

HEARING THE WORD



NIGEL BARGE

Isaiah 40 - 66
Leader's guide

Hearing the Word Isaiah 40-66 Leader's Guide

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Email: info@hearingtheword.org.uk

Website: <https://hearingtheword.org.uk>

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Nigel Barge, July 2017

Scripture Quotations taken from

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Resources

The *New Bible Dictionary* 3rd edition, published by Inter Varsity Press
The *New Bible Commentary* 21st century edition. A commentary on every Bible book, IVP
www.blueletterbible.org

Hearing the Word: A Tool for Bible reading



LOOK – What does it *say*?

- 1) The Text
 - a) What questions does it raise -
Who, What, When, Where, Why, How?
 - b) What surprises you?
- 2) The Context?
 - a) the surrounding text
 - b) the Book of the Bible
 - c) the whole Bible
 - d) the place in the Bible Story



LEARN – What does it *mean*?

- 1) What type of writing is it?
- 2) Answer the questions
- 3) Summarise the passage



LISTEN – What is the *message*?

- 1) Which is the main point?
- 2) Which is the key verse?



LIVE – How should we *respond*?

- 1) What does it show about God,
(Father, Son, Holy Spirit) :
 - a) His nature and character?
 - b) His grace*
 - c) Jesus / his salvation**
- 2) What should I do?

* God's undeserved generosity is evident throughout the Bible, and it is perfectly expressed in Jesus.

** The Bible, from 'the fall' onwards, describes God's plan of salvation through his Son. Thus, *all* the Scriptures speak in some way of Jesus (Luke 24:27).

The seven studies in this booklet

This second booklet looks at seven representative passages in Isaiah 40-66, taken from the last three of Isaiah's sections. Another booklet covers Isaiah 1-39. Explore all 14 studies, and you will have a good grasp of Isaiah's contribution to our world.

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READING PROPHECY IN THE BIBLE

Whatever we read, we adjust to its style. We approach a newspaper, a cookery book, a poem and a scientific report in different ways. We take into account the purpose for which it was written and the way the writer uses words.

Since the Bible has many styles - law, poetry, history, prophecy, *etc.* - we need to allow for the style if we are to discern what God is saying. Isaiah is mainly *prophecy*, mostly expressed in *poetry*. To approach it properly, keep in mind the following principles:

1) In general - it is God's story

The Bible tells the story of God's dealings with humankind. After creation and 'the fall' in Genesis 1-3, the rest describes how he works out his unfolding plan to rescue humankind through Jesus. The Old Testament (OT) prepares for the coming and the death of Jesus. The New Testament (NT) describes the event

and looks forwards to his return at the end of time. It is *all* about God. It follows that:

- a) Every part relates to Him (Luke 24:27; John 5:39). So as we read, we ask, 'what does this show about God? What is He doing?'
- b) Everything is relevant. In a movie, every scene plays some part in the overall story. Often the early stages of a film show things that make no sense until later. The Bible is the same. So as we read prophecy, often knowing the outcome already, we ask, 'what relevance has *this* part to the *main* story?'

2) In particular - 'follow the camera angle'

A film director focuses our attention on particular shots to tell 'his story'. In the same way the prophet is selective about what he tells us. He omits much general detail, only giving us items relevant to what he is trying to convey.

As we read we should therefore be asking the question - why is he telling me this, and in this particular way?

3) The nature of prophecy

The Bible uses the word 'prophet' to mean a person authorised by God to speak for him, and inspired by the Holy Spirit so that what *he* says, *God* says (2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). God had made a covenant, or special agreement, with his people; he had a special concern to hold his people to it.

4) The scope of prophecy

To read prophecy we need a tri-focal lens! A text may be referring to the immediate time-frame, the coming of Jesus made flesh among us, or His coming as Judge at the end of time. The difficulty in reading prophecy is that these may all be included, but mixed up, apparently at random!

READING ISAIAH

The Author

Isaiah lived in Jerusalem (7:3, 37:2), was married, with at least two sons (7:3; 8:3). His name means 'The LORD saves', which is the heart of his prophecy.

The Purpose

'Come now, let us reason together,' says the LORD. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ... If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land. But if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.' (Is 1:18-20)

Notice that Isaiah is not just predicting what will happen. He is appealing to people to turn to God. If they do turn, God will forgive and protect them. If they do not, God's judgement will fall on them. He hopes readers will:

- a. NOTE his vision – salvation or judgment
- b. BELIEVE the truths displayed – our sinfulness and his saviour-hood
- c. RECEIVE the Lord's provision – the rescue he offers in God's name

Isaiah was mostly writing chapters 1-39 of his book to the people of Judah (the area around Jerusalem) about 730 years before Jesus Christ lived, to call them to repent; and chapters 40-66 to their descendants who would be living in exile 150 years later, to comfort and encourage them. (See the table of dates on page 5.) But through him God promised some things in detail such as the birth and death of Jesus Christ; so the prophecy is also addressed to all people throughout history.

He *warns* of the judgement that is on its way as he writes (5:5-6) and of the greater, final judgement of the impenitent (2:12-21; 66:24); but he also *promises* a coming Saviour (52:13–53:12) and *offers* all people a new start, and fullness of life, through belonging to him: free! (55:1-7)

What was happening then?

Isaiah prophesied through four reigns from 740 to about 700BC (1:1). The people we call the Jews, God's people Israel, had split into two kingdoms:

The *northern* kingdom, *Israel*, also known as Ephraim, had *Samaria* as capital; and *Judah*, the *southern* kingdom, with its capital, *Jerusalem*.

Sometimes Isaiah uses 'Israel' to mean *all* the people, of both kingdoms.

The joint enemy to their north and east was the empire **Assyria**. Isaiah warned that Assyria would invade their land and plunder Samaria (8:3-8); this happened a few years later while Isaiah was still active as a prophet. Many Israelites were deported to Assyria as prisoners of war. Israel became part of the Assyrian empire and ceased to exist as a separate kingdom.

So when you read warnings such as 8:3-8 'Because you have rejected God's reign, Assyria will invade', you can say to yourself, 'that was the news-flash of its day – *and it came true*: what does that say about God who inspired it?'

The next great empire was **Babylon**. Isaiah warned that they would conquer the remaining kingdom, Judah, and deport the people in turn as prisoners of war (39:5). This took place in a series of invasions about a century later, after Isaiah's death. Again, what God said came true!

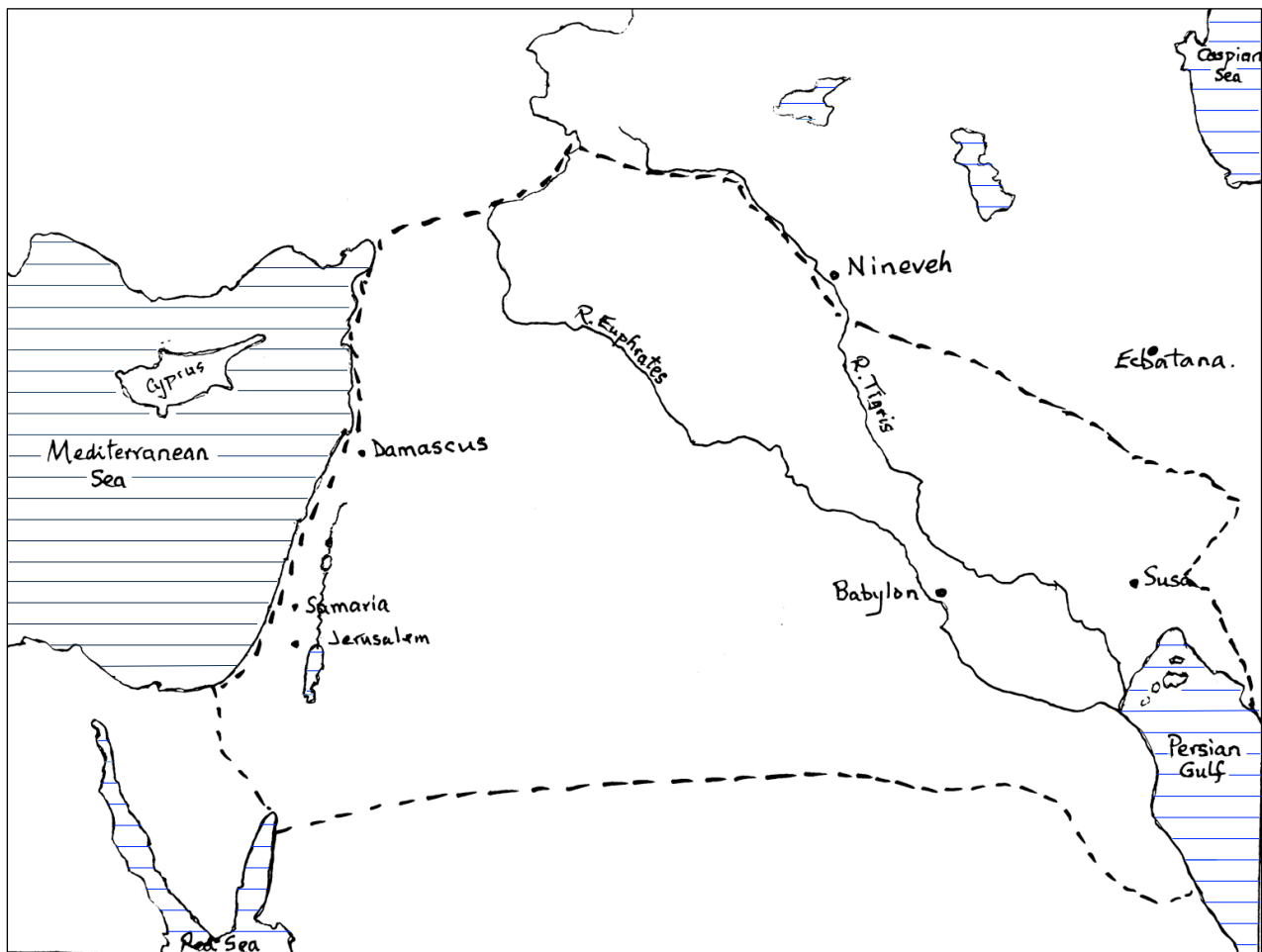
To prepare for the time of exile in Babylon, Isaiah wrote chapters 40-66 to comfort those future Israelites. Though he had died by the time it happened he wrote in advance: like writing a message for your great-grandchildren.

Chapter 40 sets the scene for the rest of the book. The 27 chapters are in three groups of nine, each with a special emphasis: See Table of Contents p1

Isaiah signals his divisions by ending each with the surprising, solemn statement 'There is no rest for the wicked:' 48:22, 57:21 and (even more strongly) 66:24, the words with which he ends his prophecy.

These prophetic chapters were primarily designed to comfort the exiled Jews. God had not forgotten them or cast them out. On the contrary, his purpose to bring the world his son as saviour still stood. These notes of comfort, and prediction of Jesus, dominate Isaiah 40 – 66.

MAP: Middle East affected by Isaiah's Prophecy



Key, taking the cities from west to east:

- Jerusalem: capital of southern kingdom, Judah
- Samaria: capital of northern kingdom, Israel
- Damascus: capital of Syria (Aram): see, eg, ch.7 v.1
- Nineveh: capital of Assyria
- Babylon: capital of Babylonia
- Ecbatana: capital of Medo-Persia for Cyrus' first two years
- Susa: capital of Medo-Persia after that (later Persepolis was: further south, to east of Persian Gulf)

Assyrian Empire: a little smaller than dotted line, with some land to north of it.

Babylonian Empire: area shown by dotted line.

Medo-Persian Empire: all that area, and Asia Minor all the way to the Mediterranean, and south west to northern Sudan, and territory to the east another 600 miles all the way to the Syr Darya river in what is now Eastern Uzbekistan. See also Esther 1.1. Cyrus' achievement (first emperor of the united Medo-Persian empire) is stunning.

CHART: Timescale relating to Isaiah

Timescale relating to Isaiah

| Date | World Power | Kings of Israel | Kings of Judah | Isaiah |
|-------|--|--|--|---|
| BC | 800-625 Assyria | | | |
| - 750 | 750 - 732 King Rezin of Damascus a minor power | 740-732 Pekah | 767-740 Uzziah | 740 – c 695 |
| | Tiglath-Pileser III | 732-722 Hoshea | 732-716 Ahaz (co-regent from 744) | Isaiah's ministry. Contemporaries: Micah, Hosea |
| | Shalmanezar V | 722 Samaria fell to Assyria | | |
| | Sennacherib and others | <i>People of Israel (the 10 northern tribes) exiled to Assyria</i> | 716-687 Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29-32) then 7 more kings over next 100 years (2 Chron. 33-36) | |
| - 600 | 626-539 Babylonia | | | |
| | Nebuchadnezzar and others | | 586 Jerusalem fell to Babylonia | |
| | Belshazzar (Daniel 5) | | 586-538 <i>People of Judah exiled to Babylon</i> | Isaiah had written 40-66 in advance to these exiles |
| - 500 | 538-331 Medo-Persia | | 538 Cyrus encouraged the exiles to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1) | Isaiah predicted this (44:28-45:6) |
| | first ruler = Cyrus | | | |

HOW TO USE THIS LEADER'S GUIDE

The first page in each week's study explains matters that would have been known to the original hearers but not to readers today.

The 'Bible connections' show where the Bible refers to similar themes. Bibles that provide 'cross references' give the same kind of information.

In this Leader's Guide, the questions under 'LOOK' are those that others happen to have asked. The Leader should *not* read them out; unlike other types of study guides, they have not been carefully refined to elucidate the main points. Instead, enable your group to ask their own questions, and write them down. If there are too many for the time available, select the most pressing.

If any coincide with the questions shown in 'LOOK', the matching possible Answers offered in 'LEARN' may help the group if they get stuck. But wait till everyone has tried to work out their own answers first.

In all printed volumes in the series, instructions on using *Hearing the Word* are shown in brief on the inside *front* cover. Suggestions on how to use the process *with a group* appear on the inside *back* cover.

A 4-hour training course is available, 'Introduction to Hearing the Word' . Address on back cover.

§5 Chapters 40-48 The Return under Cyrus

Study 1

40:1-31

Comfort for the future Jews in exile

Background

After the message of disaster in 39:5-7 comes the message of comfort in chapter 40. God's promises may be forfeited but they cannot perish. He alone is the Creator and his people are his central concern. 41:1-7 tell us he is the ruler of history.

Word list

| | | |
|----|--------------------------|--|
| 1 | <i>says your God</i> | imperfect tense, so = 'keeps saying' |
| 2 | <i>Jerusalem</i> | capital city of Judah |
| 5 | <i>glory of the Lord</i> | = the Lord's presence <i>see</i> Exodus 16:10; 40:34f |
| 10 | <i>Zion</i> | name for Jerusalem, city on a hill |
| 18 | <i>God</i> | Hebrew <i>el</i> is the most transcendent of the OT's words for God. |
| 26 | <i>created</i> | the Hebrew verb here is reserved for divine action. |
| 29 | <i>weary</i> | = failure, or bowed down, under life's pressures |
| | <i>weak</i> | = lack of innate strength |
| | <i>power</i> | related to word for 'bone' <i>ie</i> durable and stable |

Bible Connections

| | | |
|----|--|---|
| 2 | <i>sin has been paid for</i> | OT uses <i>passive tense only</i> of God's acceptance of the Levitical offerings <i>see</i> Leviticus 1:4; 7:18; 19:7 |
| 3 | <i>prepare the way</i> | Predicts John Baptist <i>see</i> Mark 1:3-8; Luke 3:2-17 |
| 5 | <i>Glory of Lord seen</i> | <i>see</i> John 1.14 |
| 8 | <i>The Word of our God stands for ever. cf</i> | Psalm 33:6,9; 148:5 |
| 10 | <i>the Lord's arm</i> | <i>see</i> 48:14; 51:5,9; 52:10; 53:1; 59:16; 62:8; 63:5,12 |
| 11 | <i>shepherd</i> | <i>see</i> Psalm 23; Micah 5:4; Ezekiel 34:2ff, 23f; John 10:11-30 |
| 13 | <i>understood mind of Lord</i> | <i>see</i> Job ch. 38,39 |
| 18 | <i>folly of idolatry</i> | <i>see</i> 41:5-7,21-24,29; 42:8,17; 44:6-20; 46:1-7 |
| 22 | <i>He sits enthroned.</i> | <i>see</i> Daniel 7:9-14; Revelation 4:1-6 |
| 23 | <i>He brings princes to naught.</i> | <i>see</i> Jeremiah 27:5; Daniel 4:17,34f. |
| 29 | <i>He gives strength to the weak:</i> | <i>see</i> Matthew 11:28-30 |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 *Who is speaking?*
 Who are 'his people'?
- 2 *When was 'her hard service'?*
 How had she received 'double for all her sins'?
- 3/4 *Why 'straight' and 'level'?*
- 3a/6 *Whose is 'the voice'?*
 5 *How will God's glory be revealed?*
 6 *Why is he instructed to 'cry out'?*
 8 *Why is the eternal Word of God contrasted with man's mortality?*
 9 *What is 'the Good News'?*
- 10 *What is 'his arm' that rules?*
- 12-14 *Who is the 'who' in the questions asked?*
- 15-17 *What is the point about the nations?*
- 18-20 *What is the comparison to God?*
- 21,28 *Who is the 'you' that is addressed?*
 21a *What has not been told to you?*
 25 *How are you to compare God?*
 27 *Why do the people complain?*
 28 *What have they not heard about God?*
 30 *What does 'hope in the Lord' mean?*

What surprises or confuses you?

Why is there no indication of when these prophecies will be revealed?

2) The Context

a) individual book

- 2 *sins paid for (Isaiah 1:18).*
- 6 *cry out (Isaiah 6:9).*

b) whole Bible

- 1 *'Comfort' – God's discipline is not harsh (Hebrews 12:5,6).*
- 5 *the Glory of the Lord (John 17:1-5).*
- 10 *good tidings (Luke 2:10).*
- 15-17 *the nations (Genesis 11:1-9).*

- 22 stretches out heaven (c.f. Psalm 9:1-6).
28 Everlasting God (Psalm 90:2).
Creator (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1).

c) Bible story

God create them but man's sin separated them.

God provide a way back to him through faith.

God gave mankind his perfect Law, which would if kept allow restoration.

Mankind did not obey Him despite the warnings of His prophets

LEARN

1) What type of literature is this?

Prophecy written as poetry

2) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

1 *God is speaking to his prophet.*

His people are Judah / Jerusalem.

2 *Her hard service was her exile.*

This exile was due to her by God for her sins.

3/4 *'Straight', 'level' means no obstruction to revelation of God / His Glory.*

3a/6 *The voice' belongs to an angel of God.*

5 *God's glory will be revealed in His coming.*

6 *He is to 'cry out' as God's truth. His presence is to be made known.*

8 *Contrasted to show God & his purposes are eternal - man's are not.*

9 *'The Good News' is: your God is here.*

10 *'His arm' refers to His strength.*

12-14 *The 'who' questions expect the answer, 'No-one but God!'*

15-17 *'The nations' are tiny/insignificant compared with God their maker.*

18-20 *All human attempts to contain/master/understand God will fail; he is incomparable; no simile is adequate.*

21/28 *'You' means the doubters.*

21a *They have not heard that the Lord is the everlasting God.*

25 *God has no equal – there is no-one to whom you can compare him.*

27 *They complain because they do not see / feel / understand God.*

28 *They have not heard/ acknowledged God is the everlasting God.*

30 *'Hope' is belief in / trust in God.*

3) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

He was not speaking of one particular time.

4) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

1-5 God's word of comfort is that His glory will be revealed.

6-11 The message to mortal man is: God reigns and cares for them.

12-20 God rules the nations and is beyond man's comprehension.

21-31 The challenge is to acknowledge:

a) The Lord reigns (21-27)

b) Hope is in the everlasting God (28-31).

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Trust in the everlasting God and he will sustain you.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 28 & 31**

Do you not know?.. The Lord is the everlasting God... Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

2 God has a tender heart towards, and a purpose for, his people.

4-5 The revelation of God's glory is straightforward.

8 God / His Word are eternal.

13 The Lord is sovereign in his rule.

b) His grace

11 God 'tends' his flock.

c) Jesus and His salvation

31 The everlasting God renews the strength of those who hope in.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What should I do?

1 Do not despair!

6 Human beings are mortal

8 Trust in the eternal God.

31 Wait on the Lord to renew your strength..

Now underline the application of the Main Point

A song about God's coming servant

Background

Chapter 41 'See, they are all false' (v29) points to the emptiness that marks the Gentile world. Chapter 42 introduces God's remedy, 'Here is my servant.'

Vs 1-4 the Lord speaks *of* his servant, describing his task;

Vs 5-9 the Lord speaks *to* his servant, confirming his task.

Justice is the leading idea of this first Servant Song.

Word List

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|---|
| 1 | <i>Here</i> | the Hebrew word <i>hen</i> is better translated, 'See' |
| | <i>My Spirit</i> | mode of the Lord's personal presence and action and the special endowment of leaders |
| 4 | <i>establishes</i> | Hebrew for 'to set or place', as in Deuteronomy 4:44 |
| 4 | <i>law</i> | teaching, revelation of God's will <i>see</i> 1:10 |
| | <i>islands</i> | landmasses, countries in general as in 40:15 |
| 6 | <i>Gentiles</i> | non-Jews |
| | <i>Covenant</i> | a unilateral declaration, sealed with a sacrifice, of a commitment by a 'superior', and entered into with agreement by an 'inferior'. |

Bible connections

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------|--|
| 1-4 | <i>Jesus quotes</i> | Matthew 12:18-21 |
| 1 | <i>My Spirit</i> | <i>see</i> Psalm 139:7; Numbers 11:16ff; 1 Samuel 16:13; Luke 4:1,14; Hebrews 9:14 (Spirit = Breath <i>see</i> Psalm 33:6 Isaiah 40:7) |
| 6 | <i>Covenant</i> | <i>see</i> Genesis 6:17-18; 15:17; Exodus 2:24; 24:7-8; 6:2-7; 20:1-2; 20:3ff, Hebrews 8:7-12 |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 *Where is His servant?*
 How does He 'uphold' Him?
 What does 'bring justice' mean?
- 2 *Why will He not 'raise his voice'?*
- 3 *Who / what is the 'smouldering reed'?*
 How will He 'bring forth justice'?
- 4 *What does 'not falter' mean?*
 What 'islands' does he mean?
- 5,6 *Who is God talking to? Who is the 'you'?*
- 5 *Why does He say –'created . . . spread out . . . gives breath...'?*
- 6 *What does 'call in righteousness' mean?*
 What does 'make you to be a covenant' mean?
- 6-7 *When will this eye-opening and freeing take place?*
- 8 *Why does God assert who He is at this point?*
- 9 *What are the 'former things'?*

What surprises or confuses you?

Why is there a delay of 700 years till the New Covenant?

2) The Context

a) individual book

- 2 *not shout out/dumb before his shearers (53:7).*
- 4 *justice (52:7).*
- 8 *not give his glory (48:11).*

b) whole Bible

- 1 *'delight' in his servant Luke 3:22*
 My Spirit on him (Luke 3:22)
- 2 *not shout out – meek and lowly (Matthew 11:29; Philippians 2:6,7))*
- 3 *Take my yoke... I am gentle and humble. (Matthew 11:29)*
- 6 *New Covenant (Luke 22:20)*
 not give his Glory (John 12:41)

- 9 *'new thing' c.f. New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31)*
 'announce' – Good News (Mark 1:38)

c) Bible story

God create them but man's sin separated them.

God provide a way back to him through faith.

God gave mankind his perfect Law, which would if kept allow restoration.

Mankind did not obey Him despite the warnings of His prophets.

LEARN

1) How do you answer these questions

1 *'Here is my servant' = a future unveiling.*

'I uphold' means I endorse.

'Bring justice to the nation' = sort out the world's problems.

2 *'Not shout' means he will not use earthly power.*

3 *'Smouldering wick' is a sign of weakness.*

'Faithfulness' means full of faith and in accord with this promise. 'Not falter' means he will succeed.

4 *'Islands' represent the nations.*

5,6 *God is talking to His servant.*

5 *He says this to show He is the author / in complete control.*

6 *This means that the servant is right / holy / sincere.*

It means the servant will be the agreement between God and men.

6-7 *It will happen when the New Covenant is ratified.*

8 *He asserts who He is / His authority, as He is making a covenant.*

9 *The former things means the Old Covenant.*

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

The delay may seem long to us mortals, but from his eternal viewpoint, God sees time differently from us: 'a thousand years is as a day' to God. (2 Peter 3:8, quoting Psalm 90:4;)

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

God introduces to the world His meek servant, who will bring justice. The sovereign Lord commissions him to be a new covenant. The new element will be his identity: He is God.

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Through His Servant, God will enable all people to be safe with Him.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 6b**

I will keep you and make you to be a Covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

1 God delights in the Son whom He will send.

2 His ways are meek as he approaches us.

3 He is a God of justice.

4 God will bring justice to the whole earth.

5 He is the creator and sustainer of life.

1&9 God 'announces' / preaches to us.

b) His grace

3&7 His welcome is for the weak.

c) Jesus and His salvation

2/3 Jesus was 'meek'.

6b Jesus has committed Himself to all people (i.e. the weak).

8 He is Glorious / God.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What should I do?

1 Wait patiently on God's servant, Jesus.

3 Trust that he favours the weak and is gentle with us.

6b Note – Jesus has committed Himself to all people – even ‘insignificants’ like you!

9 Believe He is in complete control because His Word says so.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

How great is our God!

Background

We are still in the first section of 40-66, the promise of a return to the holy land by permission of the future Medo-Persian emperor Cyrus. What a God, to have even the rulers of the world at his disposal! A major theme in 40-48 is God's incomparable greatness, for instance, this chapter, 44.

Word List

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|--|
| 2 | <i>Jeshurun</i> | poetic variant of Israel. Hebrew means 'the upright one' |
| 4 | <i>Spirit</i> | the Spirit of the Lord <i>see</i> Isaiah 11:2; Mark 1:8-11 |
| 6 | <i>Redeemer</i> | the one who pays the ransom/price <i>see</i> v22 |
| 8 | <i>Rock</i> | title for the Lord |
| 28 | <i>Cyrus</i> | Persian king who conquered Babylon 539BC |

Bible connections

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------|--|
| 6 | <i>first and last</i> | <i>see</i> Isaiah 41:4; Revelation 1:8,17. <i>Alpha</i> and <i>omega</i> (α, ω) are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet |
| 28 | <i>Cyrus</i> | This came true in detail about 170 years after Isaiah predicted it: <i>see</i> Ezra 1:1-4 |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 *Why does he call them both 'Jacob' and 'Israel'?*
 Why does God call Israel 'his servant'?
- 2 *What does it mean that 'He formed you in the womb'?*
 Why does he use another name, 'Jeshurun'?
- 3 *When will this happen?*
- 5 *Why do people do this if they are already Israel?*
- 6 *Whom does the Lord say it to?*
- 8 *Why should they try not to tremble or be afraid?*
- 9/10 *Why should they mention idols?*
- 22 *How have they been redeemed?*
- 23 *What has the Lord done?*
 Why should creation celebrate?
- 24 *What is the Lord saying about:*
 - a) *Creation (24)?*
 - b) *False prophets (25)?*
 - c) *Jerusalem (26)?*
 - d) *Watery deep (27)?*
 - e) *The foreign emperor, Cyrus (28)?*
- 2,6,24 *Why does it repeat the phrase, 'this is what the Lord says'?*

What surprises or confuses you?

Why does it mention Jerusalem (26,28) before the Temple? (28)

2) The Context

a) individual book

- 6,22,23,24 *redeemer (Isaiah 41:14;43:14; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5, 59:20; 60:16; 63:16, i.e. Isaiah refers to redemption very often!)*
- 23 *burst into song (Isaiah 55:12)*
- 55 *The trees of the field shall clap their hands. (55:12)*

b) whole Bible

- 2 *in the womb (Job 31:15; Jeremiah 1:5)*
- 3 *pour out Spirit (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17:21)*

- blessing on descendants (Genesis 17:7ff)
 5 knowing the Lord (Jeremiah 31:34)
 confessing the Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3)
 6 first and last (Revelation 1:17)
 6,22,23,24 redeemer / redeemed (Job 19:25) ;
 the Lord Almighty (the God of Jacob) (Psalm 46:7,11)
 8 rock (Deuteronomy 32:4; Luke 6:48)
 9 idols (Psalm 135:15)
 21 not forget mother and child (Isaiah 49:15)
 23 creation celebrates (Romans 8:19)
 24 the Lord/Creator (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1ff)
 25 false prophets (Matthew 7:15; 24:11,24)
 28 shepherd (Psalm 23; John 10:11-16)

c) Bible story

God create them but man's sin separated them.

God provide a way back to him through faith.

God gave mankind his perfect Law, which would if kept allow restoration.

Mankind did not obey Him despite the warnings of His prophets.

LEARN

- 1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?
 - 1 He uses both names to show his continuing purpose with them.
God calls Israel 'his servant' because Israel will carry out His Will.
 - 2 It means you owe God alone for your existence.
'Jacob' implies 'deceiver'; 'Jeshurun' (righteous one) is the way God sees him now.
 - 3 This will happen at Pentecost. (Acts 2)
 - 5 They will respond to the Lord's initiative.
 - 6 The Lord says it to all of His creation.
 - 8 They should not tremble/fear; God alone is the unchanging Creator.
 - 9/10 They would speak up for idols since that was what they trusted.
 - 22 They have been redeemed prospectively by the cross of Jesus.
 - 23 The Lord has redeemed his people; creation should celebrate, for the Lord displays His glory in Israel.

24 What is the Lord saying about:

- a) Creation – he has made ALL things (24)
- b) False prophets – they all are (will be) confounded (25)
- c) It is /will be His city (26)
- d) He is the God who dried up the Red Sea to rescue his people (Exodus 14) (27)
- e) Cyrus, the foreign emperor, is completely in God's control. (28)?

2,6,24 In repeating the phrase, the Lord underlines three things:

- a) They are the Lord's chosen people
- b) The Lord reigns supreme
- c) The Lord is in complete control.

2) What surprises or confuses you?

The Temple is 'the end'/ the centre of God's creation.

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

Listen, my chosen people. (1):

- 1) *I, the Lord made, chose, blessed you; I am committed to you. (2-5)*
- 2) *I am God almighty. (6)*
 - a) *the future is secure with me (7,8)*
 - b) *all other gods are futile (9-20)*
 - c) *you are mine (I have redeemed you). (21-23)*
- 3) *I am in complete control of all things. (24-28)*

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Israel's God is the Almighty God, the only God, who is in control of all things.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage?

v 6

Israel's king and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and the last; apart from me there is no God.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

- a) His nature and character?

6 *God is supreme.*

24 *God alone is the creator.*

- 25,26 *God's word alone is to be trusted.*
27 *God commands the deep / is sovereign over evil.*
28 *God is in control of / commands history.*

b) His grace

3 *The Lord is the giver of His Spirit.*

c) Jesus and His salvation

22 *God removed (past tense!) our sins - NB the timeless effect of the Cross.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What should I do?

2 *Trust God , my creator, for the future.*

5 *The Lord's people are meant to be assured of their identity in Him.*

6 *Put your trust in the supreme God of all.*

8 *God reveals the future so that we should trust Him.*

18 *Recognise that Idols know nothing; they cannot see or think.*

24 *Believe God has removed/ bought us out of our sins.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 4

52:13–53

Our Saviour, and how He saves us

Background

The heart of chapters 49-57 is the rescue that the coming Servant of God, (who is, as we now know, Jesus Christ) will achieve for us by his life, death and resurrection. The central chapter, in every sense, is Isaiah 53. The New Testament often refers to it, sometimes word for word (*eg* Matthew 8:17; Acts 8:32f, 1 Peter 2:24f). Note the repeated, emphatic 'he'.

The poem is symmetrical – 5 sections of 3 verses. It begins and ends with the exaltation of the Servant. Section 2 and 4 speak of his rejection. The centre-piece is 53:4-6, which describes the atoning significance of his suffering.

Word list

Ch 52 13 *act wisely* the wisdom of true prudence

14 *human likeness* 'sons of man' ie common humanity

15 *sprinkle* the work of a priest, removing the defilement that separates sinners from God (*eg* Ex 24:6-8; 1 Peter 1:2)

shut their mouths ie overwhelmed, silent from shock, and respect

Ch 53 1 *arm of the Lord* powerful act of God

3 *esteemed* an accountancy word ie a reckoning up of value

considered same Hebrew word as *esteemed* in v3b

pierced usually means *pierced fatally*

crushed used of people being crushed to death (Lament'ns 3:34)

5 *transgressions* deliberate flouting of the Lord and his law

iniquities Hebrew *to bend double* ie the bent-ness of human nature

peace Hebrew *shalom*, to be whole or complete

8 *descendants* but see v. 10!

Bible Connections

52:13 *see, my servant* see Isaiah 42:1

highly exalted see Isaiah 6:1; Ephesians 1:19-23

53:3 *familiar with suffering* see Matthew 16:21

4-6 *the Servant as the Substitute* see Leviticus 16; Romans 3:21-26; Hebrews 10:1-12; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 2:1-2

making our burdens his see Matthew 8:17; Revelation 21:4

7-9 *the Servant's firm and deliberate self-submission to death.* see John 10:18; Philippians 2:6-8

9 *with the rich in his death* cf Jesus' burial Matthew 27:57-60

10 *the Lord's will* see Isaiah 46:10; 55:11; Acts 2:23

guilt offering see Leviticus 5:15

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

Ch 52 13 *Who is speaking?*

Who is he speaking to?

When will this happen?

14 *Who were appalled?*

Why was his figure so marred?

15 *Why are there different tenses – will (13) were (14) will (15)?*

What will they see and understand?

Ch 53 1 *Who is the Lord speaking to?*

3 *Why was he despised?*

4 *How did he 'carry' our infirmities?*

Why 'yet we considered him....'?

5 *When and how was he pierced for our transgressions?*

6 *How have we all gone astray?*

8 *By whose judgement was he taken away?*

9 *Why, 'though'?*

10 *Why was it the Lord's will to crush him?*

Who is the guilt offering for?

When will the Lord prosper him?

11 *How will he 'justify many'?*

12 *What will his portion be?*

Who are the transgressors?

What surprises or confuses you?

52:13 *Why is no indication given of the timing?*

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage,

52:13f *the Lord's response to the profession (50:7-9)*

53:11,12 *many.....many (c.f. 52:14,15)*

b) individual book,

52:13 *highly exalted c.f. God Himself (6:1; 57:15)*

53:3 *reaction to humiliated Jesus (Matthew 27:39ff; John 19:5ff)*

stripes / wounds (c.f. 1:6)

c) whole Bible

52:13 *You have been raised with Christ. (Colossians 3:1)*

14 If they persecuted me, they will persecute you. (John 15:20)

15 Every knee will bow at the name of Jesus. (Philippians 2:10)

53:2 *Is this not Joseph's son? (Luke 4:22)*

4 'Yet we ... stricken by God'. (cf women at the tomb - John 20:2)

*6 iniquity laid on Him – payment for sin (Genesis 4:13; Leviticus 5:1,17)
being made by another (Leviticus 10:17; 16:22)*

We have 'all sinned and fallen short of God's glory. (Romans 3:23)

7 silent (Luke 23:9; 1 Peter 2:22,23)

9 Pilate's judgement (Luke 23:14,15)

d) Bible story

God create them but man's sin separated them.

God provide a way back to him through faith.

God gave mankind his perfect Law, which would if kept allow restoration.

Mankind did not obey Him despite the warnings of His prophets.

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

Ch 52 *13 The Lord is speaking to all nations.*

He speaking to Israel / the faithful.

*The timing is unspecified at the time of writing, but will be in 700 years
(when Jesus comes).*

14 Those who did not believe were appalled.

His figure would be marred in the crucifixion.

*15 There are different tenses because this is prophecy – the future plans of
the Lord are certain.*

They will understand that the servant is lifted / highly exalted .(c.f. v13).

Ch 53:1 *The Lord and Isaiah are speaking as partners.*

3 He was despised because he was an unknown joiner from Nazareth.

4 He 'carried our infirmities' while he was being pierced and crushed.

'Yet' because we did not understand what God was doing. We assumed the Servant's suffering was punishment from God for his own sins.

5 He was pierced for our transgressions as he was 'wounded'. (Luke 23:33).

6 We have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23).

8 Taken away by both God's judgment as our representative, and Pilate's.

9 'Though' he had done no violence, had never spoken deceitfully (8)

10 It was the Lord's will to crush him as he was being made sin for us.

Guilt offering for our sins who would trust him & become his offspring.

The Lord prospered him 'after the suffering of his soul'.

11 He will 'justify many' by 'bearing their iniquities'.

12 His portion will be that of 'victor'.

12 the transgressors are those whose infirmities he took, for whose transgressions he was pierced, for whose iniquities he was crushed, who gained peace from his punishment, healing from his wounds (4-6)

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

This is prophecy. It is for the Lord alone to know the times.

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

My exalted servant will prove wrong all those who despised him (52:13-15)

God's plan is amazing (53:1). The Lord took the weakest person (2,3) to bear our sins (4-6); he was rejected and killed (7-9). But it was the will of the Lord to crush him and then prosper him by exalting him to the highest place, for he removes the sin of many.

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

God exalted his servant, for he paid for the sins of many.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **53 v12**

I will give him the portion among the great for he bore the sin of many.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

Ch 53 2 Jesus was human, just as we are - 'yet without sin' (Heb 4:15)

12 God (the Father) exalted Him because He poured out His life for sinners.

b) His grace

Ch 53 1 God's truth is revealed to us (by Him).

c) Jesus and His salvation

Ch 53 4-6 Jesus paid for all our infirmities, transgressions, iniquities

7 Jesus willingly accepted the judgement we deserved for our sin

9 Jesus was innocent of all sin

11 Jesus, the righteous, justifies many sinners

2) What should I do?

Ch 52: 12 *Your sins have been paid for by Jesus.*

13 Note - It is possible for God's servant to be 'highly exalted' with Him.

14 Note - There are people who are appalled by Jesus.

Note - Being God's servant does not guarantee us acceptance or success.

15 Be assured - Every knee will bow at the name of Jesus.

Ch 53:3 *Note - the 'world' despises / rejects Jesus.*

Look up and beyond to God's great plan, whatever the immediate circumstance.

8 Believe God's servant, Jesus, has paid for ALL my sins.

God's free offer of salvation

Background and Word List

In his saving work, the Servant has done everything; the way is now open for response, pure and simple, to enjoy a feast for which someone else has paid. There is free entrance into life (1-5) through the moral and spiritual response of returning to God (6-11)

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|---|
| 1a | <i>come</i> | the first one is better translated 'Hey!' ie a summons; the remaining three are plural, imperative words. |
| | <i>all you who are thirsty</i> | is singular: every single person who thirsts |
| 3 | <i>soul</i> | the whole essential person |
| | <i>faithful love</i> | translates a plural Hebrew word 'the dependable acts of steadfast or covenant loves' |
| | <i>David</i> | This is his only mention in chs 40-66, but it links 'servant' with Kingly Messiah prophesied in 7:13ff |
| 5 | <i>nations</i> | Heb <i>goy</i> = the world outside the pale of Israel ie the whole Gentile world |
| 6 | <i>near</i> | Heb <i>qarab</i> is part of vocabulary of next-of-kinship see Ruth 2:20; 3:12; 4:4 |
| 7 | <i>turn</i> | = turn back, return |
| 13 | <i>pine, myrtle</i> | translations of type of tree vary but all are evergreen. |

Bible connections

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | <i>thirsty</i> | Psalm 63.1; 84:2; John 7.37-39; Revelation 22.17 |
| | <i>without money</i> | 1 Peter 1:18-21 |
| 2 | <i>what is not bread</i> | John 6:25-35 |
| 3 | <i>God's faithful love and Covenant</i> | see Psalm 89; Luke 1:67-79; Hebrews 8:7f |
| 5 | <i>nations coming to the Lord</i> | Zechariah 8:20-23; 9:9,10 |

LOOK

1) The Text What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 What are 'the waters'?
How can those 'with no money' buy?
- 2 What does 'bread' signify?
Why does He say 'listen' twice?
What is 'good'?
Who is 'me'?
- 3 When might my soul die?
- 3 Who is the 'you' that 'I' will make an everlasting covenant with?
When did He promise his love to David?
- 4 Who is the 'him' who has been made a witness / leader / commander?
What is he a witness of?
- 5 Who is the 'you' who will summon the nations?
Who has been endowed with splendour?
- 6 Who is being enjoined to seek the Lord?
Why is he near now? Where is He going?
- 7 Why should our God have mercy / freely pardon?
- 8 Who is the 'you/your' whose thoughts differ from the Lord's?
Why do our thoughts differ from His?
- 9 What does he mean by 'higher'?
- 11 What is the Word that comes out of the Lord's mouth?
What does the Lord desire? What will his word accomplish?
- 12 When will you go out with joy etc?
Why will the mountains etc respond to you like this?
- 13 What will be 'for the Lord's renown'?
What is it an everlasting sign of?
Who is the sign for?

What surprises or confuses you?

When will this happen – the invitation to drink (1), the time when the Lord is near (7) when mountains burst into song (12)?

2) The Context

- a) surrounding passage
- 2 'me' = the Lord (54:1)
- 3 Everlasting covenant and everlasting signs (13)

b) individual book

- 5 *Holy One of Israel: Isaiah uses this title 25 times. Rare elsewhere*
- 11 *word fulfilled (31:2; 44:11,26; 45:23)*
- 13 *briars and thorns (7:23-25)*

c) whole Bible,

- 1 *Come - the thirsty (Ecclesiastes 1:3)*
And I will give you drink (John 4:13) Cf Revelation 22:17; John 6:35
Buy without money - paradox of grace (Hebrews 4:16)
- 2 *Is not life more important than food? (Matthew 6:25)*
- 3 *Everlasting covenant (Genesis 17:7,13)*
Promised to David (2 Samuel 7:12-16)
- 4 *Witness to the Lord (Acts 1:8)*
God spoke through Jesus (Hebrews 1:1-3)
- 6 *Seek first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33)*
- 7 *Today if you hear his voice (Hebrews 3:7)*
A day comes when the offer is retracted (Matthew 25:13)
- 11 *Word from God's mouth (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4)*
- 12 *Creation liberated (Romans 8:20,21)*
Constant joy (Philippians 4:4)
cf jubilant fields and trees singing (Psalm 96:12,13)
- 13 *The Lord's renown / glory (John 17:1ff)*

d) Bible story

God create them but man's sin separated them.

God provide a way back to him through faith.

God gave mankind his perfect Law, which would if kept allow restoration.

Mankind did not obey Him despite the warnings of His prophets.

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

- 1 *'The waters' are the everlasting streams (?)*
Those with no money can 'buy' if things have no cost. Grace is free.
- 2 *'Bread' signifies that which sustains life.*
He says 'listen' twice to show urgency.
'Good' is that which edifies and sustains the soul.
'Me' is 'the Lord'.

- 3 *The soul dies if it ignores the invitation of the Lord.
‘You’ are those who ‘come’ (1).
He promised his love to David with His covenant.*
- 4 *‘Him’ is the Messiah in the line of David.
‘He’ is a witness of the Lord’s offer.*
- 5 *‘You’ are the people of God (‘because of the Lord your God’)
The bearer of the everlasting covenant, in the line of David, the Messiah,
is endowed with splendour.*
- 6 *All who need pardon are enjoined to seek the Lord.
God’s offer of salvation is for ‘today’. It is retracted when he returns.*
- 7 *God is not obliged to have mercy; by definition, mercy comes from the
character of the forgiver. His thoughts are not ours.*
- 8 *‘You/ your’ refers to mortal human beings.
Our thoughts are not His because we don’t see the big picture.*
- 9 *‘Higher’ means, “cannot be understood by those who are ‘lower’”.*
- 11 *The Word that comes out of his mouth means the Scriptures.
Your Word will accomplish the will of God.*
- 12 *People will go out with joy etc when they are submitted to His will.
Creation will respond because it is being liberated.*
- 13 *God will get the credit/renown for the joy for those who seek the Lord. (6,
12) and the liberation of creation (12,13).
The sign is of the Lord’s everlasting covenant (3) for all who are thirsty.*

3) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?
The time is the ‘now and not yet’ of the kingdom of God

4) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.
*Come (1) listen (2) see (4) and seek (6) the grace of God (7).
The Lord’s operation is not humanly understandable but is irresistible (8-11).
He purposes good for His name’s sake (12,13).*

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?
*For all sinners who repent, mercy and pardon are freely given according to
the unfathomable Word of God.*

- 2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 7**
'Let (the wicked) turn to the Lord and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon'

LIVE

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?
a) His nature and character?
1 *God welcomes those who know their need.*
3 *God gives life.*
God acts towards us on the basis of His covenant.
4 *The Lord's servant (Jesus) speaks to / for the people.*
8 *God's thoughts (and actions) are not understandable to humans.*
11 *God's Word is irresistible.*
12 *Joy and peace are God's provision for His people.*
Creation is an integral part of the Lord's plan for His people.
13 *The Lord acts according to his glory.*

b) His grace

7 *God mercifully pardons us freely*

c) Jesus and His salvation

5 *God's servant, Jesus, has been endowed with His splendour*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

- 2) What should I do ?

1 *Know my need.*

Enjoy His welcome

7 *Sinners may repent expectantly that they will be forgiven and see God.*

12 *Be faithful - God knows, cares and will deliver at the right time.*

1-13 *Anticipate that all nations are welcomed by the Lord.*

Now underline the application of the Main Point

New heavens and a new earth

Background information

The special emphasis of §7, ch 58-66, is that God will wind up history and, in some cataclysmic way, create new heavens and earth from our universe. The section has warnings for the impenitent but this passage enlarges our hearts in telling us what God has prepared for those who love him.

It seems we cannot in this life understand what the next will be like. The author C.S.Lewis likens it to a small child trying to understand why his parents enjoy going to bed together – ‘I know! You have chocolate hidden under the pillow.’ He lacks the capacity to make sense of the adult experience; and we lack the capacity to make sense of the new heavens and earth.

So the Bible either uses *negatives* (there will be *no more* death or pain, (Revelation 20:4) or, as here, uses ‘*more than*’ picture language taken from what we know now: ‘Jerusalem will be a delight’ (18,19), ‘we’ll live as long as trees’ (22). In fact this world’s Jerusalem will no longer exist, and we will live not just *longer* but *for ever* (25:6-9, 26:19). Our passage describes the next life in metaphor: in pictures with a message, but taken from this life’s experience.

Word List

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|---|
| 17 | <i>Behold, I will...</i> | should read <i>For behold, I will...</i> |
| | <i>create</i> | OT uses this word in this form only of actions of God |
| 18 | <i>But</i> | emphatic – ‘but on the contrary’ |
| 19 | <i>weeping/crying</i> | weeping refers to <i>felt</i> pain, crying to <i>inflicted</i> pain |
| 20 | <i>he who fails...accursed</i> | it will be as though anyone who lived to less than 100 would have died ‘young’ as a punishment from God |
| 23 | <i>people</i> | Hebrew is ‘seed’ |

Bible connections

- | | | |
|-------|-----------------------------------|--|
| 17 | <i>new heavens and new earth</i> | - the <i>totality of things</i> see Genesis 1:1 |
| 18 | <i>new Jerusalem</i> | see Revelation 21:1-5 |
| | <i>no more tears</i> | see Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 7:17, 21:4 |
| 23 | <i>seed</i> | of the promise in Genesis 17:7 of the Servant as promised in Isaiah 53:10 |
| 24-25 | <i>Eden restored</i> | see Isaiah 11:6-9 |
| 25 | <i>serpent, the curse remains</i> | see Genesis 3:14 |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 17 *What does this follow on from – ‘For behold...’?*
When will he create a new heaven and earth?
What former things will not be remembered?
- 18 *How will the new Jerusalem differ from the old?*
- 19 *Why will he rejoice over Jerusalem?*
Why will the sound of weeping be heard no more?
- 20 *What does this say about ageing?*
- 21,22 *Why is ‘living in houses that they have built’ repeated in negative?*
- 22 *How long does a tree live?!*
Who are His chosen ones?
- 23 *What does ‘toiling in vain’ mean?*
If all this blessing is future, are we today a people not blessed?
When is this, if people are still having ‘descendants’?
- 24 *What does it mean that God will answer ‘before I call’?*
- 25 *What does it mean that Carnivores and Herbivores eat together?*
Why ‘but dust will be the serpent’s food’?
Who is ‘they’ who will not harm?
Where / what is the Lord’s Holy Mountain?

What surprises or confuses you?

When are these things meant to happen (if hereafter, are we to have descendants)?
If even heaven needs to be renewed, what’s wrong with it now?!

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage

- 17 *After judgement the old troubles will be forgotten.*
- 22 *chosen ones (c.f. 65:9)*

b) individual book

- 17 *the former things (41:22; 42:9; 43:9; 43:18; 46:9; 48:3)*
- 23 *‘offspring of the blessed’, compare ‘offspring of evil doers’ (1:4)*
- 25 *Wolf and the lamb (11:6)*
Holy Mountain (11:9; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11; 66:20; (cf John 4:21?!))

c) whole Bible

23 *'and their descendant' (cf Genesis 17:7,8,9,10)*

25 *Holy Mountain (Psalm 2:6; 3:4 etc; Zechariah 9:3)*

The creation was 'very good' before the fall. (Genesis 1:31)

d) Bible story

God create them but man's sin separated them.

God provide a way back to him through faith.

God gave mankind his perfect Law, which would if kept allow restoration.

Mankind did not obey Him despite the warnings of His prophets.

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

17 *This follow-on explains v16 and develops the teaching about the next life.
A new heaven and earth will be created following judgement of the earth.
The former things are the things that are judged and found wanting.*

18 *In old Jerusalem life was not 'a delight' and the people were not 'a joy'.*

19 *He will rejoice over Jerusalem because righteousness has prevailed.
In the new creation, sadness and therefore weeping will be abolished.*

20 *In the new order there will be no death, so no mourning at separation.*

21/22 *The building metaphor is repeated in the negative to emphasise the security people will have.*

22 *Some trees live much longer than humans, eg. Giant Sequoia, 3,200 years, Mediterranean Cypress, 4,000 years, Bristlecone Pine, 5,000 years!
His chosen ones (65:9) are those who don't forsake the Lord.(65:11, 2-7)*

23 *'Toiling in vain' is used as a contrast to those in the new heaven and earth
Future blessing does not stop God blessing His people today too.
'Descendants' will co-exist with their forebears in the new creation.*

24 *God 'answering before I call' means that there will be no 'negative' things.*

25 *Carnivores and Herbivores eating together means there is no death at all.
Eating dust refers to God's judgement on the serpent (Genesis 3:14)
'They' are all who live on God's Holy Mountain – his servants. (13)
The Lord's Holy Mountain is a metaphor for 'where' the Lord dwells.*

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

It will happen when time ends – we will be with our descendants, judgement will happen & the Lord's people will be with him forever. Everything, even heaven, will be different after judgement day.

3) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

After judgement I will create a New Heaven and a new earth for my people. In 'Jerusalem' (where I will dwell among them) there will be no more tears; no ageing and death; no pain or toil – they will have all they need. They will live together in peace and harmony.

LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

Following judgement and the complete destruction of evil, God will make a new creation which will all be 'very good'.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage?

v 17

'For behold I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind'

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

17 The Lord will completely restore all things in a new creation.

b) His grace

23 The Lord blesses his people and their descendants

c) Jesus and His salvation

19 For the joy set before Him, Jesus endured the cross

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What should I do ?

17 Trust in God's good purpose, and live in hope in God

17 NB In Heaven sin will not be remembered.

18 NB In Heaven joy will be forever.

NB In Heaven God will enjoy His people.

- 20 NB In Heaven we will no longer have to contend with ageing and death.
- 21f NB In Heaven everyone will be 'at home'.
- 23b NB In Heaven everyone will belong.
- 24 NB In Heaven there will be no 'need'.
- 25 In Heaven no one will gain at another's expense.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Study 7

Isaiah 66

Humankind's two destinies

Background and Word List

Isaiah is so full of good news, it is shocking to notice that he identifies each section of chapters 40-66 by ending 'but there is no peace for the wicked.' (48:22, 57:21 and the startling 66:24). Jesus and his apostles confirmed this difference between the destinies of the repentant who ask God for mercy and the impenitent wicked. *see Bible connections below.*

| | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|---|
| 2,5 | <i>trembles</i> | sensitive longing to obey <i>see also</i> Ezra 9:4; 10:3 |
| 17 | <i>gardens</i> | loci of fertility cults <i>cf</i> 1:29; 65:3 |
| 19 | <i>Tarshish</i> | possibly Tartessos in Spain |
| | lit. <i>Pul</i> and <i>Lud</i> | <i>see</i> Jeremiah 46:9; Ezekiel 30:5 |
| | <i>Tubal</i> | in the far north (ie 'to the ends of the earth') |
| 20 | <i>vessels</i> | the only offering brought in a container was 'the first-fruits' <i>see</i> Deuteronomy 26:2 |

Bible connections

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Difference in destinies</i> | <i>see</i> Matthew 22-25; John 5:28f; Romans 6:23; Galatians 6:7-8; James 1:15; Ephesians 2:1-5 |
| 1 <i>God's house</i> | <i>see</i> 2 Samuel 7:7; 1 Kings 8:12-29 |
| 7 <i>painless birth</i> | <i>c.f.</i> Genesis 3:16 |
| 16 <i>fire and sword</i> | <i>c.f.</i> Genesis 3:24 |
| 19 <i>I will send some.</i> | <i>c.f.</i> Matthew 28:19-20 |
| 20 <i>brothers from all nations</i> | <i>see also</i> John 11:52 |
| <i>Jerusalem</i> | <i>see also</i> Galatians 4:25-26; Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 21 |

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1,2 *Why does the Lord say that Heaven is his throne?*
- 2 *What is it to be humble, contrite in Spirit, tremble at God's Word?*
- 3 *Who is God speaking to?*
- 4 *What is their fate?*
- 5 *What is 'the Word of the Lord'?*
When will 'those who hate you' be 'put to shame'?
- 6 *When will the Lord repay his enemies?*
- 7f *Why will these things happen so suddenly?*
- 12 *Who is 'her' being so treated by the Lord?*
- 16 *When will the Lord 'execute judgement on all men'.*
- 18 *When will all nations come and see His glory?*
- 19 *What will the sign be?*
When will his glory be proclaimed among the nations?
- 20 *Who will bring all our brothers from all nations'?*
- 21 *Why will He select some of them also to be 'priests and Levites'?*
- 22 *What does it mean that your 'name and descendants will endure'?*
- 23 *What does it mean that all mankind will bow before God?*
- 24 *What does it mean 'their worm will not die'?*
Why will they be loathsome to all mankind?

What surprises or confuses you?

- 24 *It ends abruptly and harshly*

2) The Context

a) surrounding passage

2&5 *Trembling at His Word*

23 *New moon cf New heavens (65:17)*

b) individual book

3 *meaningless offerings (1:13)*

9 *addresses Hezekiah's message (Isaiah 37:3)*

17 *the Apostates – those who reject God (65:3-7)*

c) whole Bible

- 1,2a Not building in right spirit (cf 2 Samuel 7:6; Acts 7:48-50, 54)
- 2 humble, contrite, tremble = convicted of the Spirit (John 16:8)
- 2ff God had commanded the rebuilding of the Temple (Haggai 1:2ff)
humble and contrite (Luke 18:13)
- 3 meaningless offerings (Jeremiah 7:21)
- 5 excluding because of his name (Matthew 5:11)
- 7 all be changed in a moment (1 Corinthians 15:51,52)
- 10-14 Zion as wife and mother (Galatians 4:26)
c.f. the Lord as 'mother' (Isaiah 49:14-23)
- 14a your heart will rejoice (John 16:22)
- 15,16 the fire and the sword (Matthew 10:34; Luke 11:49-51)
the Final Judgement (24; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10)
- 17 the apostates eating prohibited food (Leviticus 11:7,29)
- 19 the sign (Matthew 12:38-40?)
extremities of the earth (Acts 1:7)
- 20/21 The gentiles are acceptable in worship too. (Romans 15:15,16)
- 23 everyone will bow down (Philippians 2:9)
Jesus quotes 'worm will not die' in Mark 9:48
- 24 some to everlasting life, others to everlasting shame and contempt (Daniel 12:2b)

c) Bible story

God create them but man's sin separated them.

God provide a way back to him through faith.

God gave mankind his perfect Law, which would if kept allow restoration.

Mankind did not obey Him despite the warnings of His prophets.

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

1,2 He is announcing that He is sovereign overall.

2 This means to be convicted by the Spirit

3 The Lord is speaking to the 'apostate', those who do not believe in Him.

- 4 Their fate is 'harsh treatment' (4)
 5 The Word of the Lord is God speaking to them.
 They will be 'put to shame' on judgement day
 6 The Lord will repay his enemies on judgement day
 7f These things will happen suddenly on the Lord's day, when he comes
 12 The 'her' being so treated by the Lord is the new Jerusalem.
 16 The Lord will execute judgement on all men on his glorious return /
 judgement day
 18 All nations will see his Glory on the day of judgement
 19 The sign is 'the resurrection'.
 His glory will be proclaimed among the nations on the day of judgement
 20 Those who proclaim his glory will bring all our brothers from all nations?
 21 In Judaism Gentiles could not even enter, let alone serve in, the Temple; in
 the new 'Jerusalem', all who come in faith are fully included
 22 God's power and authority, and those to whom God gives it, will persist.
 23 It means he is all-powerful
 24 'Worm will not die' means there is eternal death without God
 All mankind will loathe them because they do not share the Love of God.

3) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

This Word is a prophecy: if you oppose the Word of God, take note and repent.

4) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

I, the Lord, reign over all (1,2). I esteem the faithful (3) but not those who ignore me (4). Listen, faithful, the Lord will sort out his enemies (5,6) instantly (7-9). Rejoice with the people of God (10). They will be abundantly provided for (11-14b) while the Lord judges all men (14c- 16). Those who resolutely oppose me will perish (17) as my Glory is revealed (18). I will give a sign to all nations, who will come and worship and serve me (19-21). In the new creation, I will reign over my people for ever (23) but those who reject me will perish (24).

LISTEN

2) What is the lesson or the main point?

Inevitably, the Lord's supremacy over all will be shown to all on the day of judgement; the faithful will be fully vindicated; those who reject Him, perish.

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? **v 14b**

The hand of the Lord will be made known to His servants, but His fury will be shown to his foes.

LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

1 The Lord cannot be contained by man

2b The Lord looks for humility and faith.

The Word of God should be respected

6 The Lord repays all His enemies what they deserve

The Lord's coming is not time-restricted!

13 The Lord's people are cherished and cared for

14 The Lord's justice will be revealed to all

15 The Lord's judgement is terrible.

b) His grace

2b God requires of us only the right attitude – ie humble faith!

c) Jesus and His salvation

19 God's sign to the world is the resurrection of Jesus

Now underline the application of the Main Point

2) What should I do ?

3,4 Do not choose to ignore God.

5 As a believer, expect Persecution because of the Lord's name.

14 Wait patiently on God's purposes being revealed and His foes dealt with.

15 Live in the light of the judgement and justice of God.

17 Trust in God to deal with sin and rebellion.

19 Note - All nations will hear and see God's glory.

20 Note - All nations are welcome in God's presence.

21 Note - All nations are able to serve God.

22 Believe - The new creation will endure – for ever.

24 God will punish those who rebel against Him – forever.

Now underline the application of the Main Point

Sharing the Word

Use

Hearing the Word can be used alone, with one other person, or in a group

Preparing for a group

Time put in alone beforehand will greatly benefit time spent together.

Work through the stages - LOOK, LEARN, LISTEN, LIVE.

Write down your own questions and answers. *

Format

- a. LOOK - Any questions? (If answer is known or not!)
Relevant cross references in rest of the Bible?
- b. LEARN - Answers to questions?
- c. LISTEN - Key verse and Main Point?
- d. LIVE - What does it show about God /His grace/ Jesus?
What should I do

n.b. Leave plenty of time for the LIVE section!

By also eating together and a time of prayer, you will have shared something of the life of the early church! (Acts 2:42-47)

Remember!

As we gather round God's Word -

- a) Listen to the views of others.
- b) Make room for the novice. (They can join in too when you start by listing 'Any questions'.)
- c) Don't let the 'knowledgeable' dominate. Encourage everyone to think for themselves.
- d) Try to include others, especially 'seekers', in your time together.

* The **process** is explained and practiced in a four-hour course, suitable for all, called '**An Introduction to 'Hearing the Word'**

<https://hearingtheword.org.uk>

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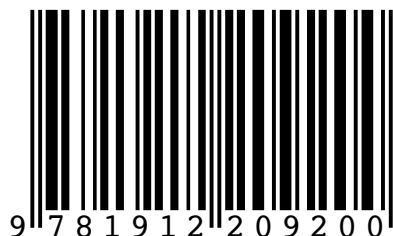
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