

Isaiah - an overview

by Ross Callaghan

<http://rosscallaghan.yolasite.com>



Introduction to Isaiah

Author

Isaiah was the man God chose to bring His truth to the Jews during a period of deep spiritual darkness. His mission was to bring the people back to the Lord, and thus avert captivity by the Assyrians. He was also the prophet who revealed to Israel (and to us) that the Messiah would come and bring salvation to the Jews and to all mankind.

In the year that Uzziah, king of Judah, died (742 BC), Isaiah received his call from God. (See Isaiah 6). God revealed His majesty, holiness and glory to Isaiah and he gained a new awareness of human pettiness and sinfulness. The difference between God's holiness and people's sin overwhelmed Isaiah and affected everything he did from then on. It also provides the key to understanding his message. Isaiah's response was *Here I am, send me!* Hopefully ours is too!

'Never has there been another prophet like Isaiah, who stood with his head in the clouds and his feet on solid earth, with his heart in the things of eternity and his mouth and his hands in the things of time, with his spirit in the eternal counsel of God and his body in the very definite moment of history. Truly, Isaiah may be called the dean of all the prophets'. Jan Valetton

Most of the events referred to in chapters 1–39 occurred during Isaiah's ministry so these chapters may have been completed not long after 701 B.C., the year the Assyrian army was destroyed. Isaiah lived till at least 681 B.C. and may have written chapters 40–66 during his later years.

Some think that chapters 40-55 were written by an anonymous poet who prophesied toward the end of the Babylonian exile. (This section contains the prophecies about the coming Messiah which were wonderfully fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ). Chapters 56-66 contain messages from a later period and could have been written by disciples of Isaiah who were carrying on his work.

Theme

Isaiah's name means "salvation is of the Lord," and he speaks about salvation more than any other prophet. (The word "salvation" is found twenty-six times in Isaiah and only seven times in all the other prophets combined. Also Isaiah is quoted 54 times in the New Testament, again more than any other prophet).

So Isaiah's message was primarily about the coming Messiah:

**Salvation comes through Messiah:
the Servant of the Lord.**

There are two major sub-themes in Isaiah:

- **the holiness of the Lord**

"The Holy One of Israel" is found 26 times in Isaiah and only 6 times in the rest of the Bible. This is applied especially in relation to worship of idols. Idolatry is strongly condemned and shown to be foolish in comparison with worship of the living God.

- **humility before God**

Isaiah calls Israel (41:8-9), prophets (44:24-26), Messiah (42:1), and us all (65:8-9) to be humble servants of God.

Outline

1. Prophecies of Judgment (Assyrian Period) - chapters 1-39

- a. Judgment of Judah - chapters 1-12
- b. Judgment of the Nations - chapters 13-23
- c. The Day of the Lord - chapters 24-27
- d. Judgement and blessing - chapters 28-35
- e. Historical section: Hezekiah's sin, sickness and salvation - chapters 36-39

2. Prophecies of Peace (Babylonian Period) - chapters 40-66

- a. Israel's deliverance - chapters 40-50
- b. Israel's Deliverer: Messiah - The Servant of the Lord - chapters 51-57
- c. Israel's Future Glory - chapters 58-66

Timeline

BC

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 742 | Uzziah dies; Isaiah begins to prophesy |
| 742 | Jotham becomes king of Judah |
| 735 | Ahaz becomes king of Judah |
| 732 | Hoshea becomes king of Israel |
| 727 | Shalmaneser IV becomes king of Assyria |
| 722 | Sargon II becomes king of Assyria. Samaria falls; |
| 722 | The ten tribes of Israel go into captivity |
| 715 | Hezekiah becomes king of Judah |
| 705 | Sennacherib becomes king of Assyria |
| 701 | Judah invaded by the Assyrians |

The book of Isaiah is like a "Little Bible."

- The Bible has 66 books; Isaiah has 66 chapters.
- The theme of the Bible is salvation through Christ; the theme of Isaiah is salvation for Israel through Messiah (Christ).
- The Bible is divided into the Old Testament (39 books) and the New Testament (27 books). Isaiah has two major divisions: the Assyrian Period (chapters 1 - 39) and the Babylonian Period (chapters 40 - 66). The first part of Isaiah contains prophecies of judgment, but the second part brings prophecies of peace (just like the Old and New Testaments).
- The Old Testament prophets serve as a transition from the Old Testament to the New. The historical section of Isaiah (chapters 36 - 39) serves as a transition from the Assyrian Period to the Babylonian Period.



1. Prophecies of Judgment (Assyrian Period) - chapters 1- 39

a. Judgment of Judah - chapters 1- 12

Chapter 1: Judah is a rebellious nation

In Chapter 1 Isaiah introduces the theme that will flow through the whole book: Judah is a rebellious nation so God will bring His judgement upon her. Through this judgement God will purify His people and bring them back into right relationship with Himself.

- Their sin: *They have forsaken the LORD. v4*
- God's question: *Why? v5*
- The results: *Your country is desolate. v7*
- God's desire: *Stop bringing meaningless offerings v13*
- What they must do: *Wash and make yourselves clean. v16. Learn to do right. v17*
- The results of their rebellion: *I will turn my hand against you. I will thoroughly remove all of your iniquities. I will restore and afterwards you will be called The City of Righteousness, the Faithful City. v25-31*

Chapter 2: In the last days God will restore Judah

- The temple will be re-established v2
- God will teach them His ways so His people will walk in His paths v3
- The Word of the Lord will go out from Jerusalem v3
- God will settle disputes and bring peace v4,5

So, in the day of the Lord mankind will be brought low, and God will be exalted. v6-22.

Chapters 3 and 4: Before this restoration God will pour His judgement of Judah and Jerusalem

- They will receive the fruit of their deeds and will be paid back for what they have done 3:10,11. This includes men of power 3:2, elders and leaders 3:14, women 3:16-4:1.
- When Messiah (the Branch) comes God will wash away the filth of those who remain (by judgement and fire) and the Lord's people and land will once again be glorious.

Chapter 5: A song for the vineyard (whom God loves)

Judah is God's vineyard, and He expected that she would bring forth much fruit. Instead she rejected the Law and spurned God's word. As a result she will be humbled and brought low. Through this the Lord will be exalted and will show Himself holy and righteous. v15,16

Chapter 6: Isaiah's commission

God revealed Himself to Isaiah and commissioned him to tell God's people that they were hard of heart and would become desolate. Isaiah's response was *Here am I. Send me. v8*

Chapter 7: God's sign: Immanuel

Although God's patience had been tested He will give Judah a sign: the virgin will conceive a Child, who would be called Immanuel, God with us.

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. v14



Chapter 8: God will use Assyria to bring about His judgement

Assyria will overflow onto Judah, but it is God Almighty who they should really fear. He will be their sanctuary, but their rejection of Him is behind their troubles. They must wait for the Lord and put their trust in Him v17 (not the mediums and spiritists).

Chapters 9-10: Messiah will be revealed

Messiah will bring joy, justice and righteousness, and will reign on David's throne forever. 9:1-9.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. 9:6,7



Even though Israel's enemies have prevailed and wickedness is rife God's hands are still open to her. When God finishes His judgement (by His own strength and wisdom) her light will become a fire. 9:8-10:19. Only a remnant will survive the destruction - those who truly rely on God. Then the burden will be lifted. 10:20-34.

Chapter 11: The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Messiah

He will judge with righteousness and bring in justice.

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him - the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. v2

There will be peace because the earth will be full of the knowledge of God. Messiah will stand as a banner for all peoples: He will be glorious and nations will rally to Him. The exiles of Israel will also gather from throughout the world and will delight in the Lord.

Chapter 12: On that day Israel will praise the Lord

On that day God will be Israel's salvation and she will give thanks to Him, exalt Him and sing for joy.

In that day you will say: "I will praise you, O LORD. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me. Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. In that day you will say: Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. v2-4

b. Judgment of the Nations - chapters 13 - 23

Chapters 13:1-14:23 A prophecy against Babylon

Chapter 14:24-32 A prophecy against Assyria

Chapter 14: 28-32 A prophecy against the Philistines

Chapter 15-16 A prophecy against Moab

Chapter 17 A prophecy against Damascus

Chapter 18 A prophecy against Cush

Chapter 19 A prophecy against Egypt

Chapter 20 A prophecy against Egypt and Cush

Chapter 21:1-10 A prophecy against Babylon

Chapter 21:11-12 A prophecy against Edom

Chapter 21:13-17 A prophecy against Arabia

Chapter 22 A prophecy against Jerusalem

Chapter 23 A prophecy against Tyre

God's pronounces His judgement against the nations that have resisted His will and oppressed His people.

I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. 13:11

But....

Once again He will choose Israel, and will settle them in their own land. 14:1

and...

In love a throne will be established; in faithfulness a Man will sit on it - one from the house of David - one who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness. 16:5

In that day men will look to their Maker and turn their eyes to the Holy One of Israel. 17:7

c. The Day of the Lord - chapters 24- 27

Chapter 24 The earth will be devastated

The earth is cursed because its people have disobeyed God. As a result He will pour His judgement on the earth and everyone will bear their guilt. There will be great devastation and the earth will be laid waste. People will not be able to escape the punishment of God. Then *the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem... gloriously.* v23

Chapters 25, 26 In that day the Lord will be praised

God will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations. He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; He will remove the disgrace of His people from all the earth. 25:7,8

On that day God's people will be glad in His salvation. Those who trust in Him will be kept in perfect peace and God will make their paths straight. The evil nations will have been destroyed and the pain of God's purification of His people will be worth it. It will be as if they have risen from the dust and gained new life.

Chapter 27 Israel will be delivered

After God's judgement Israel will *bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit* v6 and all the exiles will *come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.* v13 All remnants of idolatry will be destroyed.

d. Judgement and blessing - chapters 28-35

Chapter 28 Judgement on Ephraim

Ephraim was one of the tribes of Israel (descended from Joseph). It was the dominant tribe in the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and was often used to represent the whole Northern Kingdom. Later on Ephraim was called Samaria. God will judge Ephraim because of its pride, legalism and drunkenness, and bring in justice and righteousness. *See I lay in Zion a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts in Him will never be dismayed. I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb-line.* v16,17

Chapter 29 Judgement on Jerusalem

Jerusalem (the City of David) is blind to the Lord as *their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.* v13 But the Lord Almighty will come *with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with windstorm and tempest and flames of a devouring fire.* v5,6. Then Jerusalem will be humbled and will *keep my Name holy ...and will stand in awe of the God of Israel.* v22,23. (The word Ariel v1,2 is a poetic name for Jerusalem).

Chapter 30 Judgement on the obstinate nation

Woe to those who *carry out plans that are not mine.* v1 They trust in Egypt's worldly ways, and ask for Pharaoh's protection, rather than the Lord's. *They are rebellious people, deceitful children, unwilling to listen to the LORD's instructions.* v9. Because of this they will be broken unless they repent and find their rest in the Lord.

Yet God longs to be gracious to them and show His compassion to them. *Although the LORD gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."* v20,21

God will provide rain, food, sunshine, protection, healing ... all that they need. But if they reject the Lord, there will be great judgement.

The Northern and Southern Kingdoms

After King Solomon died his son Rehoboam became King of Israel. The 10 northern tribes rebelled and Jeroboam became King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel; while Rehoboam remained as King of the Southern Kingdom, Judah. See 1 Kings 12

Samaria was capital of Israel
Jerusalem was capital of Judah.

Chapter 31 Judgement on those who trust in Egypt

Woe to those who trust in Egypt rather than in the Lord. *The Egyptians are men and not God. v3 Return to him you have so greatly revolted against, O Israelites. For, the LORD Almighty will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and on its heights. The LORD Almighty will shield Jerusalem; He will shield it and deliver it, He will 'pass over' it and will rescue it. v4-6 Those who don't trust in the Lord will fall by a sword that is not of man. v8*

Chapter 32:1-8 A King will reign in righteousness

A king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice. v1 Then people will be sheltered like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land. v2



Their eyes will be opened and their minds understand, unless they are fools!

Chapter 32:9-20 The women of Jerusalem must be prepared

The women of Jerusalem must prepare for the city to be desolate *till the Spirit is poured out for us from on high. v15 Only then will justice dwell in the desert and righteousness live in the fertile field. The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest. v16-18*

Chapter 33 The Lord will be exalted

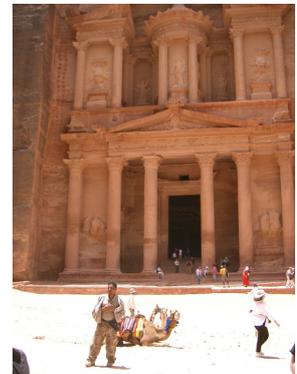
After the destruction *the Lord will be exalted for He dwells on high; He will fill Zion with justice and righteousness. He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure. v5,6 The sinners will be terrified, but the righteous will dwell on the heights and your eyes will see the king in his beauty. v17*

Look upon Zion, the city of our festivals; your eyes will see Jerusalem, a peaceful abode, a tent that will not be moved; its stakes will never be pulled up, nor any of its ropes broken. There the LORD will be our Mighty One. It will be like a place of broad rivers and streams. No galley with oars will ride them, no mighty ship will sail them. For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; it is He who will save us. v20-22

Chapter 34 Judgement on the nations

The Lord is angry with all nations and will destroy them. *For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion's cause. v8 God will especially judge Edom (in modern day Jordan) and it will become a place where only the night creatures live.*

This prophecy of the destruction of Edom has been accurately fulfilled. Petra, its capital, is today one of the Seven Wonders of the World, but it is deserted (except for tourists!). See the book of Obadiah.



Petra, the Rose Red City

Chapter 35 The redeemed of the Lord will rejoice

God will come with vengeance and retribution for those who oppose Him, but will come to save His people. *The eyes of the blind will then be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. v5,6*

There will be a highway back to Zion and the redeemed of the Lord will walk it with joy and singing. *And the ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. v9,10.*

e. Historical section: Hezekiah's sin, sickness and salvation Chapters 36-39

In the 14th year of Hezekiah's reign Sennacherib, King of Syria, attacked and captured the fortified cities in Judah. His field commander then approached King Hezekiah in Jerusalem in a mocking way and asked who he could depend on. *You say you have strategy and military strength - but you speak only empty words.* 36:5 He then said to the people: *Don't let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you! Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the LORD.* 36:14,15 *How can the LORD deliver Jerusalem from my hand?* 36:20

When Hezekiah heard this he went to the temple of the Lord and his advisers said that the Lord would rebuke the field commander, and encouraged Hezekiah to pray. God would work it so that the attackers would go away. Hezekiah prayed *Now, O Lord our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone are God.* 37:20.

Isaiah then sent a message to Hezekiah saying that God would make them return back the way they came and that the King of Assyria would not enter Jerusalem, or even shoot an arrow at it. *I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David, my servant.* 37:35. 185,000 people in the Assyrian camp died that night! Sennacherib withdrew and returned to Nineveh where he was later assassinated.

Hezekiah became ill and Isaiah said *Put your house in order because you are going to die; you will not recover.* 38:1 Hezekiah wept bitterly and prayed to the Lord *Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.* 38:2,3

As a result God added 15 years to his life! He proved this by giving a sign: the sun went backward by 10 steps. After Hezekiah recovered he reflected on his life and determined to *walk humbly all my years. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back. The living praise you, as I am doing today.* 38:15,17,19

Merodach-Baladan, son of the King of Babylon heard about Hezekiah's recovery and sent him a gift. Hezekiah showed the bearers of the gift all of his palace and his treasures. Then Isaiah prophesied and said that everything in the palace would, one day, be carried off to Babylon. Nothing would be left! Hezekiah wasn't troubled by this as he knew there would be peace and security in his time.

Two important principles emerge here:

- It's not a good idea to resist the Lord!
- God hears and answers prayer, especially if we live in a righteous and humble way before Him.

This prophecy was accurately fulfilled when Jerusalem fell in 586 BC and the Jews were carried off into captivity in Babylon (for 70 years).

2. Prophecies of Peace (Babylonian Period) - chapters 40- 66

The focus of Isaiah's prophecy now changes. After God's judgement on Israel He will bring in a time of comfort and peace, through His chosen Servant, the Messiah (Jesus). This will result in deliverance and future glory for God's people.

a. Israel's deliverance - chapters 40-50

Chapter 40 Comfort for God's people

Israel will be comforted because

- her hard service has been completed
- her sin has been paid for
- she has received from the Lord's hand, double for all her sins. v2

A voice in the wilderness will prepare the way for this to happen.

This was carried out by John the Baptist as he prepared the way for Jesus. (See Matthew 3:1-12).



The end result: the glory of the Lord will be revealed to all people.

And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken. v5

What good news! God promised to come and bring salvation for Israel and He has accomplished it. Not only that, He has accomplished it in Christ for all peoples!

This shows many aspects of the character of God:

- Even though people live and die *the word of our God stands forever*. v8. See 1 Peter 1:24,25
- God is all powerful. v10
- God rewards and recompenses according to our behaviours. v10
- God has a shepherd heart:

He tends His flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart; He gently leads those that have young. v11

- God is great. He holds the whole world in His hands. v12
- God doesn't need anyone to help or instruct Him. v13,14
- The nations are as nothing in comparison to God. v15-17
- No idol or image can represent God. v18-20
- God sits enthroned above the earth and has complete power over all who live on the earth. v21-24
- No-one and nothing can be compared to God. He created the whole universe; knows what is going on everywhere; and maintains everything by His great power. v25,26
- People can't complain that God doesn't care. He understands; He gives strength; He lifts up; He encourages. With Him those who hope in the Lord *will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint.* v27-31



Chapter 41 Israel's helper

The nations have raged against Israel but God is the One who has rescued and helped her:

I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, 'You are my servant'; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. v9,10

Those who opposed Israel will be disgraced and will perish. God has proved Himself as Israel's helper and now she will rejoice in Him:

For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you. v13

Israel will know God's rich blessings:

I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs. I will put in the desert the cedar and the acacia, the myrtle and the olive. I will set pines in the wasteland, the fir and the cypress together, so that people may see and know, may consider and understand, that the hand of the LORD has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it. v18-20

God said that He would do this for Israel, and He has!

If you visit Israel today you will see that this prophecy has been accurately fulfilled. The nation is prospering with millions of trees being planted, rich agricultural growth, and many new industries being developed. There is a strong sense of national pride, and an expectation of a prosperous future.

The contrast between the growth of Israel and the backwardness of neighbouring Palestine is stark!

Chapter 42 The Servant of the Lord

The Servant of the Lord (or Messiah) is *my chosen One in whom I delight. I will put my Spirit on Him* v1.

Jesus is the Servant of the Lord!

The word Messiah (Hebrew) or Christ (Greek) means *anointed*. Jesus was anointed for His ministry when the Holy Spirit fell upon Him at the Jordan River. Mark 1:9-11

Here are some keys aspects of the ministry of the Servant of the Lord (Jesus):

- He will not falter or be discouraged until He brings justice to the nations.
- He created the heavens and the earth.
- He gives breath and life to people on earth.
- He calls us in righteousness.
- He will take hold of our hands and guide and keep us.
- He will make a covenant with the people and be a light for the Gentiles.
- He will open blind eyes, free captives from prison, and bring light to those in darkness.
- He will not give His glory to any other.
- He will make all things new.



Sing to the LORD a new song, His praise to the ends of the earth. v10

God is to be praised for what He has done. He turns darkness into light and makes the rough places smooth! v16. How stupid it was of Israel to trust in idols. In doing this Israel was blind to the Lord (even though He had made His requirements of righteousness clear in the law) so they were plundered by the surrounding nations. They were sinning against the Lord by not following His ways and obeying His laws so God poured out His anger on them. *Yet they did not understand; it consumed them, but they did not take it to heart. v25.*

Chapter 43 The Only Saviour

God declares that He is the only Saviour. Salvation includes many different aspects:

- God created and formed you.
- God redeemed you.
- God called you by name: You are His!
- God will be with you when you go through troubles.
- You are precious and honoured in God's sight. He loves you!
- God is with you so you don't need to be afraid.
- You were created for God's glory.



There is no other 'god' who does this; no other Saviour. Only God can save!

So don't dwell on the past because God is doing a new thing.

I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland ... to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself, that they may proclaim my praise. v19-21

Even though Israel sinned and rejected God He will accept her:

I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more. v25

Chapter 44, 45 God chose Israel

Israel need not be afraid for God chose her and:

I will pour water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground. I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring and my blessing on your descendants. v3

But Israel must remain faithful to the Lord and not turn to idols for *apart from me there is no God v6* Those who make and follow idols are nothing and will be put to shame. Instead they must remember: *I have made you, you are my servant; O Israel, I will not forget you. I have swept away your offences like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you. v21,22*

God has fulfilled His word in the past and will do so in the future. Jerusalem will once again be inhabited and the nation will be restored. Cyrus the Syrian King will be used of God to bring this about:

so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know that there is none besides me. I am the LORD and there is no other. 45:6

God made the earth and all that is in it so no-one can question His actions. Israel will be saved and the surrounding nations will recognise that it can only be due to the Lord. So
turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth, for I am God and there is no other. v22

These chapters provide a wonderful explanation of how God will save Israel and then, through Israel's Messiah, will bring the opportunity for salvation to everyone!

Of course, this has been accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus!

Chapter 46, 47 The gods of Babylon

God is the One will support and sustain Israel:

Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all who remain of the house of Israel, whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. Even to your old age and grey hairs I am He who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you. 46:3,4

Compared to the gods of Babylon (who can do nothing) *I am God, and there is no other. I am God and there is none like me. My purpose will stand and I will do all that I please. What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that will I do. v9-11*

Babylon will fall and her wickedness and sorcery will be exposed. Only God will bring salvation to Israel!

Chapter 48

God told stubborn Israel that He was going to do these things before they happened, so that she would not ascribe His actions to idols. He has refined and tested Israel, but He has done it for His own sake:

For my own sake I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another. v11 I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. v17

If Israel had listened to God she would have had peace and would have been greatly blessed, but *there is no peace for the wicked. v22*

Chapter 49 Restoration of Israel

When Israel is restored:

I will make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth. v6

The restoration of Israel will include:

- gathering of Israel unto the Lord
- making her a light for the Gentiles
- bringing the opportunity of salvation to all
- restoration of the land
- freedom for those in darkness
- provision of food and drink
- comfort and compassion for the people
- God contending with those who contend with Israel.

Then all mankind will know that I, the Lord, am your Saviour, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. v26

Chapter 50 Israel's sin

It wasn't because of God that Israel got into trouble. It was because of her own sin and rebellion. God continually offered to help and provided the way of escape but Israel rejected this. In contrast, God's Servant deliberately obeys God's will so now *Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God. v10*

b. Israel's Deliverer: Messiah - The Servant of the Lord - chapters 51-57

Chapter 51, 52 Everlasting salvation

When Israel calls on the Lord He will save her. God's salvation includes:

- comfort and compassion
- joy, gladness, thanksgiving and singing
- justice and hope
- overcoming of the fear of men
- righteousness
- return to Zion (a hill just outside Jerusalem).

The ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. 51:11

Israel has experienced the wrath of the Lord and has been afflicted in many ways. Worse still, God's Name has been blasphemed. But there is now good news!

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" 52:7

The Lord will redeem His people and comfort them. They must leave behind all uncleanness and impurities and follow the Lord. Then: *All the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God. v10*

Chapter 52:13- 53:12 Messiah: His suffering and glory

Messiah's humiliation

He will be raised and lifted up (on the Cross) and exalted (through the resurrection). In this process He will be horribly disfigured.

Messiah's rejection

He will be despised and rejected by men.

Messiah's suffering

He will be suffer in horrible ways because the Lord will lay the iniquity of us all upon Him.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. v5,6

Messiah's death

Even though He doesn't deserve to, He will die because our transgressions are laid on Him. (And *the wages of sin is death* Romans 6:23). He will be placed in the tomb of a rich man (Joseph of Aramathea).

Messiah's atonement

It was God's will that Messiah (Christ) would die like this because He will be making atonement for our sin. God's righteous anger at sin will be poured on Him, and He will die in our place as a guilt offering. As a result we can have a relationship with God (in Christ) and He will *see His offspring and prolong His days. v10*. Messiah's suffering will mean we can be justified because he has borne our iniquities. How wonderful!

Jesus' death on the Cross has opened up the way for all to be saved and have a relationship with God. All because *He poured out His life unto death. v12*.

This is one of the most wonderful passages in the whole Bible! it describes the humiliation, rejection, suffering, death and atonement of Messiah (the Anointed One).

It was all wonderfully fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. See Matthew Chapters 26-28 and John Chapters 19,20.



Chapter 54 Israel's future glory

Israel will be restored. Even though God hid His face from her for a time He loves her and will bring her back into relationship and bless her. This is because He loves her:

I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you, says the LORD, your Redeemer. v8

The restoration of Israel includes:

- spreading throughout the world and dispossessing other nations
- not being shamed or humiliated
- being called back in love and compassion
- a covenant of peace
- material blessings
- peace for her children, and their being taught of the Lord
- being established in righteousness
- terror being far removed
- no enemy will prevail against her.

Israel did indeed receive these blessings from the Lord, and, in some measure, still does.

The key for Israel's future is for her to accept her true Messiah, Jesus Christ.

This is Israel's heritage and her vindication from God.

Chapter 55 God's invitation

God now tells Israel (and us!) what she must do to come into His blessings, and describes what relationship with Him is like. God's invitation is for them to come to Him.

Give ear and come to me; hear that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you. v3

They must:

- listen to the Lord
- seek the Lord while He may be found and call upon Him while He is near
- forsake wickedness and evil thoughts
- turn to the Lord.

God will pardon their sins and endow them with splendour. They will know joy and peace and experience God's rich blessings.

They must do things God's way. (And God's way is quite different from our way!).

'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways' declares the LORD. v8

Then God will accomplish what He said He would do.

...my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. v11

Chapters 56, 57 Salvation is for all

Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed. 56:1

This salvation is available for all: Israel, foreigners, exiles, ... in fact, all who walk uprightly and who are contrite about their sins. They will know joy, peace and restoration. The Lord will not exclude anyone!

The wicked, however, will stay blind to salvation due to their pre-occupation with idols and sinful behaviours. There is no peace for the wicked!

c. Israel's Future Glory - chapters 58-66

Chapters 58, 59 True repentance

Israel seemed eager to know the Lord and follow His ways. They had even fasted! But the Lord wants true fasting and repentance which is genuine, from the heart and which results in justice for all. This includes:

- setting the oppressed free
- sharing food with the hungry
- providing shelter for the homeless
- helping people and not turning away from them
- not pointing the finger and speaking maliciously
- laying down your life for others
- keeping the Sabbath.



If they do this the results will be wonderful!

Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings. then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob." The mouth of the LORD has spoken. 58:8-12, 14.

Their sin has separated them from God, and justice and righteousness are far away. This has displeased the Lord but He is still able to save them. At His own initiative *His own arm worked salvation, and His own righteousness sustained Him. 59: 16.*

"The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins," declares the LORD. "As for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD. "My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever," says the LORD. v20,21

This was fulfilled when Jesus came to Israel as her Messiah (Christ), and when the Holy Spirit was poured out. See Matthew 1-3.

Chapter 60 Zion's future glory

Darkness has reigned to this point but now the light of God's presence will shine on Zion:

... but the LORD rises upon you, and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. v2,3

God will endow His people with splendour and other nations will come to His light (but those that won't follow the Lord will perish). The Lord will be the light of His people and there will be peace, righteousness, joy and no more violence.

For the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. v19



Chapter 61 The Lord's favour

When the Lord pours out His Spirit on Israel she will know His blessing and favour. This will come through Messiah (the anointed one). Messiah will:

- preach good news to the poor
- bind up the broken hearted
- proclaim freedom for the captives
- release prisoners from darkness
- proclaim the year of the Lord and His vengeance
- comfort all who mourn
- bestow beauty for ashes, joy for mourning, praise instead of despair

Jesus read these verses from Isaiah and said 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing'. See Luke 4: 18-21

Jesus is the Messiah!

- rebuild the devastated nation
- release shepherds to care for God's people
- bring in justice
- establish an everlasting covenant with God's people
- make righteousness and praise spring up in all nations.

Chapter 62 A new name

God will actively work to bring about the restoration of Israel *till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch.* v1

The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow. You will be a crown of splendor in the LORD's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God. v2,3

No longer will Israel be called 'deserted' or 'desolate' but she will be called *Hephzibah*: 'My delight is in you' and her land will be called *Beulah*, 'married'. When her Saviour comes Zion will be 'sought after' and 'the City no longer deserted'.

Chapter 63-65:16 The day of judgement and redemption

God has trampled on the nations with a vengeance because of their sin, but now the time of His salvation has come: redemption is at hand! When Israel did not remember the Lord, or walk in His ways God reached out to them in love and mercy. They recognised that *all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags. Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter, we are the work of your hand.* 64:6,9

God's salvation is for those who call upon His name and who are righteous, but His powerful judgement will fall on all those who reject Him.

Chapter 65: 17-25 A new heavens and a new earth

"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. v17-19

Read all about the new heavens and the new earth in Revelation 7 and 21.

This is how God wanted to relate to His people when He established the earth in the first place!

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever. Revelation 11:15

Chapter 66 Hope for the future

Those who are humble and contrite in spirit; who obey the word of the Lord, will flourish, under God's blessings.

When you see this, your heart will rejoice and you will flourish like grass; the hand of the LORD will be made known to his servants, but his fury will be shown to his foes. v14.

The Lord will come with fire and all nations will see His glory.

"As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the LORD. v22,23



And so Isaiah's prophecy finishes with a triumphant declaration that the Lord will come to Israel and to all nations. He will come as Saviour for those who choose to follow Him and live according to His ways; but as Judge to those who reject Him.

Many aspects of Isaiah's prophecy have already been fulfilled in the restoration of Israel and in the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus. Other aspects will be fulfilled when Jesus comes again! Make sure you are ready.

Messiah

Isaiah prophesied that a King would come and reign in Israel and that through Him salvation would be available for all peoples. Jesus fulfilled these prophesies! The words *Messiah* (Hebrew) and *Christ* (Greek) are the same word and mean *anointed*.

Here are some of Isaiah's prophecies about Messiah, which have all been fulfilled in Jesus Christ:

Isaiah 11:1,10	He is a descendent of David, of the family of Jesse.
Isaiah 11:2	God's Spirit will rest upon Him
Isaiah 11:3	He will fear the Lord
Isaiah 11:4,5	He will judge the world with righteousness
Isaiah 11:9	He will bring knowledge of the Lord
Isaiah 11:10	The Gentiles will seek Him
Isaiah 11:11-16	The remnant of Israel will be gathered to Him
Isaiah 12:1-6	There will be joy in God's salvation.

In Chapters 52 and 53 Isaiah describes Messiah's nature and work:

Isaiah 52:13-15	His humiliation
Isaiah 53:1-3	His rejection
Isaiah 53:4-6	His suffering
Isaiah 53:7-9	His death
Isaiah 53:10-12	His atonement.

Prophecy	Fulfillment
He will be exalted 52:13	Philippians 2:9
He will be disfigured by suffering 52:14, 53:2	Mark 15:17,19
He will make atonement through His blood 52:15	1 Peter 1:12
He will be rejected by people 53:1,3	John 12:37,38
He will bear our sins and sorrows 53:4,5	Romans 4:25, 1 Peter 2:24,25
He will be our substitute 53:6,8	2 Corinthians 5:21
He will take our guilt and punishment 53:7,8	John 10:11, 19:30
He will be buried in a rich man's tomb 53:9	John 19:38-42
He will save those who believe in Him 53:10,11	John 3:16, Acts 16:31
He will die on behalf of sinners 53:12	Mark 15:27,28 Luke 22:37

Discussion questions

Identify all references to Jesus in Isaiah. How do these references help your understanding of Jesus as Messiah? How do they help your understanding of Jesus as the suffering servant?

Isaiah contains many prophecies. Which prophecies have been fulfilled regarding: - the nations? Israel? Jesus the Messiah? The Church? The future? Which ones have yet to be fulfilled?

What does Isaiah say will lead to a nation being blessed? How does this relate to the way our nation is governed and carries out its business?

How is God's holiness portrayed throughout Isaiah? What are the implications of God's holiness on the way we live out our Christian lives?

Do a character study of Isaiah. What qualities did he demonstrate that you admire?

What have you learned from your study of Isaiah? How will you apply this in your life?

