 1 and 2?

- *They are My people ie God’s people*
 - *Even when in exile, being punished for their sin, they are still God’s people*
 - *They are still called Jerusalem even though Jerusalem is far away*
- *They are forgiven*
 - *What good news this is – but so unexpected!*
 - *Psalm 137 gives a great picture of what God’s people in exile felt - despondent*
 - *What more comforting truth could there be for shattered people than that?*
- *Like the prodigal in the far country (Luke 15:17-20), they are reminded that they still have a father who loves them, and a home to go to*

3. What is the explanation for the forgiveness?

- *Does seventy years of exile pay for their sins?*
- *Does it pay for the sins for all people for all time?*
- *There is a mystery here that will not be explained fully until Isaiah 53*

4. How does God give concrete expression to their forgiveness?

- *He will not leave them where they are – He will bring them home (vv3-5)*
- *He will tend, gather, carry, and lead them as He brings them to Zion, like a shepherd caring for His flock (v11)*
- *And as the watching world looks on, it will learn what kind of God He is*
- *His glory will be revealed and all humanity will see it (v5)*
- *The highway will be level and straight, so that God can come quickly (vv3-4) and He comes to us! Nothing will stop Him.*

5. What do we learn about God's word from verses 6 to 8?

- *It endures forever*
- *It can be relied upon*
- *It does not decay and fade away as we do, but stands forever*

6. What is the response to this good news?

- *It must not be contained*
- *It must be shouted confidently and fearlessly from the mountaintops (v9)*

7. What three things does God bring in verses 10 to 11?

- *He will come with the strength of a warrior*
 - *No enemy will be able to resist Him*
- *He will come with the tenderness of a shepherd*
 - *The weak will not be left behind*
- *He will come bearing gifts*
 - *His reward*
 - *This will make the sufferings of the exile vanish like a forgotten dream*

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the gospel of Isaiah 40.

8. But can God really keep His promises (verses 12-26)?

- *Yes because it is no human invention*
- *It is God's Gospel*
 - *He created the universe (v12)*
 - *He is infinitely wise (vv13-14)*
 - *He is totally sovereign (v15, 17)*
 - *He is worthy of worship (v16)*
 - *He is incomparable (vv18-20)*
 - *He is enthroned above the earth (vv22-24)*
- *The nations are like a drop in a bucket to God (v15)*
- *No earthly sacrifice is sufficient to manipulate God in favour of our earthly concerns (v16)*
 - *Even if all the animals of Lebanon were sacrificed on an altar using the wood from all the trees of Lebanon, that would not be enough to change His mind*

9. But doubt creeps in. Can we really believe God still cares for us (verses 27-31)?

- *Aren't we too small to be of more than passing interest to Him?*
- *If He ever really cared about us, surely He has long since ceased to do so?*
- *No & No*
 - *God's glory is not just in His power*
 - *But also in His Servanthood*
 - *And He is eternal (v28)*
 - *And the Creator of everything (v28)*

10. What gives us hope?

- *As part of His Servanthood ...*
- *He gives strength to the weary (v29)*
 - *Remember He is speaking to people who have lost hope*
 - *The impossible has happened*
 - *They were sure their nation and the temple could never fall and they have!*
- *Hope in Him is not in vain*
- *Hope in Him leads to God's people soaring on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint (v31)*
 - *The God of all strength can give them exactly what they need at the right time, whether to "soar", "run", or "walk"*

11. How can God's promise energise us to live above despondency in the right?

- *Hope because:*
 - *Even our sin doesn't change His promise (vv1-2)*
 - *The King Jesus is coming (vv3-5)*
 - *It is certain (vv6-8)*
 - *Comfort will spread over all the world (vv9-11)*

Summary

So Isaiah says wait. Waiting is an important part of faith. Waiting is what faith does before God's answer shows up.

Jesus is the hope and Jesus is coming (relative to the exiles). Jesus has come (relative to us)! Whatever our life is like now, have hope that you will be comforted:

- Now in your struggles through the support and love of Jesus
- In the future in heaven, when there are no more struggles, in Jesus' direct presence

Study 6 – Isaiah 55 “Come”

Isaiah 54:11-17 talks about the whole universe being renewed. At its centre is God and then His City and His People. In this city is where God’s people, the servants of the Lord, will find their final resting place.

1. Who is it who brings about the renewal of the universe? What are they called in chapters 52 and 53?
 - *Jesus is the one who renews the universe*
 - *But in Isaiah 53 He is called ‘The Servant’ or ‘The Suffering Servant’*
 - *Why? Let’s look at the quotes from Isaiah 53 referred to in the New Testament to get an idea:*

New Testament Quote	Isaiah Reference
Matthew 8:17 “He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases”	Isaiah 53:4
Luke 22:37 “And he was numbered with the transgressors”	Isaiah 53:12
John 12:38 “Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed”	Isaiah 53:1
Acts 8:32-33 “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.”	Isaiah 53:7-8
Romans 10:16 “Lord, who has believed our message?”	Isaiah 53:1
1 Peter 2:22 “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth”	Isaiah 53:9
1 Peter 2:24 “He himself bore our sins”	Isaiah 53:5

This Servant of the Lord:

- Is sinless
- Is treated as a sinner
- Takes our sins on Himself
- By dying in our place

The Servant of the Lord is of course Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

Back to Isaiah 54, and the announcement in chapter 54 that all is forgiven now turns to the experience of that forgiveness in chapter 55.

Key verse:

Is 55:1 “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”

The structure of chapters 55 and 56 help see that the central point of these passages is the promise of future blessing.

Structure

- Invitation to people to come and eat (55:1-3a) – key words: come, all, every, eating, wine
 - Promise to people: Yahweh will make a covenant with them (55:3b-5) – key words: covenant, eternal, foreign
 - Call to righteousness (55:6-9)
 - Promise of future blessing (55:10-13)
 - Call to righteousness (56:1-2)
 - Promise to foreigners and eunuchs who keep Yahweh’s covenant (56:3-8) – key words: covenant, eternal, foreign
- Invitation to animals to come and eat (56:9-12) – key words: come, all, every, eating, wine

Read Isaiah 55

2. In Isaiah 55:1-2, what is the invitation to come to?

- *To come and share in the inheritance of the servants of the Lord*
- *The gates of the city stand open and a banquet awaits (25:6-8; 55:1-2)*
- *Come and share in heaven with God, forever*
- *And its free – already paid for (55:1)*
 - *We are often tempted to think we must clean ourselves up to be worthy of God’s concern*
 - *But His great goodness is only for those who resist the impulse to pay for it and rely solely on Jesus*
 - *As we behold God’s righteousness and are honest about our sin, we become able to experience His saving forgiveness*
 - *It is Jesus who pays for the sins of the world (Is 53:11-12)*
- *The invitation is urgent in tone and universal in scope*

3. What is the everlasting covenant and what is its sign? (verses 3 to 5)

- *This is the fulfilment of all that was promised to David (2 Sam 7:8-16)*
- *It will be the perfect fulfilment of all the covenants previously mentioned in the Bible*
 - *The covenant with Noah (sign: the rainbow – Gen 9:13-16)*
 - *The covenant with Abraham (sign: circumcision – Gen 17:9-14)*
 - *The Sinai covenant (sign: sprinkled blood – Ex 24:8)*
- *The everlasting covenant will have an everlasting sign which will be nothing less than a permanently renewed universe (Is 55:13)*
- *And now not only is this promise of the everlasting covenant to David it is to ALL of God’s people (the ‘you’ in verse 3 is plural)*

Pattern of Relationships:

From: God → King → People

To: God → People → Nations

Similarly for us:

From (prior to Jesus' ascension): God → Jesus → The Church

To (after Jesus ascends to heaven): God → The Church → The World

4. What is the role of God's people?

- *Just like David, God's people will be a witness and leader of the nations of the world (55:4-5)*
- *God's people will conquer the world, not physically, but spiritually*
- *Because of what God does in its midst, Israel (God's people) will be like a magnet attracting people of all nations into the kingdom of God*
- *While chapter 54 depicts blessing for Zion (Jerusalem), chapter 55 sees this blessing as going far beyond it and so reminds us of the universal mission of Christ (Genesis 12:1-3)*
 - *From Abraham, all the nations will be blessed*
 - *Jesus is the one who brings in this blessing*

5. More than just food, what really are 'the servants of the Lord' getting from the Lord (see verses 6 to 7)?

- *Mercy and Pardon*
 - *God calls us to seek Him, to call on Him, and invites even the wicked to return to the Lord*
- *There is pardon available, but the wicked person must forsake his own way and seek the Lord*
- *No one need be left out, but neither will anyone be forced to enter*
- *So verse 7 tells us what God does*

6. How long is this offer available? (verse 6)

- *While He may be found, while He is near*
- *I presume this means you can only repent and come to the Lord while you are alive – once you are dead you can't change your mind on what you think about Jesus*
- *The fact that we don't know when we'll die creates an urgency in how we respond to Jesus*

7. Verse 7 told us about what God does, but in verses 8 to 9 we read about who God is. Who is God?

- *God's thoughts are not our thoughts (v8) doesn't just mean what don't know what God is thinking*
- *It doesn't just mean that His thoughts are bigger than ours*
- *His thoughts are focused on mercy and pardon! This is the desire of His heart.*
- *Our thoughts are not just a little off His, but the gap is as far as the heavens are from the earth (v9)*
- *We just don't understand the depth of God's love and compassion (see also Psalm 103:11)*
- *What a future we have*
- *God's heart for His people is building towards a crescendo*

8. Where is the power from in verses 10 to 11?

- *The power is from the Word of the Lord*
- *See also 40:6-8*
- *Isaiah compares the word of the Lord to the rain and snow that nourishes the earth, giving the earth life (verse 10)*
- *And the power of the word is the same today (see Acts 19:20)*

The Persians under Cyrus the Great conquer Babylonia and Cyrus proclaims that the Israelites in exile can return to their homeland. This restoration is a foreshadowing of God's plans for humanity through the servant of the Lord, Jesus.

9. How do you think this passage links in with Jesus?

- *Jesus is the one who brings in the everlasting covenant (Matthew 26:28); He brings us mercy and pardon!*
 - *By Jesus dying on the cross and rising again Jesus pays the price for our sins*
 - *Our sins were what separated us from God and God being a just God must punish sin*
 - *But that punishment He takes on Himself!*
- *Therefore, those that accept what Jesus has done, are back in perfect relationship with God*
- *And so ultimately, God's people live with Him in God's place, heaven, otherwise known as the New Jerusalem, the Garden City (Revelation 21-22)*
 - *In this city there will be a massive banquet feast that all are invited to*
- *The covenant is everlasting because nothing more needs to be done to pay the price for our sins*

10. Read Luke 14:15-24. Is this the same story? Why or why not.

- *Yes, Jesus is asking people to the same banquet*
- *This is God's plan from the beginning, in how to restore His people*

11. Isaiah 55:3 is quoted in Acts 13:34. What do you think this verse is saying?

- *In God raising Jesus from the dead, the promises to David are now fulfilled*

12. How does Isaiah sum up what heaven will be like in chapter 55?

- *Heaven will be a land of forgiveness (v7), joy (v12) and peace (v12)*
- *No wonder the trees of the field will clap their hands (v12) and that God says Come, four times (v1)!*
- *Come, don't miss out on God's gracious gifts to us*
- *God's grace triumphs!*

Summary

Jesus' heart desires to be merciful. He has done all that is needed to restore our relationship with God. So He asks us to 'Come'. Come to Him!

Study 7 – Isaiah 66 “The New Creation”

For Isaiah, the end would begin to arrive with the return of the exiles from Babylon. All that the faithful had longed for would be realised in one climactic moment (Is 66:7-11).

The Persians under Cyrus the Great conquered Babylonia and Cyrus proclaims that the Israelites in exile can return to their homeland. When Israel returns to their homeland they will set about rebuilding the temple and the walls of the city of Jerusalem (this is covered in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah).

The final chapter of Isaiah brings out again many themes seen throughout the book:

- The hypocrisy of the people in their half-hearted worship of God and their judgement
- The future restoration of Jerusalem/Israel and the judgement of her enemies
- Israel as a light to the nations who will come and worship the Lord
- The ultimate, eternal doom, of those who continue to sin against the Lord

Key verse:

Is 66:1 This is what the Lord says: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be?”

Read Isaiah 66

1. What does it mean to say the earth is God’s footstool?

- *It’s the idea that the world is under God, in complete subjection to God*
 - *God has ALL power over the earth*
- *God is effectively also saying that I’m too big for the temple and if you think it’s all about the temple you’re completely wrong!*
- *Only an entire new creation can adequately house God’s presence (see 65:17 & 66:22)*
- *So where is God? He is sovereignly present, reigning over everything*
 - *He is not hiding or ignorant about what is happening on this earth*

2. The rebuilding of the temple was an important aspect of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. But here in verses 1 to 6 it is spoken of almost negatively. Why?

- *Isaiah would have loved the temple – it is here he heard God’s call (6:1)*
- *Cyrus was charged by God with the task of setting the rebuilding process in motion (44:28)*
- *Isaiah saw the future rebuilding of the temple as a sign of the approaching end times*
- *But Isaiah was very aware of humanity’s capability to misuse the temple*
 - *Israel believed because they had the temple, Jerusalem would never fall – but it did to the Babylonians*
 - *Their faith was in who they were and what they had, not in God*
- *So physical restoration of the temple was not enough – Israel needed heart restoration*
- *The four illustrations of sacrifices from an unclean heart in verse 3 show why this is such an issue:*
 - *Sacrificing an ox from an unclean heart – contrasting the lawful with the sinful (murder- it’s that extreme to God!)*
 - *Sacrificing a lamb from an unclean heart – contrasting the lawful with the meaningless (killing a dog)*
 - *Offering a grain offering from an unclean heart – contrasting the lawful with the unacceptable (pig’s blood)*
 - *Burning incense from an unclean heart – contrasting the lawful with the apostate (idolatry – burning memorial incense is a reference to pagan worship practices)*
- *We don’t earn a place in God’s people but it is a place for those ‘who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word’ (v2)*
 - *In other words, it is for those who repent and believe in Jesus*
- *Summary:*
 - *Humble → Comforted (v5)*
 - *Hypocrites → Judged (v6)*
 - *Isaiah is a book about humility and contrition versus ritualism and rebellion*

3. Ultimately, what shows if you are on God’s side or against Him? (verse 5)

- *Obedience to His word*
- *Contrast:*
 - *Those who tremble at His word*
 - *Those who are religious hypocrites*
- *The distinguishing characteristic of each group is how they respond to God’s word*

4. What does God bring in verse 6?

- *Judgement*
- *Isaiah saw that Jerusalem and its temple would be the scene of God's final judgement on apostate Israel*
- *It would begin when the Lord came personally to His temple and made war on His own people*
- *Judgement would begin at the house of God*

5. How did Jesus reinforce the ideas of Isaiah 66 in the Gospels?

- *Jesus repeatedly appeals for Israel to repent*
- *He cleanses the temple (see Mark 11. Note: the cleansing is preceded by the cursing of the fig tree which represents Israel)*
- *He challenges the leaders of Israel to return to God*
- *Jesus stays consistent with the same message God has been sending*

6. What was the response of Israel's leadership to Jesus?

- *A few repented eg Nicodemus, but the vast majority condemned Jesus and had Him executed on false charges*
- *Stephen, in the speech before his execution in Acts 7:49, quotes Isaiah 66:1-2, to again show that the Jewish leadership have forgotten God and how big He is*
- *But what seems to be an end is also a beginning*
- *The death-throes of Israel as it existed under the old covenant turn out to be the birth-pangs of the new age*

7. What is born in verses 7 to 11?

- *A new people of God (v8)*
- *And it is so sudden and so startling it can only be a work of God (v9)*
- *Birth is normally long and excruciating but this birth will be quick and painless*
- *This answers the fear that God may not be faithful enough to perform all His promises to His helpless people (v9)*

8. What will the New Jerusalem be like (verses 11 to 17)?

- *It will be a city of peace, overflowing with the blessing of God (v12)*
- *Those who grieve the passing of the Old Jerusalem will be comforted in the New Jerusalem (vv12-13)*
- *The New Jerusalem will be the home for all God's faithful people*

9. What is God's goal in verse 18?

- *He will come and gather people of all nations and tongues so that they may see His glory*
- *Recall in Genesis 11 that God scatters all the people of the nations because of their sin*

10. How is this goal to be achieved?

- *God will set a sign in the midst of the nations (v19)*
 - *The sign will start with a virgin who conceives and gives birth to a child (Is 7:14 and Matthew 1:23) – Immanuel, 'God with us'*
 - *That birth leads to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection*
 - *The cross and resurrection being the ultimate sign that Jesus is Lord*
- *It will be the wondrous birth (vv7-8)*
- *So the birth of Jesus leads to the birth of a new people of God, the birth of a nation*
- *And this nation will grow through the verbal proclamation that Jesus is Lord (v19)*

11. But for the Jews, what is completely unexpected in verse 20 to 21?

- *It is the nations that are to be harvested*
- *Converts from those nations will be presented as holy offerings*
- *Jews and Gentiles will be priests and Levites ie spiritual leaders of God's people, having equal access to God*
- *Remember, Israel was elected as God's people to be a blessing to the world, not just a blessing for Israel (Genesis 12:1-3)*
- *The final proof that God has not rejected Israel (probably how they felt because of the exile) is that they have been chosen to spearhead the mission to the nations*

12. How do you respond to God's amazing covenant promise?

Summary

God is the Creator and therefore ruler of His world. The book of Isaiah moves from the heavens and the earth (1:2) to the new heavens and the new earth (66:22). The key to this restoration is God's perfect Suffering Servant, our Lord Jesus Christ.

But the book also ends with a warning again of judgement (Mark 9:48 quotes Isaiah 66:24 to describe hell). The choice is ours – blessings or cursing; new creation or judgement. The distinguishing characteristic of each group is how they respond to God's word. God has done everything needed for us to be blessed.

What does Isaiah say to God's people?

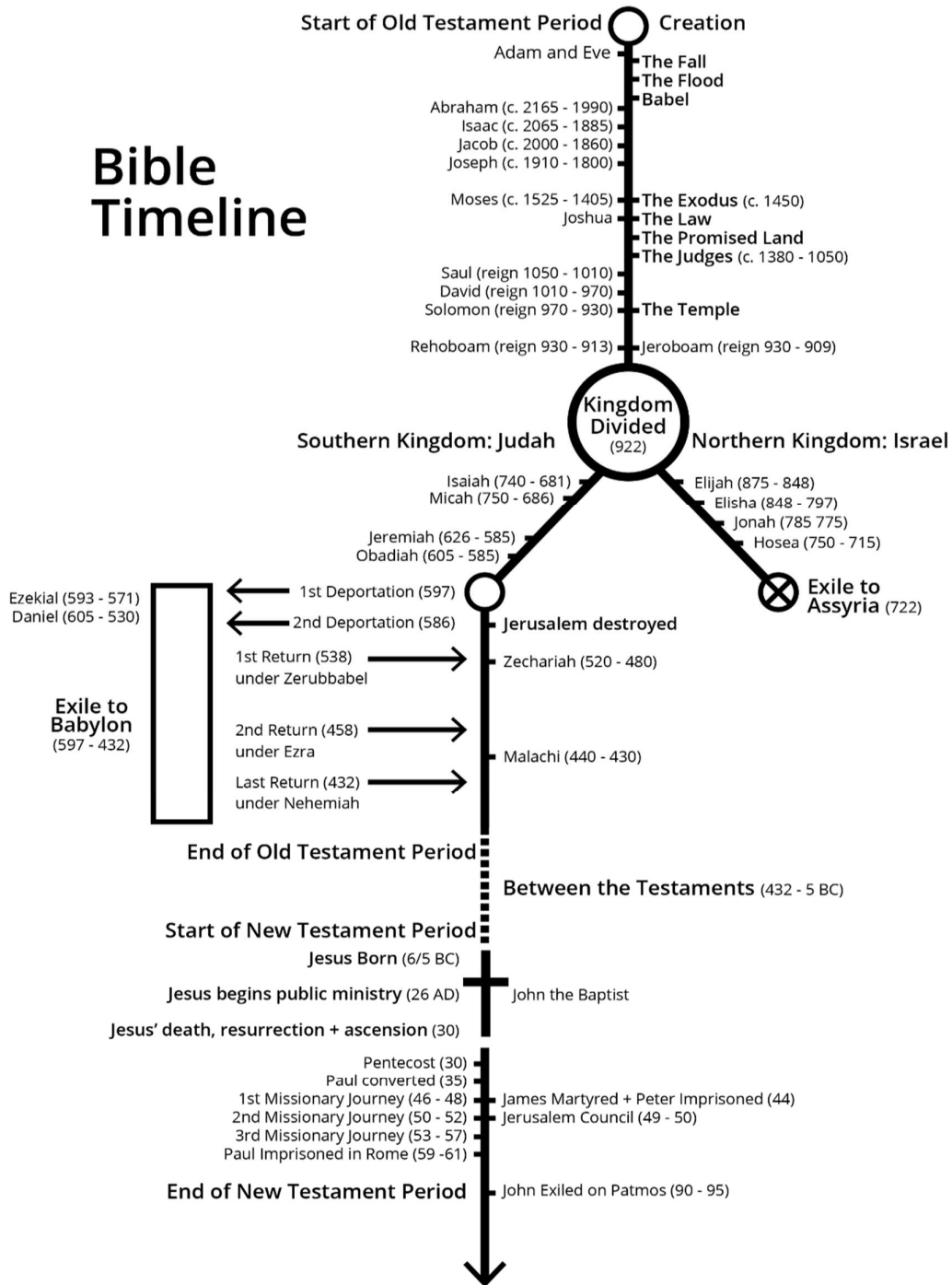
Repent.

Don't turn away from God.

There is hope and comfort because Jesus is the Saviour of the World!

Appendix A – The Bible Timeline

Bible Timeline

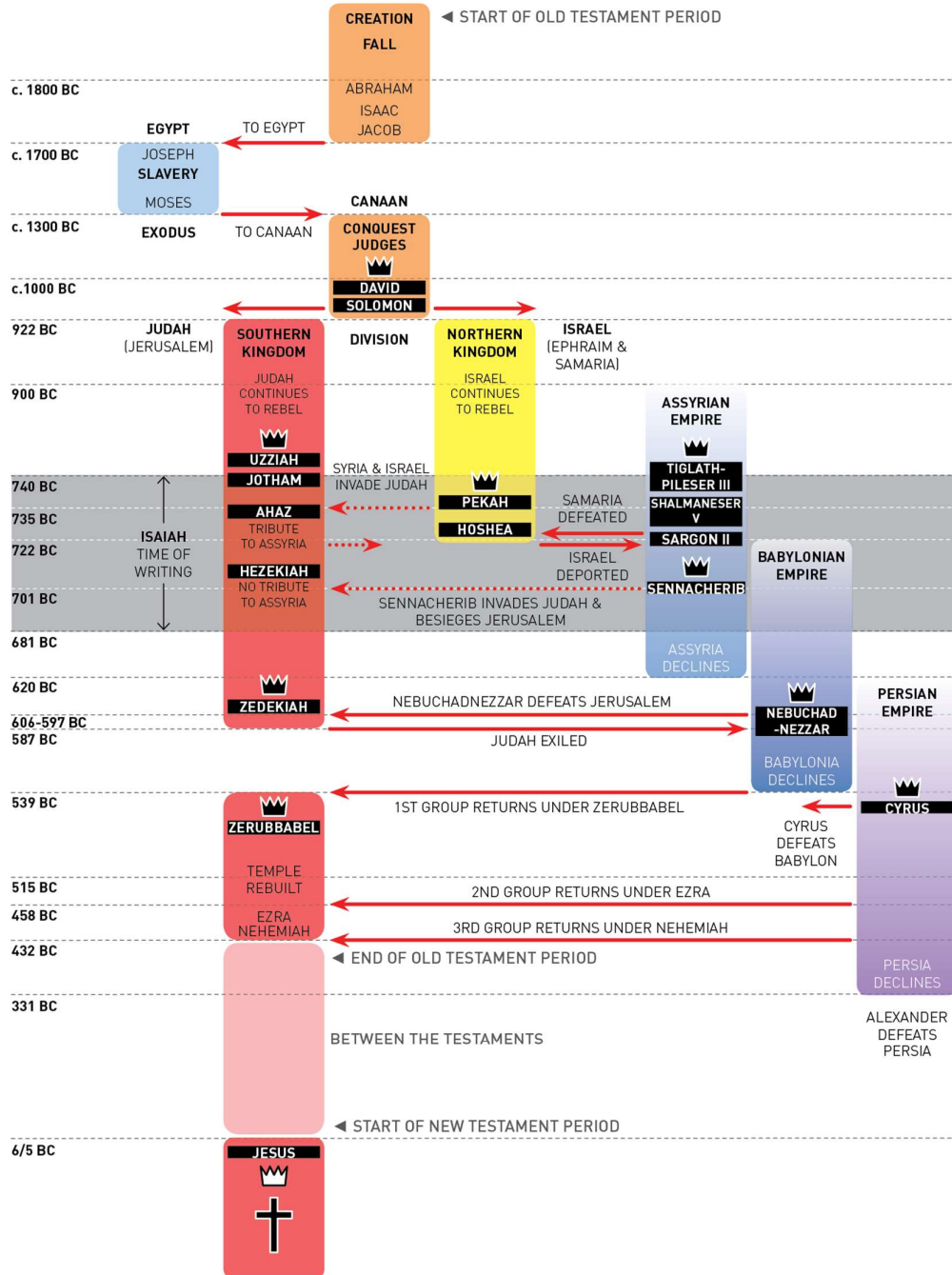


Source: *Creation to New Creation* (Moore College Correspondence Course)

Appendix B – Bible Timeline – focusing on Isaiah

ISAIAH TIMELINE

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Appendix C – Isaiah Quotes in the New Testament

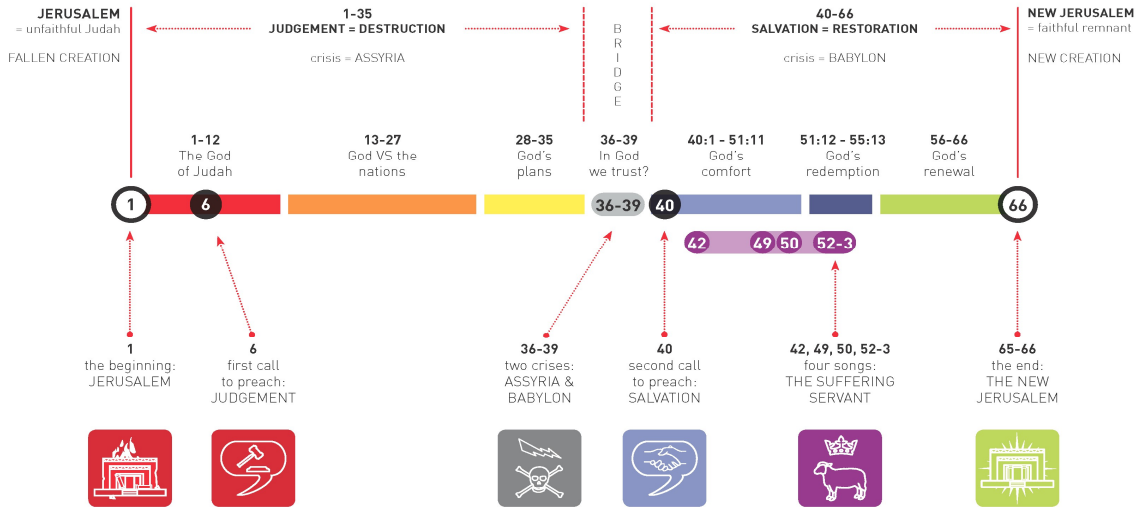
Book	Reference	Topic and Isaiah Verse
Matthew	1:23	Virgin with child (Is 7:14)
	3:3	Voice in wilderness (Is 40:3)
	4:15	A light in darkness (Is 9:1)
	8:17	Carried our diseases (Is 53:4)
	12:18	Behold My Servant (Is 42:1)
	12:21	Hope for Gentiles (Is 42:4)
	13:14	Closed eyes and ears (Is 6:9)
	15:7	They worship in vain (Is 29:13)
	21:13	A house of prayer (Is 56:7)
	Mark	1:2
4:12		Closed eyes and ears (Is 6:9)
7:6		They worship in vain (Is 29:13)
9:48		Fire is not quenched (Is 66:24)
11:17		A house of prayer (Is 56:7)
15:28		Numbered with transgressors (Is 53:12)
Luke	2:32	Light to the Gentiles (Is 42:6; 49:6)
	3:4	Voice in wilderness (Is 40:3)
	4:17	He anointed me to preach (Is 61:1)
	8:10	Closed eyes and ears (Is 6:9)
	19:46	A house of prayer (Is 56:7)
	22:37	Numbered with transgressors (Is 53:12)
John	1:23	Voice in wilderness (Is 40:3)
	6:45	All be taught of God (Is 54:13)
	12:38	Who has believed our report? (Is 53:1)
	12:39	Closed eyes and ears (Is 6:9)
Acts	7:48	Heaven is my throne (Is 66:1)
	8:32	A lamb to the slaughter (Is 53:7)
	13:34	The blessings of David (Is 55:3)
	13:47	Light to the Gentiles (Is 42:6; 49:6)
	28:25	Closed eyes and ears (Is 6:9)
Romans	2:24	Blasphemy among Gentiles (Is 52:5)
	3:15-17	Feet swift to shed blood (Is 59:7-8)
	9:19-21	Remnant shall be saved (Is 10:22)
	9:27	As Sodom and Gomorrah (Is 1:9)
	9:33	Stone of stumbling (Is 8:14)
Book	Reference	Topic and Isaiah Verse
Romans	9:33, 10:11	Believers not disappointed (Is 28:16)

	10:15	How beautiful the feet (Is 52:7)
	10:16	Who has believed our report? (Is 53:1)
	10:20	Found by those who sought me not (Is 65:1)
	10:21	Disobedient and obstinate people (Is 65:2)
	11:8	A spirit of stupor (Is 29:10)
	11:26	Deliverer from Zion (Is 59:20)
	11:26	When I forgive their sins (Is 27:9)
	11:34	The mind of the Lord (Is 40:13)
	14:11	Every knee shall bow (Is 45:23)
	15:12	Hope for Gentiles (Is 42:4)
	15:12	The Root of Jesse (Is 11:10)
	15:21	They shall understand (Is 52:15)
1 Corinthians	1:19	The wisdom of the wise (Is 29:14)
	2:9	Eye has not seen (Is 64:4)
	14:21	Speak in strange tongues (Is 28:11)
	15:32	Tomorrow we may die (Is 22:13)
	15:54	Death swallow up (Is 25:8)
2 Corinthians	6:2	Acceptable time, day of salvation (Is 49:8)
	6:17	Come out from among them (Is 52:11)
Galatians	4:27	Rejoice barren woman (Is 54:1)
Ephesians	6:14-17	Belt, breastplate, helmet (Is 11:5, 59:17)
Hebrews	2:13	The children God has given me (Is 8:17-18)
1 Peter	1:25	God's word abides forever (Is 40:6)
	2:6	Precious corner stone (Is 28:16)
	2:8	Stone of stumbling (Is 8:14)
	2:22	He committed no sin (Is 53:9)
	2:24	By His stripes you were healed (Is 53:5)
	3:14	Do not be in fear (Is 8:12)
Revelation	3:7	The key of David (Is 22:22)

Appendix D – Isaiah Overview

ISAIAH OVERVIEW

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Appendix E – Isaiah Structure

Kirk Patston has developed a helpful structure of Isaiah. This structure helps show how the themes of Isaiah progress throughout the book.

A. Isaiah 1-12 Transforming Zion

The city of Jerusalem has been ruined through incompetent leadership, hypocrisy and injustice, and will face God's anger in the form of the Assyrian army. However, the city of Jerusalem has a glorious future which will be achieved by a God-like king.

B. Isaiah 13-27 Transforming the nations

The nations, including Israel and Judah, defy God through pride and self-reliance and will face God's anger. However, a day is coming when even the nations can be included in the city of God.

C. Isaiah 28-35 Should we trust Egypt?

The city of Jerusalem is tempted to trust Egypt for help in the face of Assyrian attack. But they should trust the Lord.

D. Isaiah 36-39 Trust and Zion

The city of Jerusalem is attacked by Assyrians, but the king of Jerusalem trusts the Lord and the city is saved. The king of Jerusalem is attacked by illness, but he calls out to God and is saved. When the Babylonians visit him, he trusts in them and in his own riches, not in the Lord.

C'. Isaiah 40-48 The trusting, servant nation?

The people of Jerusalem are going to be saved from the Babylonians and the Lord urges them to trust that He is working for them, through Cyrus. They seem to find it easier to trust in Babylon and its gods. Babylon will face God's anger in the form of the Medo-Persian army. The self-reliant people of Jerusalem will miss out on the peace God is offering.

B'. Isaiah 49:1-56:8 Serving Zion and the nations

The people of Jerusalem are going to be saved from sin and they are urged to trust a Suffering Servant. The people are surprised that it is an apparent weak one, not a self-reliant one, who saves. The house of the Lord becomes available to all the nations.

A'. Isaiah 56:9-66:24 Transforming the world

Even after the exile the city of Jerusalem suffers under incompetent leadership, hypocrisy and injustice. However, the city of Jerusalem has a glorious future which will be achieved by a God-like warrior.

Source: Kirk Patson in *'Isaiah – Surprising Salvation'* p 10.

